



## Corresponding Communities and Mediation Ability: The Impact of Cultural Change at individual level

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**Abstract:** Using corresponding communities and mediation ability themes, this paper proposes a conceptual framework to study implications of cultural change at the individual level in the context of globalisation and continuous amalgamation of communities across different cultures. The research develops and tests a conceptual framework based on broader research questions such as how traditional communities differ from dynamic and corresponding communities with respect to an individual's cultural integration and how they evolve and change consequently. The conceptual construct is then used as the basis for qualitative research to study the phenomenon of cultural change. Findings suggest a strong distinction between traditional and dynamic communities and the emergence of communal salience due to an individual's personal nature and lifestyle affiliations within different territorial and institutionalised cultural sites. Analysis of the cases also found that cultural changes appear relatively quickly in communities that are dynamic in nature.

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### 1. Introduction

The evolution of the service and knowledge-based sector in post-industrialised societies inevitably accompanies the fact that people live more and more outside nature, and less and less with machinery and things; they live with, and encounter only, one another (Bell, 1973). People need to deal with interpersonal confrontation more than they were historically used to. With regard to the powerful forces of globalisation, Vance and Paik (2006) argue that rising international migration and the increasing expansion of multinational corporations across cultural boundaries demand novel practices to cope with a culturally diverse workforce (Douglas and Wind, 1987). Thus, there are not only changes in society itself; it is the interaction between societies that demand a certain level of vigilance and understanding from individual societal members. Hamilton (1994) claims that what we witness with the development of a global economy is not increasing uniformity, but rather the continuation of civilization diversity through the active reinvention and reincorporation of non-Western civilization patterns.

Historically, the theory of national character in cultural anthropology discussed personality characteristics and patterns that are modal among the adult members of the society (Barzun, 1937; Benedict, 1934; Inkeles and Levinson, 1969; Kirkman et al., 2006, Meer and Modood, 2012). The

thoughts of national character in cultural anthropology preceded the developments that are reviewed subsequently and can be traced back to the epoch in Western culture known as the Enlightenment (Harris, 1968; Locke, 1690). Even most recent advances in cultural studies are evident in the earliest work of scholars, as Locke (1909: 104) argued that we must take this for a certain truth that which will most influence their carriage will be the company they converse with.

It is in this context that this paper attempts to develop a conceptual framework to study implications of cultural change at the individual level. In particular, the study focuses on exploring how individuals, communities, national and supra-national cultures interact with each other in the globalised world and how they evolve and change consequently by exploring individuals' relationship with the corresponding communities. The term corresponding communities is used to identify and explain the communities to which an individual believes to belong or feel affiliated due to some shared characteristics such as similar educational backgrounds and professional affiliations. The corresponding communities are different from traditional communities in the sense that one belongs to traditional communities on the basis of religious and cultural values and preferences which are often inherited and not earned or achieved. By using the corresponding communities concept, the paper aims

to identify how the personal culture of an individual is characterised and how we can say that the change has taken place. Further, the concept of mediation ability which argues that we need to adopt a more constructivist approach when studying an individual's ability to systematize corresponding communities and integrate to such communities within different cultures is used to study the phenomenon of cultural change at individual level (Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg and Grigorenko 2006; Earley, 2006; Zhu and Huang, 2007)

The methodology adopted is the case study approach in which individual cases were chosen for interviews using strict criteria so that the objectives of the research could be achieved. In total 65 in depth interviews were carried out in Edinburgh in the United Kingdom. Strong emphasis was put on comprehending the real-life context of individuals and cases were carefully chosen according to a predetermined target group of potential respondents. The criteria included that individuals should not be indigenous to the UK, should be the followers of a different religion other than Christianity, should be professionals who have to interact with different British communities, and they have stayed in the UK for more than one year. The case study approach was used for exploratory reasons and allowed the identification of different cultural communities with which an individual is affiliated.

