


Models of Intercultural Communication: Identities, Styles of Acculturation, and Premises for Enjoying the Company of One Another—Empirical Data From the Public Sector in Norway

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Abstract

The research question addressed in this article is, “To which extent does intercultural communication depend on self-understanding, accumulated during the process of socialization, as well as the feeling of safety?” This question may have received less attention from researchers. This article draws upon modern and classical theories to explain the concept of self-understanding and the feeling of safety conceived in two meta-analytical models of socialization. The models were applied in a longitudinal study. They will be explained in detail, and the findings of the study will be discussed.

Keywords

socialization, communication, social sciences, behavior, identity, self-understanding, acculturation

Introduction

The oil price shock of 1973 and the stock-market crash of 1973-1974 laid the foundation for political and socioeconomic transformations that instigated immigration. The expansion of the European community in 2004 opened for more cultural diversity. The number of immigrants has more than doubled in Norway within the last 10 years, ending in 2013.

The year 2008 had already been designated as a year for cultural diversity (Kulturdepartementet, 2011-2012). The Norwegian statistics bureau has much data on immigrants and their conditions of life. However, much remains unknown about their perceptions and attitudes, according to an article by Lars Østby and Kristin Henriksen (2013). Today, integration efforts continue, mostly directed toward the second generation of immigrants.

Several studies analyze how human interaction affects peoples' attitudes and behavior (Callahan, 2004; Otten & Geppert, 2009; Singh, 2009; Zhao, 2012). Organization authors like Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1984, 1993) furnish the business community with interpretative concepts such as power distance, masculinity, femininity, collectivism, and individualism. Others concentrate on understanding culture to prevent accidents at work (Sanders-Smith, 2007) or to initiate specific behavioral regulations (Tang & Russ, 2007). However, Durant and Shepherd (2009) suggest that studies in intercultural communication may still need to be reconceptualized.

The idea to exploit data gathered during many years of intervention became thus crystallized, giving birth to this article on how intercultural communication depends on socialization and self-understanding. Two meta-analytical models of culture underline the concept of acculturation, that is, the assimilation of the cultural traits of another society (Kmitte, 2011; Sam, 1994). They refer to three processes of socialization, two frameworks of analysis, and three theories of thinking. This will be discussed later.

Newer visitors still represent a continuous challenge in Norway (Sivertsen, 1995), and the important question remains: How to handle the different perceptions of reality when individuals move between societies?

Background

This section forms a setting for the objective, research question, and the structure of this article.

Objective: The first objective is to reflect on how identities and styles of acculturation, constructed during the

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process of socialization, affect communication. Reflection is based on the Backpack metaphor and the Ladder metaphor, two meta-analytical models that draw upon theories from philosophy and history.¹ The second objective of the article is to confirm the applicability of these models.

Comparative View: Cultural complexity is often visualized through models and metaphors that decipher patterns of interaction within a certain context (Erez & Gati, 2004). Models take the form of Venn diagram, Yin and Yang, or circles drawn into one another illustrating dimensions such as micro, meso, exo, and macro (Bronfenbrenner, Lerner, Hamilton, & Ceci, 2005). As to metaphors, Bradley Wiggins mentions the following: The Iceberg Metaphor, the Onion metaphor, the Genealogical Tree, the Rhizome, or the rootstock, and the Cage Metaphor. He says that the most common trait here “is the ability to convey visually the abstract notion that culture is a collection of experiences and ways to perceiving reality from the standpoint of the individual” (Wiggins, 2012, p. 554). The present article adds the Backpack metaphor to explain the process of socialization that starts at pre-natal period and the Ladder metaphor to highlight six premises for fruitful communication.

Research Question: To which extent does intercultural communication depends on self-understanding, accumulated during the process of socialization, and the feeling of safety during communication?

If people could communicate and enjoy the company of one another whenever they sense self-esteem and feel safe, then there must be circumstances at home or abroad where this does not apply. The plausible question here is, “Which circumstances inhibit intercultural communication?” This article attempts to answer these questions based on *purposive* data collection.

The Article Is Structured as Follows: The article starts with localizing and identifying the objective and the significance of the study in the “Introduction.” Then, it highlights some “Theoretical Considerations” to give a background of the models used. The third section details the “Two Meta-Analytical Models” termed the Backpack and the Ladder metaphor. The fourth explains the “Method” used for gathering data for testing the models. The “Discussion” section discusses findings that highlight the complexity of intercultural communication. The article concludes with the section “Conclusion and Implications.”

Theoretical Considerations

Most definitions of culture, whether destined for export market or for social integration, include elements of intercultural communication. The complexity of intercultural communication, in general (Gudykunst, 2005), and of empathy (Zhao,

2012), in particular, as well as the need for practically oriented models of culture demands a well-structured theoretical mix that is connected to the cognitive state of a single person, two persons or a group of persons. This section provides this theoretical background.

Researchers are occupied mapping the field of intercultural communication, based on qualitative social research (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), and tracing trends and developments within the field (Otten & Geppert, 2009). Many authors produce books (Berkenbusch, 2009; Gudykunst, 2005; Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005) and theories, and give practical facilitation (Garcia-Sanchez, Orellana, & Hopkins, 2011) regarding challenges that emerge on the international level (Hofstede, 1993; Markus, Majchrzak, & Gasser, 2002), on the organizational level (Deal & Kennedy, 1999; Schein, 1985, 2000), and on the individual level (Vygotskij & Cole, 1978), both within an open and a closed system.

A social system is open when parts of the cultural heritage are widely available to all, such as experiences of nature or human behavior in public. It is closed when national symbols, the feeling of solidarity, independence, or the sense of justice stand as part of a particular thinking pattern predominantly available to those born and raised within it. It is within such closed systems that one identifies aspects dealing with innate cultural particularities.

We are more the product of our systems of socialization rather than our thinking. Human beings are socialized in a behavior-regulating culture (Adams, 2006). Thinkers such as George Kelly (1991), Niklas Luhmann (2013), Wilfred Bion (1961), Ibn Khaldūn (1967), Pierre Bourdieu (1986), and Jürgen Habermas (1995) explore the limits and possibilities of human comprehension. They confront already socialized patterns of behavior that regulate cognitive and sociopsychosocial interaction between individuals. This article draws upon all these authors, with focus on the theories of Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406), Kelly, Luhmann, and Bion.

