

**THE IMPACT OF MULTICULTURAL
EXPOSURE ON MALTESE SOCIETY IN THE
LATE 20TH AND EARLY 21ST CENTURY AND
ITS CHALLENGE FOR COUNSELLORS**

A Narrative Ethnographic Approach

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A Narrative Ethnographic Approach

By

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This Dissertation is presented to the Faculty of Social Wellbeing, Department of Counselling, in part fulfilment of the requirements for a dual degree of Master of Arts in Transcultural Counselling at the University of Malta, and Master of Arts in Community Counselling at the University of Maryland, offered by the International Masters Programme in collaboration with University of Maryland, College Park, United States of America.

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ABSTRACT

This narrative ethnographic study is an attempt to gain deeper understanding about issues pertaining to multiculturalism and its impact on Maltese people over the last 40 years. The study is based on *a priori* concepts found in literature and on the narratives of lived experiences of six English speaking Maltese counsellors. The review of literature is linked to the findings resulting from the narrations of the counsellors and explored from the perspective of social constructional matters. The term 'multicultural' is defined as multi-faceted and does not merely indicate cultural issues pertaining to multi-ethnicity. Through local literature and the interviews it is suggested that the apprehension of the Maltese people to embrace multiculturalism is rooted in their experience of being subjugated by foreign powers in the past and in the belief that embracing multiculturalism will be at the expense of traditional and moral values. It is noted that socio-economic change in Malta happened in such a rapid way between the 20th and 21st century that people seem to have great difficulty in coping with such fluidity. The participants reported that they feel challenged when working in a multicultural and a multi-ethnic environment with clients with abilities, needs and explanatory models that are different from their own and beyond their field of experience. The biggest challenges they face are related to the increase in complexity of issues pertaining to family, gender and youth. The study reveals the need for further research in this area to assist the development of Malta specific theoretical models and training programmes that would help improve the efficiency of Malta's counsellors and enhance the quality of coexistence between people hailing from different cultures and civilizations in Malta.

KEYWORDS: Maltese society; multicultural exposure; Maltese counsellors; challenges.

DECLARATION OF AUTHENTICITY

This is to confirm that this dissertation is my very own work and that all the material attributed to others (whether published or unpublished) has been clearly identified, fully acknowledged and referenced to the original text. The study has been screened by the software “turn it in” and a report about the outcome of this is submitted together with this dissertation. I agree that the University of Malta has the right to submit my work for originality checks.

Signature

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June 23rd 2013

Date

In memory of my mentor Dr. Milad Hanna
as well as to Rudolf Weissenberger MBA and Dr. Doris Weissenberger
in gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

“I ‘listen’ – but do I really ‘hear’ you?”

(Maria-Gabriele Doublesin, 2013, personal reflections)

This study addresses the need for coexistence between people hailing from various civilisations and their different cultures on the islands of Malta as seen from the perspective of six Maltese male and female English speaking counsellors. I chose to open this study with a reflection taken from my journey book because this question was a major inspiration for me to take on this subject. When I listen to people’s stories, do I really ‘hear’ the meaning they attribute to their stories from their perspective or do I see their world through the prism of my culturally encapsulated self? Hailing from a German native and upbringing, my perspective on objectives like multiculturalism and diversity take another stride and lookout. Although I am German, Malta is my country of choice through marriage and I thus form part of the Maltese society. I was therefore intrigued to explore how fellow Maltese society and counsellors experience this complex multifaceted theme.

Lack of local literature suggests that the topic of this study is under-researched and needs more investigation at a larger scale, in order to further address the needs of Maltese counsellors and society at large as well as to inspire scientific multicultural dialogue between the different disciplines within the academic community.

While multiculturalism seeks to acknowledge the needs of communities of people from all cultures, creeds and sexual orientations and abilities, it is strongly criticised by European political leaders and many members of its society for being the cause of unrest and a threat to social wellbeing (Song, 2010). For example the British Broadcasting Service BBC (2011) reports that U.K.'s Prime Minister, David Cameron "criticised state multiculturalism and argued that the UK needed a stronger national identity to stop people turning to extremism" (BBC report, 6 February 2011). This argument inspired me to further research on what the term multiculturalism really implies.

Similar to the British, but to a lesser extent Malta is seen as having a "mono-cultural mindset" (Dr Azzopardi as cited by Borg, Times of Malta, 7 September 2011) and it was discussed on governmental level that "multiculturalism is still not part of Maltese Heritage" (Hon. Minister Evarist Bartolo, as cited by Borg, Times of Malta, 7 September 2011). However, dissimilar to the British attitude towards multiculturalism, the newspaper Times of Malta reports that the former Maltese Prime Minister Dr, Gonzi argues that "diversity could be a source of strength rather than a weakness" (Borg, Times of Malta, 7 September 2011). This is remarkable if one considers that the Maltese people have great difficulties coping with boatloads of people from war-torn Sub-Saharan African countries who started coming to Malta in 2002 (Lutterbeck, 2009), This increased even more so as a result of changes in Malta's socio-cultural landscape with Malta's entry into the European Union in 2004 (Mitchell, 2002).

The strong influx from people coming from all over Europe and beyond and the global economic crisis were perceived as a great challenge to the wellbeing of the society of this tiny island Malta (Baldacchino, 2009).

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) to explore how Maltese counsellors in particular and the Maltese society in general experience the impact of the above mentioned factors at an inter- and intra-cultural level, and (2) to explore challenges that Maltese counsellors face when working in an multicultural environment with clients from different cultural and ethnic background and with abilities, needs and explanatory models that are different from their own.

This study is guided by theoretical principles about culture and multiculturalism and it is aimed to unveil misconceptions pertaining to multiculturalism. It is a contribution to help discover gaps in professional skills and to inspire develop specific training programs for counsellors and mental health workers as well as to facilitate multicultural understanding

1.1. Outline of the Study

Because of its multifaceted complexity it was a challenge to contain and to structure the topic under investigation. While this chapter presents the objectives of this study, the following chapter discusses relevant literature pertaining to the topic under investigation. In the third chapter I aim to provide a detailed explanation of the methods used to conduct this study and how data is obtained and analysed. The last chapter consists of four distinct parts:

The first part presents the findings which are discussed with reference to relevant literature and then analysed. The second part informs on limitations of the study. The third part suggests implications for practice and research and the fourth part concludes with a summary of the overall outcome of the study.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

Counsellors aim to assist the client to understand and integrate experiences in a way that is congruent with the client's world view (van Beek, 1996). For this reason, understanding human behaviour in social and cultural context is one of the main principles in counselling (Reynolds Welfel & Patterson, 2005). In order to help clients effectively, counsellors in today's world need to "embrace a broader perspective of recognising unique worldviews, appreciate socio-cultural differences and facilitate the empowerment of individuals within a society" (Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk & Ingene, 2012). This can be challenging.