The findings suggest a strong distinction between different type of communities i.e. traditional communities and dynamic communities. The findings also show that individuals act differently in particular situations due to their individual personal nature and life styles affiliations even if their cultural context seem similar. Analysis of the cases also found that cultural changes appear relatively quickly in communities that are not associated with traditional communities. Further the concept of communal salience was evident in many instances.

The methodological limitations of this paper imposed significant constraints and the results gained are far from comprehensive. However, the conceptual framework was positively perceived as an analytical tool of individual cultures and shows great potential for further development and testing. Subsequent to this introduction part, the rest of the paper is structured as following. First the paper presents the theoretical background of the paper. This is followed by a discussion of research settings and data analysis. Findings and a proposed conceptual research model are then presented. The paper concludes with the discussion of the findings, identification of areas for future research and research limitations.

## 2. Theoretical Background

Leung, et al. (2005) argued that the ongoing process of globalisation leads to increased mutual influences of national cultures and consequently to some form of cultural change or exchange. However, most existing frameworks are based on the use of the traditional paradigm and the study of traditional communities which regards culture as a stable entity with values and value dimensions being consistent and enduring over time (Douglas and Wind, 1987; Earley, 2002; Ghemawat, 2007; Epstein, 2009). Therefore, culture is considered as changing significantly slowly (Hofstede 1980a, 1991), leading to a high potential for predicting behavioural patterns and outcomes of individuals belonging to traditional communities (Weick and Quinn, 1999). Cultural stability in this view suggests a considerable fit between national culture and organizational practices, thus, high adaptation to behavioural predictions, and ultimately, higher effectiveness (Erez and Earley, 1993).

In recent studies and evaluations, a number of authors suggest a shift towards a more direct approach in researching the cultural contexts, thus, moving away from predominating national surveys and the study of traditional communities (Bouchard, 2011; Dobbernack, 2010; Emerson, 2011; Gould and Grein, 2009; Meer and Modood, 2012). For example, Gould and Grein (2009) and Meer et al. (2010) argue that the traditional paradigm enforces barriers on cultural studies, as the theoretical focus of attention is placed on the role of 'National Culture' – a destined form of culture – rather than on culture itself being a more holistic, constructivist paradigm. In accordance, McSweeney (2002: 91) states that Hofstede's (1980a; 1991) framework treats national culture as implicit, core, systematically causal, territorially unique, and shared, hence, neglecting discrepancy between culture and geographic territories e.g. migration, expatriates, international movement of students, dislocated people, etc. In addition, factors that impact or even supersede the influence of national culture e.g. organizational culture and the forces of globalisation and institutional changes e.g. changes within the European Union should also be considered while conducting any cultural study (Eisenberg, 2009; Gould and Grein, 2009; Emerson, 2011). Hence, a move away from the study of and individual's link with traditional communities to dynamic and corresponding communities.

Similarly, culture is also often treated as being geographically indigenous – that is belonging to a distinct territory (e.g. nation-state) – it seems reasonable to suppose that people act according to certain location based conditions and often stick to them in the long run (Heuer et al., 1999; Ricart et al.,

2004). This suggests people may identify with, identify against or not identify with particular places in which they find themselves (Dobbernack, 2010; Rose, 2003). Harton and Bourgeois (2003) put forward that top-down approaches simply document and describe the range of values expected between people from different national groups.

Further, the traditional paradigm treats culture separately on national, organizational and individual level, hence, disregards the dynamic interrelated character of culture (Earley, 2006; Meer, 2010). Earley (2006) argues that Hofstede's (1980a; 1991) concept of value dimensions emphasises broadly shared cultural attributes that represent the 'collective programming of the mind', resulting in a "realm of stereotyping and cross-level fallacies" with regard to individual level interpretation. Organizations researchers, however, are interested in individual employee actions across cultural settings which proves considerably problematic when relying on aggregated, macro-level implications; hence, significant generalisation (McSweeney, 2002; Smith, 2002).