The *Opus Magnus* of Ibn Khaldūn, the *Muqaddimah*, is permeated with concepts such as “*aḥwāl*,” political and socioeconomic conditions, that in time generate “*‘awā’id*,” habits and customs, or “*habitus*.”² In Chapter 2, Section 5 of the *Muqaddimah*, he says, “Man is a child of the customs and the things he has become used to. He is not the product of his natural disposition and temperament” (A. Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 258, Vol. 1). He further says that we think in *pictures* and are dominated by our habits, or the *how* of things, rather than our cognition, or the *why* of things. In Chapter VI of the *Muqaddimah*, he explains the previously mentioned three stages of thinking: the discerning, the experimental, and the theoretical intellect. The first and second are common to all living beings. They are mostly descriptive and concern the *how* of things. The third stage is reserved for human beings who have the ability to question and answer the *why* of things.

George Kelly (1991) uses the term *Personal Constructs* in his therapeutic interventions to address individual stereotypes and prejudices (cf. secondary socialization). Personal

Constructs are cognitive structures that steer the individual's thinking and behavior. More experience, richer cognitive structures, and mental patterns help one predict and understand the reactions of others and, in this way, fulfill self-esteem and safety. Kelly uses his Fixed Role Therapy to adjust deviative mental constructions based on the person's own description. A person, who, for instance, feels uncomfortable or unable to confront people from a particular ethnic group, because he or she is afraid of being accused of racial discrimination, must be able to sketch, or illustrate, his or her fears to the therapist so that the intervention may succeed. The therapist then builds a new role-figure based on this illustration that is similar to the client's own construction. During training, the client and the therapist use this role-figure in an attempt to conform to reality. The whole experiment consists of motivating the client to build up alternative mental constructions.

Niklas Luhmann (2013) uses the term *Double Contingency* to describe the cognitive power two persons use in communicating with each other. Double Contingency means that we understand things differently due to our background, experiences, and cognitive endeavor. Double Contingency is primarily about *expectations*. The less we know about each other's expectations, the greater the problem of Double Contingency, and the less likely we are to understand each other. Power, as manifested in communication, is bound to Double Contingency. Individuals can use their cognitive and cultural abilities to reduce Double Contingency or to harmonize expectations. It is, thus, possible for two persons with different assumptions to reach a common platform of understanding and interact well together, but interaction is not necessary when not desired or when self-esteem and safety are not valued by the interlocutors.

Wilfred Bion (1961) discusses, in his book *Experiences in Groups*, behavior occurring within three group-formations: *Pairing* group, *Dependency* group, and *Fight-Flight* group. *Pairing* occurs when intimate relationships develop between two members or two groups. *Dependency* occurs when responding to difficulties by fleeing to something else or someone outside, as for instance, laws and regulations, a set of rules, others' opinions, authority or similar things. *Fight-Flight* mechanisms secure self-preservation. Fight has aggression as underlying feeling. This creates the battle for ideas, opinions, or leadership. Flight is to run away from difficulties, physically or mentally, by looking out the window, divert conversation, and so on. Bion's (1961) group dynamics would, technically speaking, suit the investigation of conditions that hinder or enhance group communication, also at work. Self-esteem and safety is here dependent on reducing dominance from a certain group-type. It is not the existence, but the dominance of Pairing group, Dependency group, and Fight-Flight group that disturb communication.

Bion's theories, contrary to those of Ibn Khaldūn, Kelly, and Luhmann, were originally applied in the treatment of psychiatric casualties (post-traumatic stress or shell shock)

resulting from First World War. However, Bion's work, *Experiences in Groups*, is still an important guide for group dynamics in a wide variety of fields.

Ibn Khaldūn's previously mentioned stages of thinking could shed light on Kelly's Personal Constructs, even though Kelly's constructs seem more tied to the cognitive history of the person. In certain cases, it avails to revive and question this cognitive history anew. Luhmann's Double Contingency refers to cognitive states of mind during communicative efforts between two persons, based either on earlier internalized patterns of socialization, as also the case with Kelly, or on both socialization and cognitive reflections. Bion's (1961) group expressions could also be investigated through recourse to techniques such as Personal Constructs and Double Contingency, or to Ibn Khaldūn's three stages of thinking.

The theories of Ibn Khaldūn, Kelly, Luhmann, and Bion constitute a background for the models discussed in this article, for research question and the underlying interventions. These theories compose a mix that is relevant in intercultural communication, relating it to the cognitive state of a *single* person, *two* persons, or a *group* of persons.

Two Meta-Analytical Models

The following two sections explain the two metaphors used to discuss intercultural communication and to validate utterances collected at the end of every intervention the author was invited to.

Sociopsychological attitudes are behavioral dispositions deep-rooted in the process of socialization (J. Grant & Luxford, 2011). The cumulative stages of primary, secondary, and tertiary socialization, as well as identities and styles of acculturation resulting from them, activate sociopsychological attitudes, according to the two meta-analytical models.

The Backpack Metaphor: Identities and Styles of Acculturation

This section discusses the Backpack metaphor with stages of socialization within the context of the family and near surroundings, that is, the school and peer-groups but also within the context of work, where organizational culture dominates.

Aristotle and John Locke (Dolson, 2005; R. W. Grant, 2012) contend that sense impression and human memory develop after birth. Evolutionists, however, believe that our genes influence us. No one is born as "tabula rasa." Innate predispositions, sensorimotor abilities, and similar hereditary matters constitute a common background for socialization.