Sue, Ivey and Pederson (1996) observe that people's values bound by their culture are often antagonistic to the values and experiences of people from different cultural groups. With this narrative ethnographic study, looking from outside in, I venture into relevant literature and into the narratives of six male and female Maltese counsellors to explore significant components of multicultural dynamics of contemporary Malta and how these dynamics affect Maltese society and Maltese counsellors. In an attempt to contain the complexity of the topic, this review of literature is structured into six sections:

The first section considers past and current manifestations of multiculturalism and the role of counselling in Malta.

Its two subsections address salient issues, cultural values and beliefs in Malta and cultural realities including the impact of rapidly developing technology in terms of digital literacy, on students and older generations in the 20th and 21st century and their respective dynamics in relation to the self. The second section examines multicultural dynamics on inter- and intra-cultural level while the third section describes inter-cultural dynamics in Malta.

This section also seeks to shed light on challenges in counselling when it comes to immigration, human values and conditions sensitive to multiculturalism such as xenophobia and social inequity.

Following this, literature about intra-cultural dynamics within Maltese society exploring gender roles and change within family dynamics are presented in the fourth section. The fifth section presents the following two issues:

- the role of language, the impact of moving abroad on children and its implications for counsellors and,
- multicultural experience and its impact on language and identity during childhood.

The sixth section gives a brief outline of the counselling profession in Malta. This is followed by concluding thoughts and the attempt to identify gaps in literature that form the basis of my research question.

Seeking to “explain the present with the aid of the past” (Lee, 2002, p. 2) I decided to start the review of the literature section by going back in time in order to capture ancient underlying socio cultural constructs of values, beliefs and attitudes that have been passed on from generation to generation (Smith, 2010).

2.1.1 Cultural Complexity and Cultural Sensitivity

Openness and flexibility lie at the core of cultural sensitivity. Relevant literature suggests that there is apprehensiveness and a lack of openness of Maltese people towards foreign influence (Lutterbeck, 2008; Mitchell, 2002; Baldacchino, 2009;). One example to their “resistance to wider social forces” (Mitchell, 2002) is the revival of Maltese traditions and the emphasis on Maltese Language (Baldachino, 2009; Mitchell, 2002; Boissevain 1992). For example Mitchell observes:

“Contrary to what one might have expected, the last decades of the twentieth century saw a marked expansion of ritual celebrations... both religious and secular, these rituals increased in scale and intensity... which emerged as a means of identifying, strengthening and asserting the uniqueness of particular social – usually local – groups” (Mitchell, 2002, p. 1)

Asserting one’s national identity can serve as a stabilizing factor as the sense of belonging may also be strengthened by it. In this way the local can encounter foreign influences not out of a sense of inferiority but out of a sense of equality. On the other hand, considering the above mentioned apparent lack of openness and flexibility can also be the result of culture bound values which may be perceived as incompatible with the values of the people originating from a different ethnic and sociocultural background (Singh, Merchant, Skudrzyk & Ingene 2012; Sue, Ivey & Pederson, 1996).

This can be very challenging when considering that manners and conduct which are considered as abnormal or unacceptable in one culture, such as for example polygamy, “may be seen as adaptive in another” (Lee, 1999, p.2).

The development of multicultural sensitivity may at times put the counsellors' degree of openness and flexibility to the test especially where issues of "ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age and social status and minority groups" (Lee, 1999, pp.2-3) are concerned. Conducting this study taught me that defining culture and learning to understand the meaning of culture is essential for developing cultural sensitivity and better understanding of others.

Culture is a complex phenomenon and there are many different explanations of what culture is and what culture does. Culture has been defined by academic scholar in many different ways and every definition informs on different facets related to this phenomenon. Axelson (1993) for example defines culture as "any group of people who identify or associate with one another on the basis of some common purpose, need or similarity of background" (Axelson, 1993, p.2).

In other words, the definition explains that belonging to a culture can mean anything specific that people are organizing themselves around something they have in common, such as Maltese traditions, beliefs and needs of a small nation which has been for most of its history subjugated to foreign rulers.

The definition of culture by Sorokin (1937) includes the dynamic interaction of conscious and unconscious attitudes that conditions "one another's behaviour" (Sorokin, 1937, vol 1 p. 3). Sorokin's idea on culture informs on the impact of culture on society. An example for this is the Maltese family value system which is greatly influenced by "the traditional family system, the size of the island and the Catholic church (Abela, 2009, p. 150).

The definition of culture by Haviland (1975) holding idea that culture can be seen as “a set of shared assumptions where people can predict each other’s actions in a given circumstance and react accordingly” (Haviland, 1975, p.6) helps to understand how individuals judge others on the basis of their own cultural bias leading to misconceptions and stereotyping.

2.2. Past and current manifestation of multiculturalism in Malta and the role of counsellors

The history of the Maltese Islands sheds light on the fact that multicultural exposure is not a novel experience for the Maltese people who have been governed by different powers throughout history from the Phoenicians, the Romans and the Arabs to the British. Exposure to different cultures has shaped Malta’s rich socio-cultural landscape, as “the actual movement of people” is in part responsible for “direct, unmediated acquaintance with foreign patterns” (Sztompka, 1993, p. 87). The impact of such patterns is not only manifested internally as values and beliefs that impact behaviour, but they are also manifested outwardly.

The megalithic temples, dating back to 7000 BC (Bonanno, 1991; Trump, 2002) and the fortifications built by the Knights of the Order of St. John give the impression that the focus of the people living on the islands of Malta was on worship, defence and protection (Blouet, 1997; Boissevain, 1992).

Being surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, the day-to-day world of the Maltese people was not closely affected by their next door neighbours. Being insular and isolated from the mainland could be a reason for a slow change in practices, values and beliefs.

2.2.1. Importance of cultural beliefs and religious values for the Maltese people

The cultural landscape of Malta and its society bears witness to the great ability of the Maltese to integrate cultural systems from other civilisations into their own without losing their own character. In this way ancestral cultural beliefs did not disappear with its civilisation but continues to live on. One of the simple examples of how the Maltese used to integrate cultural practices of their invaders and which is still common practice up to this very day is the use of the Phoenician symbol of the “eye” (Baldacchino, 2010) on the colourful little Maltese *'luzzu'* boats. It denotes a common superstitious belief in the powers of the evil eye and serves as a symbol of protection against the unpredictable power of the sea which is beyond human control (Baldacchino, 2010, p. 196).

Superstitions are thought to serve as social and moral control and they motivate the believer to good conduct (Baldacchino, 2010, Frazer, 1927). Malta's history of worship and the arrival of Christianity created significant socio-cultural patterns that lie beneath the multicultural makeup of contemporary Malta (Mitchell, 2002; Boissevain, 1992). This is significant because moral and religious values inform people what is right and wrong and how people's conscience affects their choices and behaviour as well as the consideration for others (Kohlberg, 1973; Muhlberger, 2000; Hoffman, 2000).