In compliance with other authors (Adams and Markus, 2004; Erez and Gati, 2004; Meer, 2010; Triandis, 2006) it can be argued that culture should then be regarded as a psychological construct reflecting a multitude of influences on individuals. In order to map cultural influences on individuals in a broader or more constructivist context than national culture or hierarchical cultural layers, Gould and Grein (2009) introduced their 'Glocalized Community Culture Model' suggesting that culture should be viewed as a network of communities that cross the strict, hierarchical boundaries (global, national, organizational, etc) of the traditional paradigm. This incorporates different influences on individuals in today's global world. Communities in this regard are referred to as sites of culture and sites involve various forms, including face-to-face contact, as well as other types of linkage, imagined or virtual, explaining cultural phenomena as results of social, interpersonal influence within and between communities an individual identifies with (Gould and Grein, 2009; Harton and Bourgeois, 2003). These communities are termed corresponding communities in this paper. The corresponding communal self-identification of individuals is characterised by salience of their most influential cultural communities over others. On the other hand, the term dynamic communities is used to for communities which are ever-changing and ever-evolving as conceptualised by Gould and Grein (2009).

Identification of an individual's link with a particular community (corresponding community) in this view is based on the key assumption that certain

communities in any country can take on salience over others communities (Gould and Grein, 2009; Harton and Bourgeois, 2003). In an interactionist conception – that is, the identity of an individual within a network of interrelated communities is based on the individual's level of commitment to his or her social networks. Hence identities based on communal affiliation may occur hierarchically depending on the social, situational and environmental context within dynamic communities (Earley and Ang, 2003).

Contemporary conceptual frameworks based on dynamic communities suggest applying a more constructivist approach when researching the individual's context of culture or capacity to adapt to varying cultural settings (Earley, 2006). Zhu and Huang (2007) argue that cultural integration eliminates conflicts arising from cultural differences by organizing and amalgamating different communities. Thus, being situated in a new cultural environment presupposes some form of mediation ability – or cultural intelligence – to organize and amalgamate one's different communities (Sternberg, 1985; Sternberg and Grigorenko, 2006; Earley, 2006; Zhu and Huang, 2007). From this perspective mediation ability involves a chain reaction process, beginning with an independent variable that affects an individual that in turn affects an outcome. In other words, the view that clustering of individuals with some form of shared cultural perception, as communities hence as sites of culture (Gould and Grein, 2009) is adopted in this paper.

The above discussion suggests three important areas that need to be further explored when researching cultural contexts; Firstly, more emphasis has to be put on mapping all cultural influences, not just national culture i.e. to further study the corresponding communities. Secondly, it has to be understood that culture is not only based on values but also on territorial and institutionalised cultural sites. And thirdly, culture has to be regarded as a dependent variable in a dynamic environmental setting.

In order to further explore the above issues, this research intends to look at questions such as;

- How do communities, an individual is a part of, differ in the extent to which they represent traditional communities opposed to dynamic communities?
- Whether cultural integration is fostered more by dynamic communities than traditional communities and if yes, than why?
- Do dynamic and corresponding communities result in congruent cultural changes amongst individuals who move from one dynamic community to a new one?

### 3. Methodology

Research design comprises the development of a research strategy with clear focus on the purposes of the study i.e. what information will answer research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Saunders et al. (2007) consider seven different research strategies referring to the researcher's epistemology, ontology, and the research approach.

The case study as a research strategy was adopted to study a contemporary phenomenon covering numerous undetermined variables reacting to a complex environment that cannot be influenced by the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2001). Yin (2003: 21) states that "for case studies, five components of a research design are especially important which include a study's questions, its propositions, its units of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and finally the criteria for interpreting the findings. Question 1, 'How do communities an individual is a part of, differ in the extent to which they represent traditional communities opposed to dynamic communities?', describes the general research interest of this paper and provides the basis for the other two research questions.

The propositions made within the development of the research questions are based on the assumption that communities an individual is part of, influence the cultural integration process of an individual. These communities are expected to differ to the extent in which they represent traditional opposed to dynamic characteristics.