Figure 1 reads bottom up, from inborn predispositions at birth, to support in childhood (Barber, Stolz, Olsen, Collins, & Burchinal, 2005) and forward through three phases of socialization lasting the whole life long: Primary

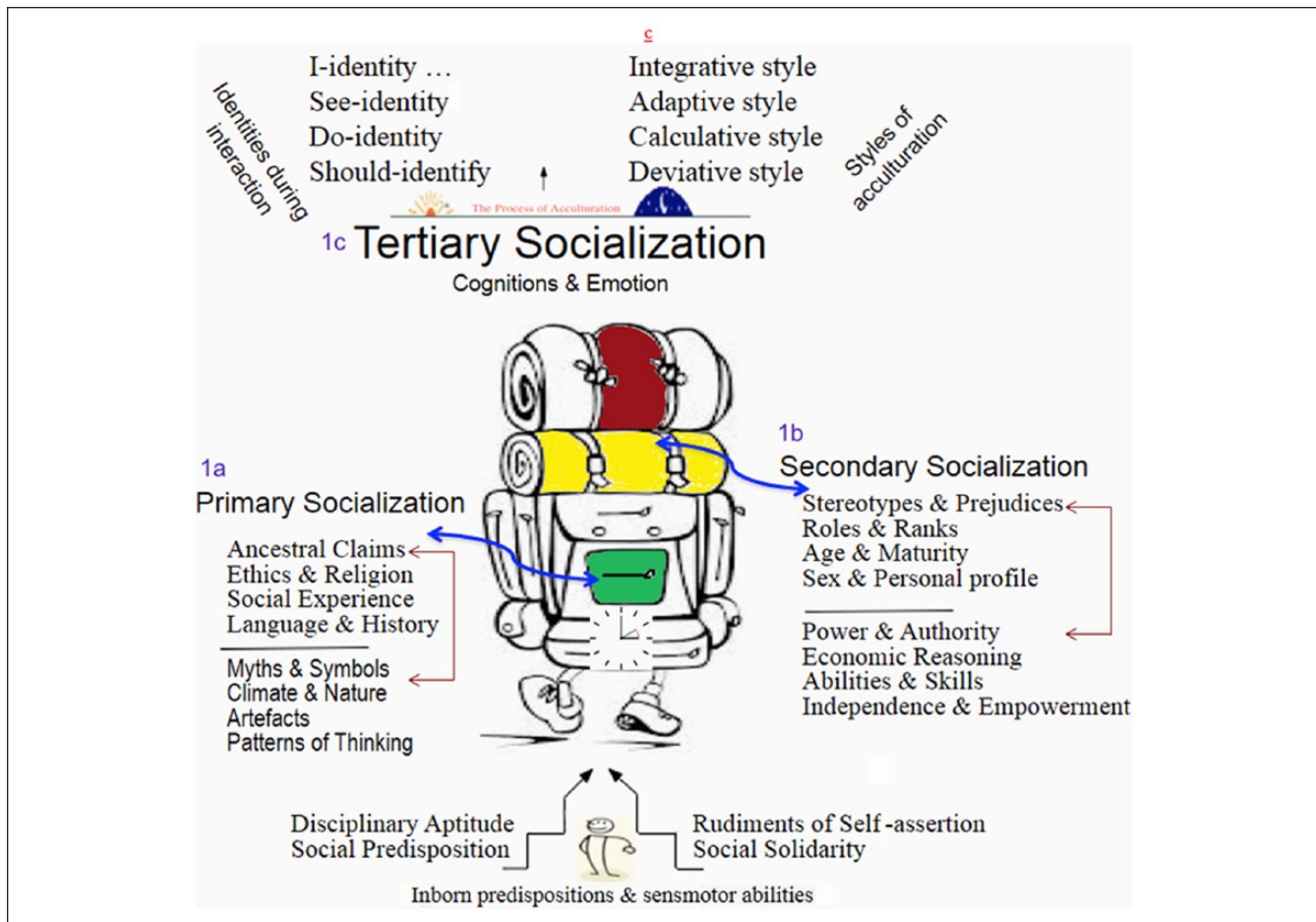


Figure 1. Backpack metaphor and the entire model of socialization: 1a primary socialization and related concepts, 1b secondary socialization and related concepts, 1c tertiary socialization and related concepts.

socialization—childhood (0-14 years); secondary socialization—adolescence, early working experience (14-18); and tertiary socialization (18-30) or adulthood. The inborn sensorimotor abilities are, thus, steered and enriched during socialization. Figure 1 simulates a *journey* of cultural discovery.

During *primary socialization*, the child learns to go on foot, explores things, discovers family relations, acquires religion and social experiences, exercises mother tongue, distinguishing its sounds from unauthorized ones, and learns about history. Simultaneously while developing, she discovers myths and symbols, internalizes climatic impressions; gains basic knowledge about mountains and valleys, listens to voices and sounds from her surroundings, discovers the utility of things and artifacts, puts questions to acquire the correct words and answers and to interpret patterns of thinking (cf. Figure 1a).

During *secondary socialization*, the child develops further his or her ability to think, while receiving cultural heritage from family and closer surroundings. In addition to discerning and experimentation, she grows up to experience

friendship and the rudiments of working life, as experienced by her parents. She processes emotions, speculates about phenomena, and receives explanations, while striving to answer the why of things and forms her theories (cf. Figure 1b).

During *tertiary socialization*, we develop an innate urge to compare ourselves with others. Sounds, movements, experiences, and thoughts make us discover our culture and become curious about other cultures. As grownups, some travel to remote areas, often with a backpack and a dictionary or an iPad at hand, perhaps also to ask what others have in their backpacks and why. We choose among *integrative, adaptive, calculative, or deviative* styles of acculturation in combination with one or more of the following identities, that is, *the I-identity, see-identity, do-identity, or should-identity* (cf. Figure 1c).

The theoretical intellect exceeds the sensorimotor world and the world of experiences. From childhood, each one collects and stores experiences and impressions in her backpack, thus making it extremely personal and private. No one should search another person's backpack. People fix and

clean up their backpacks alone, renew or replace something with something else. It is of great value for the individual, as a basis for regulating behavior through experience and renewal of contents.

Even though the three phases in Figure 1 are summarized above, Figure 1a to 1c differentiate between their interpretive concepts. The Backpack metaphor details concepts that cover the three phases of socialization. Each phase involves two groups of concepts. Each group involves four variables arranged in accordance with the order in the PEAK-framework, explained below.

Primary socialization secures the individual his or her first collection of experiences and ways to perceiving reality. Two groups, of four concepts each, compose Figure 1a on Primary socialization. The first group includes *ancestral claims* (Power), *ethics and religion* (Earning), *social experiences* (Artistry), as well as *language and history* (Knowledge). The second group includes *myths and symbols* (Power), *climate and nature* (Earnings), *artifacts* (Artistry), as well as *patterns of thinking* (Knowledge).