Maltese society carries features of a small society where everybody “knows” everybody else and could be one of the contributing factors as to why “pastoral activity of the local church has a strong influence on Maltese family life” (Abela et al 2005, Abela 2000) even up to this day. Mizzi (1997) observes that, because of the robust traditional family structures and the strong impact of the Catholic Church on family values, as well as the small size of the island, Maltese people are adjusting only very gradually to change.

Literature by Baldacchino (2009) notes: the parish is “the main expression of local governance in Malta; even with the introduction of the local councils in the 1990’s”. In a way the Church is multicultural in the sense that it has penetrated all the corners of the world while at the same time its mission is to spread the Catholic Religion and its objective is to protect its own culture. Baldacchino (2009) reaches the conclusion that Maltese people in general have a high opinion of Church education and favour the leading role played by the Catholic Church in so many spheres of life. His paper reads: “almost one-third of all students in primary and secondary education attend Church schools” (Baldacchino, 2009, p. 153).

2.2.2. Transition from dependence to independence

A significant change in Malta’s socio-cultural dynamics can be observed when Malta gained independence from the British in 1964 when it became a Republic and later its entry into the European Union in 2004. The successful and rather rapid transition from a dependent colonial state to becoming an internationally recognised team player amongst other nations is a strong indicator of resilience and adjustment to change (Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010; Sztompka, 1993).

Yet, the resilience of the Maltese is currently challenged by the global economic crisis and the strong influx of people from Eastern European and Sub-Saharan African countries.

Local studies show that the Maltese people regard foreign influence with apprehension (Lutterbeck, 2008; Mitchell, 2002; Baldacchino, 2009). Mitchell (2002) argues that in the process of establishing their own national identity, which required them to come out of the shadow of centuries of colonial rule, they fear that they might, once again, lose this hard-earned identity. Apart from Lutterbeck (2008) Moncada, Camilleri, Formosa & Galea, (2010) also mention in their article the small proportion and equally small size of the island, with its limited resources.

They state that the Maltese have to cope with the “structural constraints that result in multiple consequences such as, when compared to other European states, a below average Gross Domestic Product and higher costs of living due to insularity” (Moncada, Camilleri, Formosa & Galea, 2010).

The impact of two or three thousand immigrants plus the rapid growth of people migrating from Eastern Europe may seem to have not a dramatic significance to bigger countries, but, when seen from the perspective of the inhabitants of tiny Malta, it may look as if they are about to be invaded again.

The challenge that this fear poses to counsellors is to put the worries of their clients into proper perspective: Fruitful multicultural human relations depend on dialogue and the readiness of the hosting society to re-examine the foundations of its moral standards and principles (Nesbitt-Larking, 2008). According to Xuereb (2009) multiculturalism is defined by the European Commission as:

“The acceptance of immigrants and minority groups as distinct communities whose languages and social behaviours and infrastructures distinguish them from the majority. Moreover, multiculturalism advocates that members of such groups should be granted rights equal to each other and more importantly, to members of majority groups” (Xuereb 2009, p. 33).

The above suggests a pluralistic disposition and the development of socio-cognitive skills as well as the development of multicultural competence (Davis, Conklin, Smith & Luce 1996; Bennett, 1993; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). These are challenging demands that suggest the counsellor is flexible, respectful and empathetic.

Van Beek (1996) defines empathy as an “intentional, conscious act that takes imagination, although the empathising person recognizes that the experience of the other is not the same” (van Beek, 1996, p. 35). He argues that it is highly unlikely for a counsellor to be able to always maintain an empathic disposition in multicultural encounters.

His argument is based on the belief that “when we empathise, the identifier’s experience is the frame, and the experience of the other is the picture... it is very difficult for someone to grasp the picture of another across cultures” because it is outside the frame of reference of one’s personal experience (van Beek 1996, p. 35). As a solution for this dilemma van Beek proposes to consider Augsburger’s (1986) concept of ‘*interpathy*’ which van Beek defines as “an affective and cognitive intentional act to understand the world of another” (p. 35).

In contrast to empathy where the frame of reference is similar and therefore a gap between the known and the unknown, 'interpathy' is providing a bridge through cognitive understanding (Augsburger, 1992).

Lee (2007) advises counsellors "to embrace a way of life that encourages maximum exposure to and understanding of the many-faceted realities of multiculturalism" (Lee 2007, p.2). Reynolds Welfel & Patterson (2005) point to the benefits of socialising with members of different communities by stating that: "only through the process of socialisation are humans redirected toward behaviour that allows for the satisfaction of personal needs in ways that are not destructive or unacceptable to others" (pp. 216-217).

2.2.3. Understanding multicultural complexities: the impact of modern technology

Digital technology has profoundly changed the world we live in. This section considers the impact of a fast-paced world of developing information technology on students and older generations. When comparing the demands on the individual, in terms of society, education and work environment, during the 20th century on the one hand and the 21st century on the other, it is clear that these demands are much higher today. Could this be due to the advent of the internet and social media?

Literature by Borges (2007) observes that 21st century students have features that are different from students in the 20th century. For example, the use of social media, leads them to construct a virtual identity which requires a student counsellor to explore and understand the student's "values, social conventions and moral compasses behind some choices" when constructing virtual identity (Wise, 2008, p. 2).

With regards to education and work environment a paper by Constable and Touloumakos (2009) asserts that graduates often do not possess the necessary soft skills to efficiently apply themselves at work (Constable & Touloumakos, 2009).

Consequently continuous professional development is required by individuals and counsellors alike to keep pace with the constant changing demands of information technology, calling for academic institutions to continuously adjust their educational programmes (Caruana, 2002).

The fast paced development of information technology proves also to be an even greater challenge for older generations as there is a growing divide between them and the digital literate youth (Massey, 2012).

Cognitive abilities change with age. Consequently older generations find it more difficult to acquire new skills (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003). This gives rise to concerns about their possible alienation from the social activities of modern life and the culture of younger generations.

The challenge here is to find ways to stimulate intergenerational dialogue. Nesbitt-Larking (2008) states that conversational practice has a pivotal role in the promotion of multicultural relations within a society.

As suggested by Lee (1999), one of the tasks for counsellors of clients presenting intergenerational issues is to encourage intergenerational dialogue which can help them to find ways to adjust to modern life and also help them and their families to share their skills and learn from each other's life experiences.

2.3. Aspects of Inter-cultural dynamics in Malta

As mentioned above in section 2. 2., from the beginning of the 20th century to-date Malta has experienced a rapid socio-political and cultural change (Abela et al 2005).

This section seeks to shed light on the multicultural impact on Maltese society at an inter-cultural level. It considers the fact that today, Malta is facing a rapid influx of people from Eastern Europe, the war-torn Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa (Lutterbeck 2009) seeking a better life. The 2010 report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) states that 42 million people around the globe have lost their homes due to war, civil unrest, fear of violence, environmental problems and natural disasters (UNHCR, 2010). This stands in contrast to the recent past where “Malta has been a country of emigration rather than immigration” (Lutterbeck, 2009, p.120). About 140,000 Maltese citizens migrated to other countries between the years of 1945 to 1974 (Attard, 1997).