The units of analysis were carefully chosen to include most representative cases were the researched phenomenon was thought to be strongest. Data was collected using the interviewing approach (Johnson and Weller, 2001; Johnson, 2001). Research conducted in this paper is based on Inglehart and Baker's (2000) finding of people having different cultural heritages shaped by religious beliefs. In this regard, the target group was determined by choosing individuals with a cultural heritage that is different to the new cultural environment they migrated to:

1. Muslim individuals were chosen to contrast the prevailing religious perception of the people in the UK. Islam as the second largest religious community (over 1 billion adherents worldwide), was selected as a cultural heritage that incorporates differences in individuals' perceptions (values, beliefs, attitudes, and norms) compared to the one predominant in

the UK (Parboteeah et al., 2009; Inglehart and Baker, 2000).

2. Individuals not indigenous to the UK were chosen to ensure independence from communal characteristics of one national culture, and to further diversity. This attribute leads to a target group of individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds ('Cultural Territories', 'Institutional Sites', 'Lifestyle Affiliation', and 'Personal Nature') within the religious heritage mentioned above (Gould and Grein, 2009).
3. Professionals were chosen to limit findings to the boundaries of international business and to identify common communal affiliation amongst them. Emphasis is placed on people who are most likely to be part of an international business context as professionals in future (Elmuti et al., 2008).
4. Only individuals who have stayed for over 1 year in their new cultural environment were chosen in order to ensure that cultural integration processes are evident.

All four attributes assure significant cultural disparity between individuals and the environment they migrated to. Strong differences (e.g. nationality) between individual cases are also assumed. Building upon these characteristics, foreign Muslim professionals living in the UK were chosen as the focus of interest (target group). Each case is developed around the unique experience and environment of an individual (Stake, 2005).

Qualitative data collection refers to what was earlier termed as the interpretivism approach including non-numerical data gained from e.g. interviews (Bourdon, 2002; Saunders et al., 2007). Even before conducting any interviews, it emerged that asking strangers if they were Muslims was highly inappropriate and different approaches had to be found. Many potential interviewees refused to be recorded. Sixty five in-depth interviews were undertaken in total, with 21 respondents interviewed at a local mosque and its Islamic Centre in Edinburgh, 9 respondents provided by a contact through the Multicultural Society, 13 contacts through the network at the local University (Edinburgh Napier University), and with 22 respondents approached randomly. Respondents were aged between 21 and 56 having stayed from 1 to 26 years in the UK. Interviewees pursued different professions, e.g. shop assistants, managers

conducting research at universities, doctors (general practitioners), business consultants, Imam, and so forth. Nationalities differed with most respondents being from Pakistan, followed by Iran, and Bangladesh. Data analysis is presented in the next section of the paper.

#### 4. Data Analysis

The data analysis narrows down the collected data using corresponding communities and mediation ability themes which are discussed in the theoretical section of the paper. These themes were followed to develop the conceptual framework and contribute to existing theories.

##### Correspondent Communities

The conceptual concepts introduced in the early part of the paper suggest that communal self-identification of individuals is characterised by salience of their most influential cultural communities. As anticipated, when asked to describe their personal culture, respondents mainly described what is referred as traditional communities; hence, sites of culture that are rather value-based, historically embedded and comprise an individual's cultural heritage. Traditional communities that were predominantly mentioned in respondents' general cultural descriptions were religion ('Personal Nature'), gender-related perceptions ('Personal Nature') and nationality ('Territorial Sites'), complying with the predictions made within the conceptual framework. In the words on one respondent;

"If you look at my culture from an outside perspective, people sometimes appear to be very strict, harsh; [...] a Muslim should be a kind person. We should follow the behaviour of our prophet Mohammad. I think people should act exactly the way Mohammad did. [...] In my country, Iran, there are two main cultures; firstly, people are very patriotic, I haven't seen this here in Scotland. People in Iran get angry when you talk in a negative way about the home country. The second thing is religion, Islam. It is very important" (Respondent 17).