The letters of the PEAK-framework appear in parentheses to mirror the connotations of each concept. The concept of *ancestral claims*, in the first group, is considered as a factor of *Power*. The second, the third, and the fourth concepts are, respectively, factors of *Earnings*, *Artistry*, and *Knowledge*. Scanning the eight concepts of primary socialization provided in Figure 1a could invoke ideas received during childhood that shed light on one's own socialization. Revived memories could highlight the present behavior.

Attributing the concept of *power* to ancestral claims expresses feelings of social solidarity received under upbringing. The following question can visualize such feelings: *The care I give to my relatives does not imply any economic obligation from my part, as in your case. How far are you willing to go to meet such obligations and why?* Reflections of this kind could explain the power of obligation felt by some toward family members.

Models discussed in this article *do not cover* the specificities of the Norwegian culture per se. However, one of the most important cultural particularities, emerging from Figure 1a, is independence. Norwegian children are from birth onward brought up to be independent. This is a highly established cultural attitude. A small visit to a Norwegian kindergarten will show how 2-year-old children *fight* to put on their winter clothes alone, an important socialization for facing climatic challenges in Norway. Independence can, therefore, be considered as a factor of power and empowerment. Considered, for instance, from within the context of work, it is a symbol of autonomy, action, activity, and knowledge. When a person is accepted to work somewhere, this implies that he or she has the ability to decide, plan, and follow up alone. Normally, the responsible does not intervene unless asked.

The concepts under *secondary socialization* invoke also memories occurring outside home, in the near surrounding,

or at work. The first group shown in Figure 1b includes *stereotypes and prejudices* (Power), *roles and ranks* (Earnings), *age and maturity* (Artistry), as well as *sex and personal profile* (Knowledge). The second group includes *power and authority* (P), *economic reasoning* (E), *abilities and skills* (A), as well as *independence and empowerment* (K).

One could, for instance, examine one's stereotypes and prejudices (P), and question how and why they stand as factors of *Power*. There is no adolescence age or society without prejudices, even though prejudices are subject to change. Childhood and adolescence are vulnerable periods. Stereotypes and prejudices arising here function as instruments of self-defense that often weaken with age and learning. The first work experience, as regarding power and authority (P), felt at work compared with that felt at home or in other places is an important feature of secondary socialization.

Another important Norwegian cultural particularity, emerging from Figure 1b, is *independence and empowerment*. Empowerment is tightly connected to work. Norwegians value empowered at work. This has probably to do with the previously mentioned attitude of independence, deeply rooted in childhood.

An important part of secondary socialization is working life. Imagine yourself recruiting employees during your first working experience. You point out two conditions for choosing the right persons. He or she must be culturally integrated and productive, two important qualities that alleviate or distort interaction with others at work. You advertise in the local press looking for candidates satisfying the two criteria.

Categorization of applicants, using a two-by-two table,³ gives four combinations. Two combinations demand a simple decision making. These are Group A, for persons who are both culturally integrated and productive (IP), and Group B, for persons who are *neither* culturally integrated *nor* productive (nInP).

The two other combinations concern Group C, for persons who are culturally integrated, but not productive (InP), and Group D, for those who are productive, but not culturally integrated (PnI). Here, there is a preferential choice. Should you choose from Group C or from Group D?

Considering economy and responsibilities allocated at work, choosing *productive*, from Group D, is probably sounder, because the probability of being *independent* is high. One could later deal with the integration of this productive person, for instance, through organizational culture. It is obvious that integration, in this case, will depend on the person's socialization, identities, and styles of acculturation (cf. Figure 1c), as well as how she handles the six conditions for fruitful communication, visualized in Figure 2. Organizational culture stands here as a powerful instrument of behavior regulation, with reference to Kelly's (1991) Personal Constructs or to Luhmann's schemes of Double Contingency.

However, communication is compulsory at work. Tasks should be undertaken regardless of the quality of exchange of meaning with one's colleagues, or of how communicatively

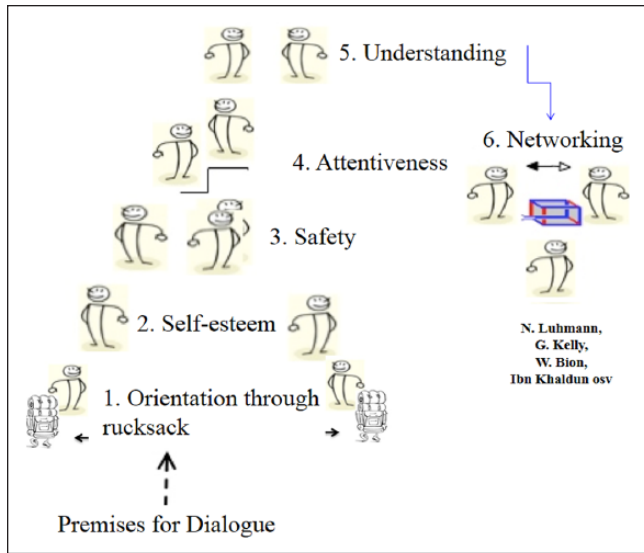


Figure 2. The ladder metaphor with six premises for communication.

capable a person is, as far as the job is done. When communication is absolutely necessary, but difficult, the intervention of a third party using, for instance, performance in groups of Bion (1961) could help surmount difficulties. The concept of *cultural-mix*, that is, the mix of identities and styles of acculturation, finds its application here, as the person is part of a working group, as will be explained later.

There are four entries in Figure 1a and 1b that need highlighting, being not explicitly apparent in the construction of the model. These concern the emergence of extremism and racism. Extremism emerges when *ancestral claims* (P), combined with *myths and symbols* (P), are consciously exaggerated and transmitted to the child during primary socialization. Racism emerges when *power and authority* (P), combined with *stereotypes and prejudices* (P), are consciously exploited at work. There is probably no outlet for prejudices without professional power.

The *backpack*, in Figure 1, symbolizes continuous storage of cultural apprenticeship and experiences during three phases of socialization. Two processes are visualized on each side of the backpack and the third on the top. Legs and backpack—movements and cultural abilities—allow the discovery and enrichment of culture, whenever we use our head.