The moods of the Maltese people about the presence of people, who are embedded in various cultures and civilizations is reflected in articles in local newspapers such as the “Times of Malta” or “Malta Today”. One of the newspaper articles by Grech (2013) views Malta as a “country bent on stereotypes where individuals call immigrants hailing from Sub-Saharan African countries not only “clandestines” but even “parasites” and “scroungers”. The author also admits that “the media is largely responsible for fuelling racist and xenophobic sentiments” (Grech, Times of Malta, 15 April, 2013). Another article by Debono titled: “The Maltese: I’m not racist, but...”(Debono in Malta Today, 5 July 2012) reflects on whether the Maltese are racist or simply concerned about issues pertaining to migration.

Debono holds that the Maltese see migrants as a burden. He bases his arguments on the Eurobarometer which shows that only 32 % of the Maltese population “think that immigration enriches Malta economically or culturally” which, he writes “contrasts starkly with 81% of the Swedes and 53% of all Europeans who think that immigrants do contribute economically and culturally” (Debono in Malta Today, 5 July 2012).

Although human understanding and respect for each other is one of the highest ethical values, literature seems to confirm that “the persistent barriers of racism, fear, ignorance and imaginative stereotypes remain constant obstacles to fruitful human relations” (Cuccioletta, 2001, p. 1). These are contributing factors to social inequity and economic rifts between social groups within a society (Lee 2007). Social inequity has a negative impact on the psychosocial development of the individual, which in turn can revert back into society in a negative way (Freire, 1996, Lee 1999). This can prove to be challenging to fully understand because unlike in the past, contemporary history bears witness to a “global structure of political, economic and cultural relations” that “extend beyond any traditional boundaries, binding separate societies into one system” (Sztompka, 1993, p.86).

2.4. Aspects of intra-cultural dynamics in Malta

In this section of the literature review makes the attempt to shed more light on some of the intra-cultural factors that shaped the people of contemporary Malta, by exploring issues within the dynamics of the individual and society.

This thought is inspired by a critique by Realo and Allik (2002) who state that: “despite the fact that there exist clearly distinguishable sub-cultures within countries, or national cultures, they are often regarded as uniform and homogenous entities in cross cultural research” (Realo & Allik, 2002, Unit 2, Chapter 8) with “uniform cultural rules from which only a few people deviate” (Pelto & Pelto, 1975, 2009, p. 3).

2.4.1. Issues pertaining to family structure and traditional gender roles

As already mentioned, Malta’s entry into the European Union, the fast development in the fields of science and technology, and global economic instability are further contributing factors to change. When Malta joined the European Union, more possibilities to study and work started to become available, offering greater exposure to different schools of thought and life concepts. This increased mobility could easily lead to a change within family dynamics due to a possible increase of movement and issues pertaining to gender role equality (Claval, 2012; Spiteri, 2012) which has been mentioned earlier in the text.

The traditional gender roles in Malta are such that women are seen as responsible for housekeeping and the upbringing of the children while men are considered to be the breadwinners (Doublesin, 2011; Abela et al., 2005). Although the situation is changing since more Maltese women started working outside the home, many of them do so reluctantly as they feel that it is their responsibility to stay at home and raise the children (Abela, 2009).

A change in women's position in the family brings about a shift in the position of the entire family. Consequently, gender role and tasks within the family structure need to be redefined. This is not always an easy task (Abela, 2009; Borg Xuereb, 2008; Azzopardi, 2007; Abela et al. 2005). Transitional processes in gender role identifications are some of the factors that test people's ability and willingness to "go beyond the ways they usually think about things" (Massey, 2012, p. 92).

The challenge here for counsellors once they themselves have reflected upon their own position within their own family structure, is to provide insight on the new dynamic to their clients.

The fact that each and every one of us has our own needs is one of the contributing factors for the rich intra-cultural diversity within Maltese society. This also justifies the above cited critique by Realo and Allik (2002). It also explains why understanding human behaviour in a social and cultural context is one of the main principles in counselling (Reynolds Welfel & Patterson, 2005).

On an individual level this concept asks the client as well as the counsellor to develop self-awareness (Lee, 2007). In other words it can be seen as an invitation to learn to understand how one's own age, gender, cultural background, social status and current environment influence one's own perceptions, thoughts, feelings and actions.

2.5. Aspects of language in a multicultural context and its importance for the counsellor

Language is of great importance to counselling, since counselling is a verbal profession. It is vital for counsellors to understand the ways in which clients express themselves (Haley & Combs 2010), because language is directly linked to the cultural identity of a person (Faubert & Gonzales, 2008). This is also substantiated in a study by Geng (2010) who notes the following:

“language reflects a nation’s characteristic and contains historical and cultural backgrounds of the nation [and] every nation has its own way of viewing the universe, and each develops from its own premises a coherent set of rules which will be handed down from generation to generation” (Geng, 2010).

Therefore counsellors may feel challenged in their ability to “articulate the problem from the client’s cultural perspective” (Gladding, 2004, p. 90).

According to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis our views on the world are influenced by the way in which we use our language (Whorf, 1956). In this context our social thinking is strongly influenced by what is considered to be a cultural norm within a society (Moscovici, 1984). Whorf (1956) holds that individuals cannot think outside the context of their language (Ashcraft, 2006).

2.5.1. Language in a multilingual and multicultural context

Due to their history the Maltese are multilingual by nature. Although their original language is Maltese which is “the only Semitic language written in a Latin script”(Baldacchino, 2009, p.152). English gained importance during the British rule for political reasons to counter Italian influence (Baldacchino, 2009).

According to Baker (2003) the linguistic skills of multilingual people are more complex due to code-switching, which is the juxtaposition of elements of one language into another during a conversation (Meisel, 2007; Baker, 2003; Myers-Scotton, 1996). This phenomenon can be observed in the ways Maltese people make use of their language.

As mentioned above, counsellors are asked to be culturally literate and sensitive (Haley & Combs, 2010) to the ways their clients express themselves, especially when the clients are bilingual or multilingual because not all the clients feel equally comfortable to share personal issues in a language other than their mother tongue (Chryssides, 2008). In this regard, counsellors might need to use the help of a translator to make their client feel more comfortable to express themselves, which in turn might be challenging to the establishment of a counsellor –client relationship.

Given that counselling is a verbal profession (Haley & Combs, 2010) the Sapir Whorf hypothesis could help to explain why issues pertaining to language are very important for counsellors.

Adding to this Faubert & Gonzalez (2008) hold that:

“The development of language cannot be separated from culture. The clients’ language and culture are one. When the cultural language is not available to them in counselling, clients can feel devalued and it can also happen that clients start to feel alienated and may resist counselling or never come back” (Faubert & Gonzalez, 2008).