Respondent 17's statement above could be related to the traditional paradigm with Hofstede's (1980a) value-dimension of 'Collectivism-Individualism', rating the country of origin significantly high as a collectivist nation. However, over half of the respondents interviewed in this project described sites of culture that are not necessarily – or not only – related to their nationality. Hence, when individuals assess their current situation in their unique cultural environment, communities

other than their national culture may take on salience depending on situational circumstances.

"[...] In Pakistan, the culture is different compared to the Western culture. It is totally different. Women wear Hijabs, sometimes fully covered, not showing their face. Even when they are working in the fields, they remain fully covered. In provinces closer to Afghanistan, women are not like here; they don't come to cities, not even on markets. However, there are also provinces like Punjab where I am from, there, it is modern and people are very modest." (Respondent 32).

Most gender-related perspectives can be regarded as based on values (modes of conduct existing relatively) and norms (collective code of conduct), which are covered as the traditional community termed 'Personal Nature'. In this example, the respondent initially referred to a nation-state (Pakistan), however, turns to a gender-related discussion and even mentions a second and third 'Territorial Site' (Afghanistan, Punjab) in this context. It appears that the gender related perceptions of culture expressed by respondent 32 do not necessarily relate to the cultural site of a nation-state. Perceptual disparities are evident even within the country (Close to Afghanistan opposing Punjab and other regions).

Building upon the findings of Inglehart and Baker (2000) and the theory referring to the traditional paradigm, it was anticipated that traditional communities comprise 'Territorial Sites' and communities of 'Personal Nature', whereas dynamic communities comprise 'Lifestyle Communities' and 'Institutional Sites'. The normative role of male and female as part of individuals' 'Personal Nature' appear to have significant implications on respondents' beyond communal affiliation.

"It is a very tolerant society here. It was another first experience for me. I have never seen women naked (not fully covered as in respondent's country) like this" (Respondent 17).

It was anticipated that people migrating to the UK would experience some form of friction between new and old communities with which they identify or just interact. For instance, the differences between the Islamic and Christian heritage were expected to result in some form of guardedness or "friction". Far from it, respondents never expressed issues that can be related to another religion.

“Most people are very good, humble and very kind, and very helpful. Some other people, you know those, we also experience that in Pakistan, people on the street, they’re sometimes shouting. They have prejudices, sometimes they are racist” (Respondent 2).

“In western countries, if you are different, you don’t have a problem. It’s really easy. Better than in Iran” (Respondent 51).

This may again relate back to what was described earlier as the concept of communal salience. In the above cases, it is evident that Muslims who were obviously affiliated with the Islamic community back in their home countries and are part of the Islamic community in their new environment, do not identify themselves with the Christian community.

“Integrating is not difficult. But integration with religions is difficult. Because we have a separate religion” (Respondent 31).

“I learned to be more open. Accept things. Because in Edinburgh we have a very strong inter-faith community. Everybody is accepted” (Respondent 54).

Hence, even if respondents live, work, or study in their new environment, the predominant religion (Christianity) as a community in the new environment plays only a minor role. Contrary to what was expected as being the correspondent community to the Islamic communities back home, the new Islamic community itself appeared to show signs which were expected between the Christian and Islamic community. People were Muslims in their home countries and are still Muslims in their new environment. However, these two appear to be significantly different Islamic communities that appear to experience some form of “friction”.

“Here, it is totally different, we have to tolerate people, they are busy and have not much knowledge of Islam” (Respondent 2).

“It is different here, I don’t have the time to pray constantly but there is still the pressure to do so” (Respondent 19).

This phenomenon highly relates to the concept of Harton and Bourgeois’ (2003) culture formation through clustering and correlation. The persistence or even strengthening of Islamic perceptions brought from home, can be explained “as

those holding minority opinions are insulated [...] within their clusters, they receive social support for maintaining their beliefs” (Harton and Bourgeois 2003: 52). Cultural change within this dynamic setting may result from majority influences of people not sharing the same beliefs. These people are surprisingly not people following other religions, but Muslims who do not share the in-depth knowledge of Islam, e.g. migrants in second or even 3<sup>rd</sup> generation.