This moves us to the process of *tertiary socialization*, in Figure 1c, that represents the core of intercultural communication. It is formed during primary and secondary socialization. It has four identities and four styles of acculturation. The identities are the *I-identity*, the *see-identity*, the *do-identity*, and the *should-identity*.

The *I-identity*, the self, is the inborn power of the individual, in the sense I am Angelica or I am Ali, born with the right to exist and enjoy respect, regardless of ability or cultural background. Human abilities, inherited at birth, develop

further through respect and self-esteem. No successful communication without respect for the *I-identity*. It is positively experienced when one does not exceed the individual limits of another person.

The *see-identity*, based on the English phrase “I see you,” in the sense “you are in my field of vision,” but also “I see!” in the sense “I get it” or “I understand,” with reference to Ibn Khaldūn’s three stages of thinking: *differentiation*, *experimentation*, and *theory building*.

The eyes symbolize paying attention when facing a challenge or new experiences. When afraid, we first use our eyes to see and to *warn* us of danger. Then, we use our *head* to deal with discomfort and fear. We obey the signals invoked by our instinctive feelings when undertaking actions and choices that lead to the *do-identity*, often mingled with the *should-identity*—action and morality.

The *do-identity* refers to how we do things, how we activate ourselves, in agreement or not with moral behavior. In the previously mentioned Group C—persons who are integrated but not productive—it may be helpful to ameliorate the person’s *see-identity* to underline how thinking intervenes with productivity. When we discern among things, experiment with things, and formulate theories about them, we can discover the blind spots that reduce productivity.

The *should-identity* refers to how we *dress* what we do with norms and values. Morality emerges instantaneously. At the individual level, this does not necessarily conform to transfers from earlier periods of socialization. There is a moral obligation that people should cooperate and integrate socially at work. In the previously mentioned Group D—persons who are productive but not integrated—the non-integration could reside in the person’s *see-identity*. Normally, integration happens when people voluntarily get used to one another, understand and value one another. Giving ideas to each other does not automatically mean understanding them. Ideas often need interpretation or conversion into practice (cf. also Table 1). However, this may demand intervention to reduce insecurity.

The previously mentioned four identities could be summarized in the following sentence: I am myself. I see what I see, do what I do, and might do things differently if I want to, but I am still conditioned by the environment where I live and function. Connecting the I-identify in Figure 1c, for instance, to the integrative style of acculturation, does not automatically mean that a person is integrated. There is no absolute integrative style but shades of integration, in combination with adaptive, calculative, and/or deviative attitudes, depending on conditions within a specific sociocultural context.

Each person uses his or her identities, and observes and gathers experiences in his or her *backpack*. In this way, individuals regulate and expand the culture into which they are socialized, depending on how ready a person is to question certain standards acquired in childhood. What makes our identities unique and person-dependent is the psychosocial reactions manifested each time an individual acts as “I am,” “I see,” “I do,” and “I should do.” Identities and styles of

Table 1. Networking and Mentoring.

Exchange of meaning	Participation	
	Low	High
High	(c) High exchange of meaning Low participation	(d) High exchange of meaning High participation
Low	(a) Low exchange of meaning Low participation	(b) Low exchange of meaning High participation

acculturation trigger the iceberg that is under water and causes psychological reactions.

Similarly to the four identities, four styles of acculturation stimulate instinctive reactions. A style is a particular procedure, leading to something that evokes emotions, often judged differently from situation to situation. The styles of acculturation, in Figure 1c, are *integrative*, *adaptive*, *calculative*, and *deviative*. What do these four styles describe?

The *integrative style* denotes *mastering* a cultural situation. We become an integral part of a situation when we voluntarily understand things, regulate behavior, and are at ease with the feelings that are triggered. Integrative style results from a *sound I-identity* that can be expressed as follows: *I can relax in this culture, both when concerning knowledge and action. I get a lot done and gain a lot.* Similar to I-Identify, the integrative style is an expression of power and ability.

The *calculative style* tells us that we master the situation, but we calculate and evaluate the pros and cons in the situation, often emotionally, before we take a final decision. We participate with the intention of realizing surplus, an opportunistic behavior. One expresses calculative style as follows: *I proceed with great ease in this culture, both when concerning knowledge and action. I get a lot done and have the ability of achieve more. I am able to anticipate this culture and manage to gain personal benefits.*

The *adaptive style* is to choose what suits at a certain moment and reject what does not fit. We do not calculate, but make a choice on an emotional basis or out of habit. One could express adaptive style as follows: *I adapt relatively well in this culture, both when concerning knowledge and action. I get something done and get something in return for it. I have become accustomed to this culture and have partially adapted myself to it.*

The *deviative style* occurs when a person is completely dissatisfied within a cultural context. The person rejects everything, including feedback from others. One could express *deviative style* as follows: *I do not cope in this culture, both when concerning knowledge and behavior. I realize small things, and do not have the means to gain anything.* Deviations from a collective understanding of a culture are due to the quality of the communicative pictures constructed by individuals and the effort invested in interpreting them.

We rarely choose *only* one style of acculturation when interacting. Usually, we use a combination of styles according

to the situation and to how complex the implied feelings are, how deep in memory they stick or where in the *Backpack* they are stored. Chris Argyris (1982) postulates that we are often unconscious of our use-theories (theory-in-use) and do not notice when our use-theories differ from our expressed theories (espoused theory). There is no absolute style of acculturation. All styles differ as to their respective accuracy. We believe that we act in a certain manner, but others notice something else and ascribe a style to us. A person could be attributed an integrative style by some and a calculative by others.

Lack of reciprocally fruitful exchange of meaning during interaction could compel a person to adhere, there and then, to abnormal styles of acculturation, often in contradiction with one's main identity. If harmonizing intercultural expectations is a function of contingency, in the sense of *it all depends*, then Luhmann's Double Contingency between interlocutors will increase due to how one's choice of style influences others. An increased use of calculative or deviative styles of acculturation may inhibit enjoying the company of one another. The same happens when we reinforce stereotypes or avoid others, as in Kelly's personal constructs.

Discussing "the experimental intellect and how it comes into being," in Chapter VI, Section 3 (A. Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 417, Vol. 2), Ibn Khaldūn says that to enjoy the company of one another and to satisfy needs, people must cooperate. This cooperation requires, first, exchange of meaning, and then, participation and the things that follow thereafter, that is, familiarity and recognition. Exchange of meaning and participation are the sine qua non of intercultural communication.