2.5.2. Example: multicultural experience and its impact on language and identity during childhood

Malta’s joining the EU has provided Maltese families with new opportunities to work abroad. Inversely, other European families have moved to Malta with their offspring to bring forth a new generation of children. As a result, these children are being raised between different cultures becoming the third culture kids, TCK, (Limberg & Lambie 2011). Pollock & van Reken (2001) maintain that these children have an affiliation with all the cultures they are, or have been, exposed to “while not having full ownership in any [and] although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background” (Pollock & Van Reken, 2001, p. 19).

The first culture of these children is the country of origin of their parents, the second is the culture they were exposed to during their most important developmental years (Gilbert, 2008) and their third culture is the result from lived experiences which are shared with people who hail from different cultures but have a similar lifestyle to their own (Limberg & Lambie, 2011; Pollock & van Reken, 2001).

This makes integration with children of the host country rather difficult. A counsellor has to understand that these children have very special needs in order to stabilise their sense of belonging, which might lie beyond the counsellor's field of personal experience; one reason is because the development of these children's identity have been influenced by their experience with different cultures.

2.6. Counselling in a Multicultural Society

According to literature counselling in a multicultural society requires counsellors to be aware of the diversity of cultures and ethnicities within their own country as well as within their respective counselling environment (Lee, 1997; Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez & Stadler, 1996; Pedesen, 1982) as well as an understanding of how their clients' culture and ethnicity form their personality.

These demands may prove to be challenging for counsellors since the majority of the theories of personality they have studied "are not always applicable to clients from other cultural traditions" (Gladding, 2004, p. 90; Nwachuku & Ivey, 1991). All of these theories have been researched and developed in a European-American middle-class Christian oriented society and many of them do not include the socio-cultural influence on personality development (Gladding, 2004; Katz, 1985).

Effective counselling in a multicultural society does not only require counsellors to understand their clients and articulate their problems from their own cultural perspective, it also entails the ability to anticipate “resistance from a culturally different client and to diminish defensiveness by studying [ones] own personal responses” (Gladding, 2004, p. 90 citing Pedersen, 1977).

Lee (1999) argues that counsellors need to recognise their clients’ deprivations, e.g. socio-cultural deprivations or linguistic deprivations, and to contrast these to one’s own privileges (Lee, 1999). Similar to this Gladding (2004) asserts that in order to help their clients cope with their problems and solve personal conflicts based on cultural differences, counsellors need to be able to skilfully assess differences and universality in the personality of their clients as well as “the process that lies behind these differences” (Gladding, 2004, p. 90).

Furthermore, counsellors working in a multicultural environment may also find themselves in an advocacy role, helping their clients adjust to a new environment or to new life situations (Lee, 2007).

2.6.1. Ethical issues in counselling in a multicultural society

According to Gladding (2004) counsellors are required to safeguard their client's dignity and to acknowledge their vulnerability (Gladding, 2004) and are therefore bound to adhere to the code of ethics stipulated for their profession. In order to be able to fulfil this request, it is essential to “develop personal virtues, monitor attitudes towards self and others and develop ethical sensitivity” (Doublesin, 2012, p. 1 citing Constable, Kreider, Smith & Zachary, 2011). However, this is only the first step. The next step is to understand and apply the ethical principles that are stipulated in the ethical code throughout the interaction with the client.

“Embracing cultural diversity in professional ethics is one of our major contemporary challenges and an urgent ethical imperative in order to slow the spread of social divisions” (Bond, 2010, p. xiii).

2.6.2. Brief History of Counselling in Malta

Counselling has its roots in the “guidance movement” with its focus on “helping people make choices, e.g. choosing a preferred life style and decision making” (Gladding, 2004, pp. 4-5). According to this author, the difference between counselling and guidance is that “guidance focuses on helping individuals choose what they value the most, whereas counselling focuses on helping them make changes” (Gladding, 2004, p. 5). According to Degiovanni (1987) counselling in Malta was a second step and an improvement on guidance teaching which was set up in 1974 and the first counselling post for primary schools was established in 1994.

Today, the University of Malta offers a wide variety of training programmes in different disciplines of counselling up to Master's level. Society's needs are becoming more complex and request "effective responses" (Slimbach, 2005, p.206) to "facilitate optimal client functioning" (Sheely-Moore & Kooyman, 2011, p. 102).

This implies that specialised skills and multicultural competencies are required to meet this demand (Arredondo, Toporek, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez & Stadler, 1996). In response to meet these requirements the University of Malta offers specialized postgraduate training programs in counselling, including a dual Master of Arts degree in Transcultural Counselling in collaboration with the University of Maryland.

Counsellors are closely monitored by compulsory supervised practice and the ethical code, issued by The Malta Association for Counselling Professionals (MACP), aims to protect the privacy of the client and ensures high quality service.

2.7. Conclusion

The review of literature suggests that since the Maltese people have been ruled by different powers and have a super-organic (Claval, 1995) multicultural history which could point to a tendency that the cultures of the conquering countries are seen as superior (Baldacchino, 2009). However, literature of Maltese history also demonstrates a strong resilience of the Maltese people when faced with the consequences of change. One example of this is how they managed the transition from a dependent to an independent successfully functioning state.

However, literature has also pointed to the challenge of being open enough to seek a deeper insight into the nature and implications of multiculturalism as the issues pertaining to multiculturalism appear very complex and multifaceted and demand a clear structure.

This review brought to light that the term “culture” cannot be understood as a constant but as dynamic and ever evolving (Claval 1995). Taking this perspective can open different dimensions of how we perceive ourselves and the world. This invites us to re-examine opinions and assumptions on preconceived notions about the self and others.

On the other hand the literature also suggests that our social thinking is strongly influenced by what is agreed as a cultural norm within a society (Moscovici, 1984). This suggests a limitation in understanding people hailing from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Well trained and multicultural competent counsellors can act as agents of social change and contribute to the creation of a successful coexistence between all the cultures of Malta today.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter reflects on “the philosophical stance that underlies and informs” (Sapsford, 2006, p. 175) my chosen type of research. In order to justify the theoretical framework on which my research is based in this chapter, I aim to provide a detailed explanation of the methods I am using and how I gathered and analysed the data. Methodology in research comprises two notions:

1. Epistemology of research, which involves the establishment of credibility (Steup, 2012) “of conclusions based on arguments cast in terms of information that has been collected transparently by known means” (Sapsford, 2006, p. 175);
2. Ontology of research which “reflects on the worldview in which the researcher engages” (Sapsford, 2006, p. 175).

The epistemology of this study is descriptive-interpretative because it is “knowledge based on people’s stories and experiences” (McLeord, 2011, p. 178). Information is taken from narratives and combined with the review of literature and is put under the lens of social constructionism.(McLeod, 2011; Willig, 2008; Lyons & Coyle, 2008; Hibberd, 2005; Berger & Luckmann, 1966) with *a priori* concepts found in literature (Cresswell,2007).

Since social constructionism does not assume any pre-existing reality in the present study, I am searching in a reflexive manner for the meaning (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2002) that Maltese male and female counsellors assign to what they perceive as impacts of multicultural exposure on Maltese society during the years 1974 to 2013.