Overall, it seems that respondents’ individual cultures are strongly characterised by salient traditional communities. Furthermore, salient communities seem to have corresponding communities in respondents’ old and new cultural environments that may cause some form of “friction”.

#### Mediation Ability

The above theme of corresponding communities showed that salient communities of respondents may be subject to different forms of communal interaction. This phenomenon is a form of what Martin (2005) refers to as the hybridised interaction of various communities. Living in such an environment where these communities are prevalent individuals have to develop mediation ability to adjust, finding a common ground by not ignoring their own affiliation to different communities (Sternberg, 1985; Zhu and Huang, 2007). In some cases, this interaction appears to cause inter-communal friction as the interacting communities have not coexisted over a long period of time, but may even congregate at the very first time someone from a different cultural background enters the new environment.

“In the first 5-6 months it was very difficult to understand the people. Their mentality and especially interaction with the children I am teaching. I am also working with people in prison, hospital, etc. and that was a totally new experience for me. But slowly, slowly I understand different situations. Not 100%, but I would say 50% I can understand” (Respondent 32).

“When you go somewhere and you are a minority, you have to think about yourself, your identity. Sometimes you need to protect it” (Respondent 60).

Changes seem to appear relatively quick if they do not comprise any strong association with individuals’ traditional communities, in particular salient ones.

“When the classes started, I got the confidence during studying and also talking to people outside the university as well. I got used to different things very fast. Back in my country we are in the habit of having servants because the labour there is very cheap. But here I had to do everything myself, things I had never done before, but it is okay now” (Respondent 17).

It seems that people do change relatively quickly in certain areas, whereas respondents kept to their traditional perceptions in others. Relating to the concept of Cultural Intelligence and the “reality that all humans are ethnocentric” (Triandis, 1990), it could be understood that respondents keep to their perceptions, especially when traditional, however, learn to mediate these with corresponding communities. This phenomenon was highly evident in cases where gender-related roles seemed to play a significant role.

“From my point of view [...] we don’t live like Men and women here [...]; it is not as open (broadminded society)” (Respondent 1).

Even though, respondent 1 does not necessarily agree with some parts of people’s perceptions, he seems to not exclude himself in any way.

“You shouldn’t drink, I don’t, but I go to pubs with friends. I did not experience any problems because I am very open about these things. Even when we go to clubs, my friends make fun of me because I go to clubs and don’t drink” (Respondent 11).

It could be argued that people learn to mediate different cultural perceptions in situations where respondents’ traditional communities do not comply with norms, values, attitudes or beliefs that are represented by corresponding communities. This learning process was attributed to different dynamic communities and one specific traditional Community: Edinburgh (‘Territorial Site’).

“So many people come here to work or study. The different people together build a stronger society. The values of the people living in Edinburgh are based on the different peoples. [...] we get to learn from each other and respect each others’ values and so on. Just experiencing the differences” (Respondent 5)

“The people working there came from every part of the country. Chinese, Pakistani, Asian, American, Europeans, you meet so many different people. That’s where I meet many Pakistani friends as well. That was another place where I interacted with different people. So I would say workplace and other institutions like universities helped me a lot” (Respondent 33).

Overall, the origin of respondents’ mediation ability, especially between corresponding communities could not be identified as subject to one type of community. However, what appears to be a common factor throughout the second theme is that learning processes take place in communities that are of choice rather than given. Contrary to traits like nationality, ethnicity, religion, gender and so fourth, which have to be regarded as rather given, the above statements comprise individuals’ working community (‘Institutional Sites’), academic community (‘Institutional Sites’) and the city they live in (‘Territorial Sites’). It could be argued that people choose to work in a specific organization, they chose to study at a specific university, or chose to live in Edinburgh. The chosen communities appear to comprise a higher motivation that justifies mediation between corresponding communities. To give a simple example mentioned by Respondent 11:

“[...] in the Islamic religion you shouldn’t shake hands with girls, but I do, I don’t care” (Respondent 11)

It would be significantly difficult to work or study in the new cultural environment without shaking hands with women. Hence, if someone chooses a particular site of culture (Communities of choice), he or she may have to mediate influences of ‘Trait communities’ in order to achieve or satisfy motivations.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

The previous section outlined the analysis of the primary data following two themes: corresponding communities and mediation ability. Both themes were evident throughout the interviews and were developed around common experiences of respondents. It appeared that particular traditional communities predominantly take on salience over others. Salient communities seem to have corresponding communities in individuals’ new cultural environment that require some form of mediation ability to cope with differences in cultural perceptions. Throughout the learning process of this ability, not only traditional communities and dynamic communities could be distinguished, but another dimension was added: ‘Trait Communities’ that build upon given characteristics such as gender, religion, nationality, and so forth and ‘Communities of Choice’, such as the place respondents chose to live, or the organization they work for, and other ‘Institutional Sites’.

Based on existing theories, it was anticipated that respondents overly identify with traditional communities that take on salience over dynamic communities. This appeared to be strongly evident without exceptions. All respondents

described traditional communities as representatives of their culture. Traditional communities that were predominantly mentioned in individuals' cultural description were religious and gender-related perceptions. Both are traditional communities of 'Personal Nature' and seem to be part of individuals' 'Evaluative Beliefs' with strong implications on guidance in their lives.

The theme of mediation ability showed strong evidence of dynamic communities as being based on norms rather than values. Changes seem to appear relatively quick in communities that are not associated with traditional communities. Sites of 'Lifestyle Affiliation' and 'Institutional Sites' strongly fostered the development of mutual understanding between respondents and their new cultural environment. Organizational communities and universities were predominantly mentioned as helpful in learning about the new environment. Furthermore, where correspondent communities showed interactional "friction", dynamic communities appear to allow mediation in form of tolerance or learning. However, a strong exception was the cultural community of Edinburgh ('Territorial Site'), a cultural site that was often mentioned as most helpful and supportive in building respondents mediation ability even though it has to be regarded as a traditional community by definition as depicted in Figure 1.

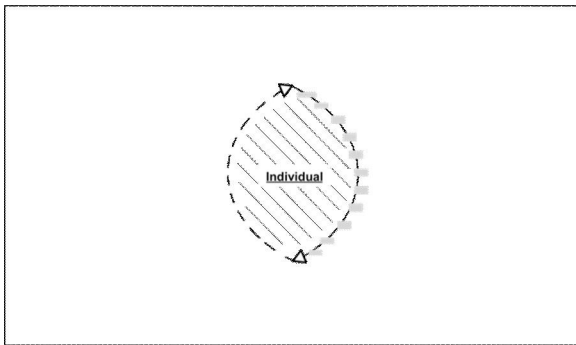


Figure 1. Individuals' social networks

Throughout the theme of mediation ability, it was evident that traits such nationality, societal "class", ethnicity, religion and so forth comprised rather rigid cultural perceptions that required mediation within the new environment. Communities of choice in the new cultural environment such as the city of Edinburgh as a place to live, the organization an individual works for, or the academic community allowed development of mediation ability, thus strongly fostered integration efforts. As a conclusion on Q2 it has to be stated that not only dynamic

communities foster development of mediation abilities but also traditional Communities.

The second dimension of 'Trait Communities' opposing 'Communities of Choice' that was identified as part of the analysis appears to be a promising development that could potentially further explanatory efforts in cultural change of individuals.

As cultural sites were successfully distinguishable on the first dimension of traditional communities opposing dynamic communities, development of the conceptual framework is based on the findings of Q1. The individual remains in the centre as the communal affiliation with diverse communities is dependent on each unique cultural context. The arrows are dotted and account for the interactionist character of communities an individual identifies with (see Figure 2). The shaded area represents an individuals' mix of cultural sites. The first dimension of traditional communities opposing dynamic communities was included on the vertical axis. The second dimension appears on the horizontal axis identifying four sections that can be distinguished using the two dimensions.