The entire model of socialization, summarized in Figure 1, creates in time and space a combination of individual identities and styles of acculturation that have repercussions on others. How we see things, do things, or deduce morals from things allows us to adapt to others and integrate with them, calculate the pros and cons during interaction, or deviate from it completely (cf. identities in Figure 1c). Whatever attitude, the individual should not distort others' fundamental right for self-esteem and safety.

To question anew internalized habits and ideas could normally pave the way for intercultural communication. We have an awareness of self in different sociocultural contexts when living in our society. Moving to another country may engender a change of *habitus* and reflexivity, due to the change of contexts, and political and socioeconomic

conditions. The way a person recognizes himself or herself depends on the context where she lives and the ability to do something within that context. Reflexivity, or the recognition of self (Adams, 2006), also as a methodological tool (Pillow, 2003), is tightly connected to the dialectics of time and space. Reflexivity is contextual.

Transformation of behavior takes place gradually, while living and interacting within a society. To regulate behavior depends on self-esteem and safety as well as the feedback we get from others, which also implies that others are safe in contact with us, and that we ourselves are confident and willing to accept feedback. Even though *tertiary socialization* is previously described as the core of intercultural communication, there are still some *ascending* premises to remember when interacting with others.

The Ladder Metaphor: Premises for Fruitful Communication

This section discusses the Ladder metaphor. Six premises describe the process of fruitful dialog between two persons. The third intervenes to handle cultural dissonance.

Figure 2 visualizes the streaming of communication in six steps from bottom up. Two individuals stand face to face, each with his or her backpack, and climb a podium with six stages. They climb simultaneously, stage by stage, and may end by understanding each other. This occurs in a glimpse. Communication engages all our identities and styles of acculturation.

Orientation is the first step. We have a strong drive to orient us, each through the contents of his or her backpack, that is, his or her ideas, stereotypes, perceptions, and values. However, the contents of the backpack may not always fit. The alternative is to regulate behavior, learn the culture of the interlocutor, rearrange and enrich the contents of one's backpack.

Self-esteem is the second step. One must always feel that one's *I-identity* is respected. When self-esteem is high and positive, identities become positively enacted and the contents of the backpack enriched. This is how culture becomes a regulator of behavior on each one's premises. The impact of our actions on others is mediated through feedback. Lack of self-esteem and safety make us trapped and afraid to communicate, let alone regulate behavior.

Safety is the third step. We must feel safe and secure in the situation and in the presence of each other. People do not communicate if they are insecure. We often avoid talking to people who show signs of aggression or who are not interested in our opinion. In situations with a lack of safety, it may be healthier to stay silent or refrain from communication.

Attentiveness or awareness is the fourth step. This is to *adjust* the level of communication, pay attention, and use one's *see-identity* to see, understand, perceive, and listen

to each other. "I see!" refers also to stages of thinking, as previously mentioned. People adapt to each other to facilitate understanding. To adjust is not to be on a lower or a higher position, but to be aware and attentive to the streaming of ideas.

Understanding is the fifth step. To achieve understanding is cognitively and socially beneficial. Individuals make an effort to understand one another, especially when cultural differences are obvious. Failure of understanding may result in stress and anxiety. We often avoid people we previously misunderstood, had difficulties to understand, or with whom we have had difficult thinking experiences. According to Luhmann (2013), reduction of Double Contingency enriches communication. To understand another person is not a granted matter, and sometimes it even demands help from a third party.

Networking is the sixth step. Home and workplace influence communication. At work, we have two levels of communication, formal and informal, where misunderstanding could arise. Instinctive feelings, our barometers for measuring emotional experiences, are often hidden. Somebody should intervene to clean up the cognitive discomfort. Networking in groups of three, two interlocutors and one observer, is useful when things do not function as anticipated. At work, intercultural communication has, in addition, its economic weight.

Differentiation, experimentation, and theory building are powerful devices when questioning self-understanding of one's own socialization. Do you see similarities and differences? Do you have earlier experiences, or would you like to experiment with newer? How do you cognitively conceive this issue and why? Questions that reveal the *blind*, *hidden*, or *unknown* behavior, or expand the *open* area, as illustrated in Johari-Window (Luft, 1969), may lead interlocutors to enjoy the company of one another.

In a triangular network, a mentor could intervene between two parties to facilitate understanding, after they have tried as a pair without success. Within the sphere of the cultural-mix, that is, the mix of individual identities and style of acculturations, efforts of facilitation should establish a sense of confidence acceptable to implied parties. Here, Bion's (1961) group dynamics, Johari window (Halpern, 2009), and similar instruments of training (Jain, 2013) could ameliorate the cultural-mix of individuals.

The six ascending steps, discussed in Figure 2, consist of *orientation*, *self-esteem*, *safety*, *attentiveness or awareness*, *as well as understanding and networking*. The two-by-two table in Table 1 combines exchange of meaning and participation to expand networking.

As shown in Table 1,⁴ high participation, in the sense of learning-by-doing, paves the way for high exchange of meaning (H + H). Under normal conditions, this may lead to habituation, collegiality, and coexistence. This denotes maturity in intercultural communication.

However, there are situations where there is neither exchange of meaning nor participation (L + L). In such cases, dispute and altercation may dominate, and the probable result is conflict. Low exchange of meaning and low participation, together with a deviative style of acculturation, necessitates a well-structured therapeutic intervention.

The combination “high exchange of meaning and low participation” (H + L), that is, much talking and less participation is a type of one-way communication, permeated with antipathy and resistance. Intervention using conversational analysis (Berkenbusch, 2009) may avail in such situations.

Learning-by-doing (Argyris, 1982) is more probable with “low exchange of meaning and high participation” (L + H). This offers the possibility of learning-by-doing due to direct participation and in spite of weak exchange of meaning.

The ideal situation, that is, with both exchange of meaning and participation, demands cultural adjustment, respect for the premises of communication (cf. Figure 2 and Table 1), and probably also intervention from facilitators or mentors (cf. tertiary socialization in Figure 1c).