My ontological stance in this study leans towards the belief that different observers may have different viewpoints. What counts for the truth may vary from place to place, and may also rest on the belief that truth depends on who establishes it. Consequently facts are human creations (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2002). This stance gives me the basis on which to approach every viewpoint of the participants in a novel manner. However, this is not as easy as it seems since I have to constantly keep in mind the fact that I have my own opinions and biases.

3.2. Rationale for Choosing Narrative Ethnography:

This study makes use of a narrative ethnographic approach because of its ethnographic focus on the multiple cultures which is combined with the narrative (Polkinghorne, 1988) of six counsellors. I chose this method as I found it to be the most appropriate since I was interested in the participants' stories pertaining to their lived experience with multicultural issues in their day-to-day private and professional encounters.

Narrative Ethnography differs from phenomenological methods such as Interpretative Analysis (Smith, 2008; Smith & Osborne, 2004) because it does not only highlight how individuals relate to their experiences (Gubrium & Holstein in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2008) but it also includes historical observations of socio-cultural dynamics (Genzuck, 2003; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000;).

As mentioned above, the topic concerns the meaning (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2002) Maltese male and female counsellors assign to impacts of multicultural exposure on Maltese society. Therefore it does not likely render itself for a positivistic approach (Langdrige, 2004). However, it may be interesting to examine the relationship between the variables pertaining to the impact of multicultural exposure on society and the challenges Maltese counsellors encounter.

Hence, my rationale for choosing narrative ethnography to investigate the topic of this study was enriching and also challenging since my experience in carrying out academic research is very limited. This experience is also reflected in literature (Aldiabat & Le Navenec, 2011; Morse & Niehaus, 2009; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; McCaslin & Scott, 2003; Cobb & Hoffart, 1999).

3.3. Theoretical Underpinnings

The narrative approach in qualitative research is, as defined by Murray (2003) “an organized interpretation of a sequence of events” (Murray, 2003, p. 113).

Depending on its philosophical position it can be both, descriptive and explanatory (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Polkinghorne 1988. Narrative inquiry has its roots widely spread in different schools of thoughts in human social sciences: e.g. anthropology and psychology.

As already indicated above in section 3.1., the narrative ethnographic approach applied in this study draws greatly on the precepts of social constructionism (Etherington, 2011) and also on the works of McIntyre (1981), Polkinghorne (1988), Bateson (1994), Geertz (1973) and Clandinin (2007).

The narrative ethnographic lens observes how both the researcher and participants position themselves in the context of time, space and environment (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In a narrative ethnographic research process meaning is seen to be co-constructed by the researcher and the participant. Hence, the research participant becomes a co-researcher (Etherington, 2011).

3.3.1. Narrative Unity

Narrative Inquiry takes a holistic stance (Geertz, 1973; McIntyre, 1981). Geertz (1973) compares narrative unity with a parade. Referring to this comparison Clandinin & Connelly (2000) note the following:

“Geertz reminds us that it is impossible to look at one event or one time, without seeing the event or time nested within the wholeness of this parade... if we shift our position in the parade, our knowing shifts, and as the parade changes our relative position changes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, pp. 16-17).

The above explains the reflexive stance the researcher is required to take when undertaking a narrative approach.

On a personal note it suggests that, besides observing how the participants of this study position themselves in their personal and professional life, it is important to be aware of how I position myself in life. I feel obliged to examine the effects I have on others and on the world around me, and also to examine the effect others and the world around me has on my perceptions and on my outlook.

3.3.2. Narrative thinking

Narrative thinking concerns itself with interaction and continuity (Clandinin, 2007). It is captured in stories and is intricately connected with paradigmatic ways of thinking (Bruner, 1986) in academic research as they touch on “six levels of cognitive behaviour, namely: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 23).

The discussion that is addressed in Clandinin & Connelly, as to whether narrative thinking can fit within a paradigm or not, is complex indeed, since narrative thinking is concerned with the fact that “everyone is exposed to a different set of models and has a different life trajectory, [so that] what he learns is not exactly equivalent to what has been internalised by other persons “(Claval, 1995 p.2).

Polkinghorne (1988) holds that narrative thinking “is a cognitive process that organizes human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 1). Narrative knowledge constructed through narrative thinking “helps make sense of the ambiguity and complexity of human lives” (Etherington, 2011, conference presentation).

In order for me as a narrative researcher to understand the picture a particular individual has of the world around her/him I have to see matters from her/his perspective while retaining my own way of seeing life.

My own relationship to narrative thinking is what is leading me to reflect on the world around me. Nonetheless, in order for me to understand the individual, I have to momentarily exit from my own frame of mind and enter into her/his without being absorbed and while retaining my own individuality.

3.3.3. Narrative inquiry space

The narrative inquiry space is seen as three dimensional (Clandinin & Holstein, 2000). Above, I mention my own experience of moving from my own perspective into the perspective of the participant. During the interview conversation both the participant and I venture together and observe and discuss the influence of the wider picture - the world around us, “however the inquiry itself is structured the inquirer” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 55).

When thinking about how best to explain the characteristics of a narrative inquiry space the picture of a ballroom dance floor came to mind, where the dancers add their individual characteristics go through the steps of a given rhythm. They listen attentively to the motions of the other, inspiring each other without getting lost within themselves or being taken over by their dance partner.

Like in a ballroom dance, in the narrative inquiry space there is a constant shift of focus, to leave space for creative processes to be included'(Etherington, 2011; Clandinin, 2007) and returning back to oneself at the end.

3.4. Salient procedures related to Participants

Participants for the study were recruited by means of snowball sampling by sending a letter of information (see Appendix 1) to the Malta Association for Counselling Professionals (MACP). This letter was passed on to all the members of the association.

I also sought to recruit participants by word of mouth, speaking to colleagues. It was not easy to attract participants because not many of the counsellors felt that their personal life and their client-counsellor experiences involved multicultural issues.

In spite of the above mentioned limitation I was able to recruit a heterogeneous group of six Maltese, English speaking counsellors. This is important, because in narrative ethnographic interviewing a participant's level of "communicative competence" and "access to information" is thought to be more relevant than their epitomisation of some characteristics of interest to the researcher" (Warren 2001, in Gubrium & Holstein, p.88).

3.4.1. Research participants

The participants for this study are two male and 4 female Maltese, English speaking counsellors whose age ranges between 33 and 54, All the participants hail from different areas of Malta. They work in the following areas: school, family settings, immigration, substance abuse and correctional environment as demonstrated in table 1 below.

Most of the participants have extensive professional experience in different areas of counselling and one of the participants is currently a counsellor trainee.