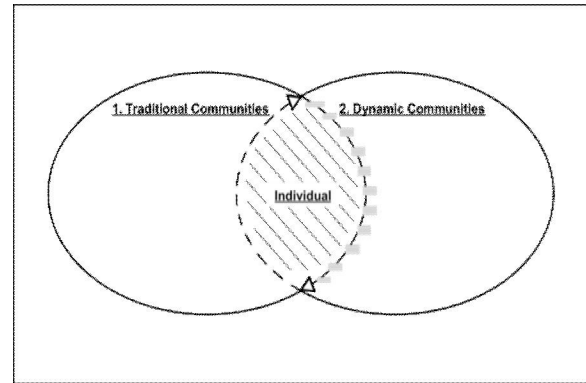


Figure 2. Types of cultural communities

In order to allow the same refined approach to identifying specific cultural sites an individual is affiliated with, the types of cultural communities are again segmented into four categories based on the first dimension. Relating to Q2, this allows traditional communities such as the community of Edinburgh as mentioned before, to be viewed as a specific 'Community of Choice' that may have significant implications on the development of individuals' mediation ability.

The categories used in the conceptual framework as a basis for the research appeared to be sufficient as all communities mentioned by respondents during the interview process could be



allocated to either one of the four categories as depicted in Figure 3.

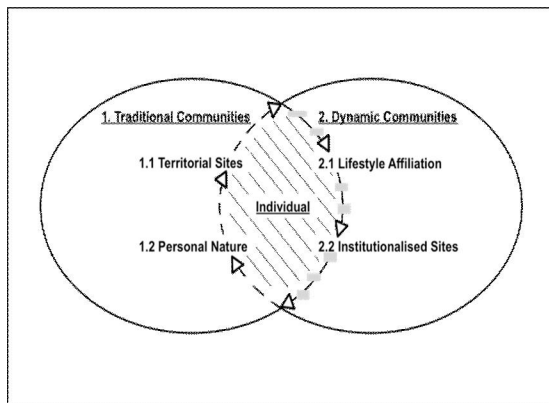


Figure 3. Four categories of cultural communities

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper, it is argued that while the theories of the traditional paradigm cannot be dismissed those can only provide researchers with generalised implications on cultural perceptions. In the context of the ongoing process of globalisation, it is inevitable to turn away from broad stereotypical predictions of behaviours, towards a more refined approach where cultural change may occur quickly and cultural sites can form mixes based on individual affiliation. In order to gain further understanding of an individual's cultural context, it is necessary to keep on approaching culture as a holistic construct that allows identifying the perceptions which predominantly characterise a person as a unique entity of cultural sites. As the concept of communal salience was evident in many instances, the interactionist conception of an individual's construct suggests identifying corresponding communities will allow comprehending the values, norms, beliefs and attitudes one person represents. The research also shows that analyzing the cultural context of individuals results in strong implications on how different people experience a new environment and how they act or feel in particular situations, even if their cultural context may seem similar from an outside perspective.

The methodological limitations of this paper, such as the use of case study approach, relatively small number of interviews and respondents from one city, imposed significant constraints and the results gained are far from comprehensive. However, the conceptual framework was positively perceived as an analytical tool of individual cultures and shows great potential for further development and testing. The themes of

corresponding communities that presuppose mediation abilities appear to be promising concepts for future research that may allow improved understanding of what Earley (2002), Triandis (2006), and several others termed cultural intelligence, and particularly, how tacit cultural knowledge may be acquired. The distinction between trait communities and communities of choice can also be regarded as another an important step that needs to be tested carefully in future research as communities of choice appear to have strong influences on how an individual's cultural context develops in a new environment. Research of the relationship between individuals' motivation towards achievements (professional, academic, etc.) and cultural change or mediation of rigid traits can also make further contribution toward the existing literature.

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