As regulation of behavior is time-consuming, a facilitator must choose his or her methods, the order of intervention, and what to start with. From between the categories in the table above, one could start progressively from Square 1 throughout Square 4, intervening first where it is necessary to regulate the behavior: (a) Low + Low, (b) Low + High, (c) High + Low, and (d) High + High. When intervening in the first square (Low + Low), one should treat, for instance, low participation first, and then move higher, half a step at a time, throughout the rest of the squares in the table and according to the need.

Niklas Luhmann (2013) says that society is communication. Using the khaldūnian dichotomy⁵ of the thing in-itself and the thing in its-context, one could agree with Luhmann that society in-itself is communication, while society in its-context and as a result of action implies factors such as politics, economics, industry, and science. When such factors blend into a context, they condition communication by making it a dependent variable. The process of socialization is individual in nature, though collective in repercussions.

The two sections above explain two meta-analytical models used when lecturing on intercultural communication, and when interpreting data collected at the end of each intervention.

Method

This section discusses the choice of methodology, intervention techniques, as well as data collection. The choice of methodology is conditioned by the author’s classical studies. Different paradigms will be used in discourse analysis of data. The methodological approach is social constructionist (Berger & Luckmann, 1976). Knowledge is contextual when considering the exercise of *power* and linguistic challenges between professionals and immigrants.

Four hundred anonymous utterances on Norwegians encounters with immigrants and their children are collected between 1990 and 2000 during interventions the author was invited to. They were collected at random using Nominal Group Techniques (NGTs; Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975).

The main question was as follows: Think of a problem, misunderstanding, or conflict that arose between you and a foreigner, and use some minutes to report your reflections, shortly and precisely, in the form of a question. Do not mention your name!

Cards of size A8 were distributed at the start of each intervention together with explanations. Reporting time was set to 5 min. After 5 min, the Backpack and the Ladder metaphor were introduced and exemplified, using action research (Eikeland, 2006), and without allusion to expertise from the part of the author.

Each intervention lasted approximately 4 hr to activate self-understanding through questioning the origins of one’s identities and styles of acculturation. The discussion was in line with khaldūnian interpretive devices and theory of thinking: *differentiation, experimentation, and theory building*, to be explained later. Conformity with reality was left to the perception of each participant.

By the end of the intervention, participants were asked to select few cards, among the ones collected at the beginning. This “purposive” sample opened for collective discussions and feedback to secure verification of inner meaning as well as reliability and validity of utterances. The anonymous utterances were later structured in a list of 447 items, using hypothetical variables. Typologies and techniques of triangulation permitted combinatory data effects, and the final product was a questionnaire⁶ to cross-verify already structured and discussed utterances. It was delivered to 42 participants in two social welfare offices in Oslo between November 27, 2003, and January 27, 2004. Respondents were aged between 29 and 40 years, all women, armed with higher education and professional secrecy to work with childcare and social welfare.

To *evaluate* the utterances in this questionnaire, respondents were asked to use scores from 1 to 3, where 3 was the highest. Eighty-nine percent of the 447 *utterances* received the highest score. This correlated well with methodological discussions during seminars, as well as with earlier publications by Al-Araki (M. Al-Araki, 1997, 2007). The findings from these 42 participants are aggregated in four categories and explained in Table 2.

Discussion

This section discusses the utterances collected using the previously mentioned question. Utterances were partially validated on the spot during interventions. They are summarized and structured in Table 2, using the PEAK-framework of analysis. The aggregated letters in PEAK refer to environmental

Table 2. Summary of Utterances Collected Between 1990 and 2000 Using the PEAK-Framework of Analysis. *N* = 42.

PEAK-variables	Category			
	Roles and styles (41%)	Reality perception (26%)	Gender and power (18%)	Family and childcare (15%)
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skepticism toward immigrants Feeling of insecurity [SEGD] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of respect for agreements and for woman authority Lack of knowledge of one's rights and obligations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigid paternal power structure Gender-dominated roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Differences in concepts of honor Forced marriage Exclusion of family members
Earnings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties to understand emotions, thoughts, and opinions Lack of contact and mutual learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulties of integration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-participative attitude Conflict creation in local community Communication only with male employees at work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unclear definition of childhood Negligence of freedom, empowerment, schooling, and recreation for children
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resistance to learning Norwegian Lack of efficiency and selective relationships at work Ownership mentality Negligence of rules and norms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of cultural balance between adaptation and preservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dominance of mother-do-all formula 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taboo perceptions Skepticism toward mentally handicapped
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixture of religious and worldly laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Different ways of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitudes of protectionism and isolation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resistance to integration in Norwegian school

Note. SEGD = Strength, Extent, *Genus Proximum*, and *Differentia Specifica*.

attributes. The letters stand for Power, Earnings, Artistry, and Knowledge. Those in SEGD-instrument of evaluation stand for Strength, Extent, *Genus Proximum*, and *Differentia Specifica*.⁷

The previously mentioned khaldūnian *dichotomy* considers a factor related to its environmental attributes, when seen through its context. However, seen separated from other things, it is considered through its essence. Regarding this essence, Ibn Khaldūn (1967) says in Chapter 3, Section 16 of the *Muqaddimah*, “When we study the origin of a thing, its genus, specific differences, size, and strength, we can draw conclusions as to the possibility or impossibility of the data in connection with it” (p. 371, Vol. 1). This generates the SEGD-instrument of evaluation.⁸

Of the four categories shown in Table 2, only *skepticism and insecurity* (P in PEAK), hereafter called *negative reactions*, are discussed here. Using SEGD to evaluate these negative reactions, as enacted in the Norwegian context, should reveal some related environmental attributes.

The *strength* (S in SEGD) of the *negative reactions* of social workers is probably due to the expansion, also in the media, of an unfavorable image of immigrants. The *extent* (E in SEGD) of their *negative reactions* is such that it limits the understanding of emotions, thoughts, and opinions of immigrants. The early experiences of immigrants are probably alien to the system of socialization in Norway. Empowerment here appears first after having gained newer experiences in

the receiving society. The *type* or *Genus Proximum* (G in SEGD) of their *negative reactions* may have relation to their professional perceptions of public rules and norms when not internalized by immigrants. The socialization of a person is probably detrimental when traveling abroad and confronting a concept of authority to a different extent than anticipated. This could, consciously or not, lead to the social isolation of the individual. The *specificity*, or *Differentia Specifica* (D in SEGD) of their *negative reactions*, arises when discovering that immigrants mix religious and worldly matters, an attitude that is alien to the Norwegian society. When abroad, immigrants may exclude differential issues that probably also exist within their own system of jurisprudence back home. Losing the *Differentia Specifica* between two systems inhibits comparison.