Table1. Participants of this study

Pseudonym	Age	Counselling Environment and Approach
David	33	Correctional environment (eclectic approach)
Rose	40	Correctional environment (cognitive behavioural approach)
Mario	44	Family support (family therapy)
Gina	44	Substance abuse environment and Refuge Centre (multicultural approach)
Mary	50	School environment (systemic oriented approach incl. the family of the student)
Jane	54	School environment (school counsellor)

3.5. Gathering of Data

In addition to data collected from the review of relevant literature, this narrative ethnographic study seeks to the needs of Maltese counsellors in order to be able to better serve their different clients and gather the counsellors' experience and attitude of with regards to their direct and indirect encounter with people from different cultural and ethnic

backgrounds and involving other issues pertaining to multiculturalism, such as age, gender, family and the impact of digital technologies.

Introductory information concerning the study was provided, and a written informed consent form (Appendix 2) was handed to the participant to read and sign.

After this, data for this study was obtained from the participants in the form of one audio-taped in-depth, tentatively semi-structured interview-conversation (Turner, 2010; Cresswell, 2007; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003) per participant which lasted between 90 and 120 minutes. DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree (2006) note:

“Semi-structured interviews are often the sole data source for a qualitative research project and are usually scheduled in advance at a designated time and location outside every day events. They are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

A brief outline of the characteristics of a semi-structured narrative ethnographic interview is outlined in the following section.

3.5.1. Semi-structured interview conversation

In contrast to standardised questions of survey interviewers (Ruben & Ruben, 2005; Langdridge, 2004) “qualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation” (Warren, 2001, p. 85) in which the researcher can, according to Kvale (1996) be either like a miner, seeking and uncovering deeper lying knowledge or like a traveller in which case “the interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the

subjects to tell their own stories of the lived world and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as *wandering together with* “ (Kvale, 1996, p. 4).

Kvale’s metaphor inspired me to further reflect on the position I am taking as non-Maltese married to a Maltese citizen and residing for nine years in Malta. In this context I can resonate with the image of being in a way similar to the predisposed mining traveller venturing out together with the interviewees with the intention of letting them guide me through their different and for me also unknown perceptions of multicultural impacts of their society and the resulting challenges.

In confirmation to what is described in literature, my personal challenge in conducting the interviews was to keep focused on the actual topic of this study so as not to be led astray by the fastness of the participant’s narrations (Riessman, 2001; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) comprising the topic under investigation.

My semi-structured interview guideline helped me to conquer this challenge. It consists of one predetermined overarching question that opens and directs the interview-conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and non-predetermined thematic prompts (Appendix 3).

One of the challenges of the researcher is to remain attentive and flexible so as to be able “to hear the meaning” (Ruben & Ruben, 2005, p. 7) “that may emerge as the interview progresses” (Warren, 2001, p. 87).

In the following section I am addressing ethical considerations as well as how narrative ethnographic research influences the researcher as well as the participants.

Kvale's metaphors bring to mind that "the knowledge produced affects understanding of the human condition" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008, p. 263). Hence, "high levels of ethical and critical engagement" (Etherington, 2011, conference pps.) are necessary to foster trust and openness in the researcher participant relationship (Josselson, 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study has been approved by UREC (University Research Ethics Committee). I am aware of my responsibility to safeguard my participants' anonymity and wellbeing and I pledge to abide by the ethical and scientific standards governing research with human research participants and the Malta Association for Counselling Professionals (MACP) ethical framework. As I was conducting a narrative ethnographic research which involves direct and personal contact with the participants, I found myself in a dual role: my role in an open and empathic researcher – participant relationship and my role as postgraduate student having to give account to the academic community.

This study implicated in-depth interviewing, audio-recording and transcribing of personal information in order to generate understanding and knowledge about the research topic.

In order to make sure that the participants' anonymity is protected, participants were given pseudonyms. Every participant of this study was given both verbally and in writing detailed introductory information concerning the purpose and nature of the research and the topic under investigation (Appendix 1). Participants also were given a written consent form to be signed, containing detailed information regarding purpose and procedure of the study, as well as about their right to withdraw from the study (Appendix 2).

In order to generate a deeper understanding about the topic under investigation it was necessary to ask the participants about their personal feedback on issues pertaining to race, ethnic origin, political beliefs and religious values. Respecting feelings of the participants, it was important to me to remind the participants of their freedom not to answer questions they might perceive as too intrusive or culturally insensitive.

In the debriefing session, at the end of the interview-conversation the participants were invited to discuss what they felt were the most important factors which emerged during this interview conversation and to comment on their experience of participating in this study. The transcripts and the audio-recordings are kept in a secure place. They are only available to me and my supervisor and will be ultimately destroyed.

3.7. Data Analysis

“Stories can be viewed as a window onto a knowable reality and analysed by using concepts derived from theory e.g. thematic analysis, or concepts derived from data” (Etherington, 2011, conference pps.)

In narrative ethnographic research analysis takes place throughout the entire research process and is not seen as a separate activity (Gehart, Tarragona, & Bava 2007). Meaning is derived by the use of thematic analysis (Willig, 2008; Cresswell, 2007) of the transcripts from the interview conversation with the participants.

The transcripts also include notes on the participants' choice of words, tonality of voice and nonverbal clues. For instance when listening to David, as well as to the others, I did not only listen to what they were saying, but also to the gaps, to that what is left unsaid. This served as additional information when analysing the data (Etherington, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Thematic analysis is informed by theory and looks for similar patterns across all the transcripts. Repeated patterns form themselves into emerging themes which are then organized into master themes and their respective sub-themes. To recognise the significance of the repeated patterns I used colour coding while transcribing the interviews. All utterances referring to challenges were marked in blue, while relevant information was marked yellow and utterances promoting resilience in green.

I found that analysing the data is a painstaking and process which can best be described as follows:

“While being involved in reading [and re-reading] the [transcribed] conversations, researchers take in what is being said and compare it with their personal understandings without filling in any gaps in understanding with “grand narratives” but rather inquiring about how pieces of the stories are make sense together” (Etherington, 2011, conference pps.)

While analysing the data, I approached the different parts of the data from different angles and contrasted it with the whole set of data, Then I compared what I found again with the meaning that was conveyed by the participant. It also felt like being in a constant discussion with the data and my own reaction to it.

3.8. Strategies Used in Ensuring Quality of Research

Aware of the difficulty of ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research those notions of validity and reliability cannot be addressed in the same way as quantitative research (Cresswell, 2007; Silverman, 2000).

I followed the recommendations of Cresswell (2007) and Guba's (1981) in an attempt to ensure the quality of my study. The subject of my research topic determined the choice of my approach to this study which is outlined in detail above in section 3.1. and 3.2.

As described in section 3.4. I was able to recruit a heterogeneous group of subjects. They differed in gender, age, location and professional specialisation which helped me to discover similarities in the emerging themes and whether these similarities apply to the other person in order to increase transferability of the findings.

Throughout the interview-conversations I kept a reflexive attitude by keeping my questions open-ended and I refraining from leading questions in order to ascertain that the results were not the construct of my own predispositions.

In order to increase the dependability of my findings I had the transcripts reviewed by two peers senior to me. The findings of both peers proved to be consistent with my own findings. The findings have also been reviewed by my supervisor. An excerpt of the transcript is attached to this study (Appendix 4).