Resistance to learning Norwegian and to integration in Norwegian schools as well as a lack of efficiency and adherence to selective pattern of relationship at work (Columns 1 and 4 in Table 2) are similar types of behavior that may cognitively *not be available* for newcomers. People tend to forget plausible cultural universalities when submerged in different experiences and attitudes from different cultures, as the case may be within social work and similar professions. One informant expresses this saying: “May be we understand refugees to death!”

Table 2 is structured horizontally according to the PEAK-framework of analysis. A vertical reading of the table reveals

difficulties felt by social workers themselves, as in Column 1. The three other columns describe unfavorable attitudes from the part of immigrants, as attributed to them by social workers.

The above interpretation uses PEAK together with SEGD. Supplementary arguments could also be extracted from the meta-analytical model shown in Figure 1 that envisions the concept of *power* (P in PEAK) through *Ancestral Claims, Myths and Symbols, Stereotypes and Prejudices*. These concepts disclose traditions, norms, values, and attitudes within a given system of socialization. The same model connects the concept of *artistry or behavior* (A in PEAK) to four identities and styles of acculturation that condition the behavior of the individual (cf. Figure 1c). Models were used under and after interventions to validate collected utterances.

The question of circumstances that could inhibit intercultural communication was raised at the beginning of this article (cf. Research Question). Does inhibition reside in the socialization of individuals per se, or in how individuals activate their identities and styles of acculturation when needed, or in failure to interpret earlier misunderstandings between interlocutors?

The above discussion maintains that the socialization of the individual, a factor of *power* (P in PEAK), is one of the inhibiting elements, as attested by utterances on discriminatory roles between sexes, taboo issues, and the like. Inhibition could also reside in the conscious activation of one's identities and styles of acculturation, a factor of *earning* (E in PEAK) or *artistry* (A in PEAK). This is the case of differences in reality perceptions where officials are more tied to laws, conventions, and general interests than immigrants. Inhibition could also reside in failure to interpret misunderstandings, a factor of *knowledge* (K in PEAK), attested through difficulties to understand emotions, thoughts, and opinions of immigrants. A progressive strategy of intervention initiated bottom up could probably avail here.

Conclusion and Implications

The research question that initiated this article dictated the choice of methodology, intervention techniques, structure, and the discussion of purposively validated data. Theoretically conceived action-oriented metaphors, the Backpack metaphor and the Ladder metaphor, were applied as interpretative devices. Specific typologies permitted the structure of collected data into four categories.

The categories shown in Table 2 indicate hindrances to intercultural communication between government officials and immigrants. Negative reactions distort fundamental right for self-esteem and safety, the two most fundamental premises for enjoying the company of one another. Even though immigrants were not specifically interviewed, the findings are still consistent with earlier observations and with reports in the media and society.

Newer data from Østby and Henriksen (2013) suggest ameliorations regarding immigrants and their integration.

A report from 2007 underlines that language is still important, especially in medical consultations that demand specialized interpreters (Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoratet [IMDi], 2007). Language is also important to access work and to follow up with the education of one's children. Statistics reveal a significant increase of those sitting for Norwegian exams during 2006-2011. Resistance to language seems out of fashion. Language, as a factor of power, has a predominant place in Norwegian culture. In addition to hundreds of dialects, Norway has two main official languages, Bokmål and Nynorsk, related to Danish and Swedish.

All persons are potentially capable of integrating in any society through conscious use of their *backpacks* and *revision* of their internalized habits and mental dispositions. However, this depends on self-understanding but also on self-esteem and safety. Self-esteem, or confidence in one's own worth and abilities, is inseparable from self-assertion, or confirmation of oneself and one's views.

Norwegians seem to value interaction through exchange of meaning and participation, but within the context of the Norwegian society, rather than through reference to one's own culture or system of socialization back home. However, they underline that cultural dissonance ("The Need for Intercultural Competency," 2012) happens also between individuals having a similar culture, whether Norwegian or foreigner.

The author hopes that the concept of self-understanding and the two metaphors of socialization, used in lecturing (2008) for students and practitioners from Norway and abroad, could enhance competence in intercultural communication.

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Notes

1. These theoretical studies are inspired from the Opus Magnus of Ibn Khaldūn (cf. references) that Arnold Toynbee describes in his *Study of History*, p. 322, Vol. 3, as being "... undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place" (Toynbee, 1935).
2. The concept "'awā'id," custom or habit, occurs at least 180 times in the work of Ibn Khaldūn, translated into French by De Slane in 1862 (Slane, 1862). The term appears in various contexts that it deserve to stand as an ideology for itself.
3. The origin of two-by-two table dates probably back to the Middle Ages, or may be earlier. I have encountered the table explained with a similar example in Chapter 5.3 in the Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldūn.
4. The contents of the table draw upon Chapter VI, Section 3 of the Muqaddimah of Ibn Khaldūn (A. Ibn Khaldūn, 1967, p. 417, Vol. 2). The interpretation of the citation and the establishment of the table are from us.

5. Ibn Khaldūn (1967) defines this dichotomy as follows: "Every event (or phenomenon), whether it comes into being in connection with some essence or as the result of an action, must inevitably possess a true nature (or attitude) peculiar to its essence as well as to the accidental conditions that may attach themselves to it" (p. 72, Vol. 1). This dichotomy can also be encountered in Aristotle's Ethics.
6. The questionnaire (http://home.hio.no/~araki/arabase/spm/spm_til_k_analyse.pdf) and other similar data (<http://home.hio.no/~araki/arabase/spm/arakipub.html>) from the public sector are mostly in Norwegian.
7. Typologies used in this article are developed by the author from the classical work of Ibn Khaldūn (Ibn & al-Araki, 2012) and A. M. Al-Araki's (2013) operationalization.
8. SEGD or SETS. The letters stand for Strength, Extent, *Genus Proximum*, Type or Typology; *Differentia Specifica* or Specificity. SETS is used in an earlier article by A. M. Al-Araki (2013).

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