3.8.1. Reflexivity

Descending from parents with 2 different ethnic origins and being raised between two different languages, religions, customs, traditions and attitudes, I consider myself a multicultural individual who has been brought up in a multicultural environment. I often experienced misunderstandings between different members of my family for the simple reason that they were not able to leave their own frame of mind. This sensitized me very early on to reflect on my own way of understanding myself and others and maybe predestined me to further my professional career in the field of multicultural issues in counselling. My great interest in learning from different cultures lead me to study Tibetan Buddhist and Vedic philosophies and to immerse myself with indigenous people from Western Africa, and South and North American Natives and Bedouin tribes in Egypt. I lived in Egypt for seven years and worked as a member of a therapeutic team in a psychiatric setting. One aspect that I became aware of during this study is that I realised the need to treat every participant of this study the same, regardless whether I agree or disagree with ideas that come up during these interviews. Finding this at times very challenging because some of what was said during the interview went against my personal values and principles and also my views on multiculturalism. The interviews also inspired me to think of how important it is to be aware of the basic human rights and fine tune the issues pertaining to racism and multiculturalism.

It was not easy to get started with this study because it challenged me to get in touch with my innermost feelings. But after a while I started to enjoy the challenge of the complexity of multiculturalism and to go on this inner excursion and find a way to structure and

contain this topic. What I have learned in the literature review and from the interviews brought freshness into my own concept of understanding multiculturalism.

Two reasons motivated me to carry out this study:

In the course of reading for this dual Masters of Arts in Transcultural Counselling and Master of Arts in Counselling degree I was inspired to study multicultural influences in Malta and the resulting challenges a Maltese counsellor has to face and also to learn more about the skills a counsellor needs when working in a pluralistic society.

The second reason was based on my own disposition as non-Maltese being married to a Maltese citizen and living in Malta for the past nine years. While carrying out this study I came to better understand attitudes and behaviours of people around me. I also gained more insight into Malta's cultural issues pertaining to generations and gender of which I found myself to be negatively biased. During the course of this study I experienced a shift of this bias. I also became more aware of myself as part of the multicultural fabric of the Maltese society and which was developed into an educational experience in itself.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter is a humble attempt to defend a research method I am using for the first time. When I started on the journey of conducting this study, I realised how little I knew about narrative ethnography and the narrative school of thought. In other words I learned by doing. I tried to explicate the reason for choosing a narrative ethnographic approach, in as much detail as possible with explanations concerning the recruitment of participants, data collection and analysis of data.

CHAPTER 4 – FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is an invitation to look through a “virtual window” (Gubrium & Holstein, 2001, p.8) and to consider how complex multicultural issues in Malta between 1974 until 2013 have influenced Maltese society and how the resulting challenges for counsellors are presented and debated.

The landmarks that stand for discussion are individual observations of intra-cultural dynamics (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2011;; Baldacchino, 2009; Abel et al, 2005; Mitchell, 2002) that is socio-cultural change (Massey, 20012; Sztompka, 2003) within Maltese society, as well as the increasing influx of immigrants (Calleya, 2013; Azzopardi, 2012; Masso, 2009; Xuereb, 2009; Baldacchino, 2009; Lutterbeck, 2008; King & Thomson 2008).

The *in vivo* quotes and interpretations presented in this chapter are an attempt to provide a comprehensive feedback system. All of the research participants’ shared narrative conventions, ambiguities and contradictions are based on their personal experience and on what they gathered in their practice as counsellors.

This data is analysed and referred to the literature review and other relevant scholarly papers.

A detailed outline of themes emerging from the interviews follows leading to reveal that although the Maltese society is used to multicultural exposure the interviewees expressed their concerns about the recent developments in Malta's multicultural landscape that may challenge the family structure, the sense of belonging as well as to the overall sense of social wellbeing.

On the other hand the interviewees also acknowledged that these late multicultural developments as well as the involuntary encounters with people from different ethnic and socio-cultural background are opening doors for:

- enriching personal and
- professional
- as well as economic growth and a
- new sense of relating to each other.

Data taken from the interviews also indicate that openness, flexibility, cultural sensitivity and literacy are necessary in order to benefit from multicultural encounters.

On the other hand understanding this aspect of culture can also contribute to deconstruct misconceptions about people from other cultures. For example the key terms, 'assumption' and 'predict' were eye-openers that helps me to better reflect on my own understanding of culture as an assumption and not as an absolute. This also makes me question values and principles of my own upbringing which I previously took as a given.

The word 'predict' calls me to reflect on the need of stability and the ability to make an informed choice. Furthermore it gives rise to the thought that if a set of assumptions is not shared there is no predictability of peoples' behaviour.

Haviland's concept of culture challenges the need to categorize and the tendency to generalize and invites to stay with the uncertainty of the unknown. The latter is a theme that emerged from the interview conversations with the participants and will be presented again further on in this chapter in more detail.

4.2. Emerging themes

The six master themes are listed below in table 2 and their respective subthemes are coded patterns that group themselves around categories which are deemed relevant to the research question (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2007; Boyatzis, 1998):

Table2. Table of emerging themes (Source: Maria Gabriele Doublesin)

MASTER THEMES		SUB – THEMES	
4.3.	Malta’s cultural diversity before the 21 st century and nowadays	4.3.1.	Multicultural “by nature”?
		4.3.2.	Impact of foreign rule on attitude towards foreigners
		4.3.3.	Dealing with the unknown: immigrants from Sub-Saharan African countries
4.4.	Participants’ understanding of the term “multicultural”	4.4.1.	Multicultural vs. multinational
		4.4.2.	Diversity within the Maltese culture
4.5.	Significance of language in a multicultural context	4.5.1.	Being multilingual
4.6.	Impact on issues related to belonging	4.6.1.	Religious values
4.7.	Multicultural impact on the family	4.7.1.	Nuclear family in the state of transition
		4.7.2.	Redefining traditional gender-roles
		4.7.3.	Generational differences and the impact of fast development of media and digital technology
		4.7.4.	Attitudes towards the family: individualistic vs. collectivistic behaviour
4.8.	The counselling profession & the challenge for counsellors	4.8.1.	Roles of the counsellor in the past & present
		4.8.2.	Facing the unknown
		4.8.3.	The counsellor’s personal perspective as being a Maltese living in a multicultural society
		4.8.4.	Ethical issues
		4.8.5.	Suggestions for colleagues

4.2.1. Brief outline of the emerging themes

The first Master theme “Malta’s cultural diversity before the 21st century and today” together with its subthemes are an attempt to reflect the participants’ perception of four important dynamics within the Maltese society and what affected them most: the transition from a dependent nation to independence; membership of the EU and its impact on the family and individuals, the break of intergenerational patterns due to the fast development of digital technology and immigration issues.

The second theme outlines how the term “multicultural” is defined by Maltese counsellors and what implications it has within the Maltese culture in context to the research question while the third theme highlights the importance of language in a multicultural context, not only in a counsellor – client relationship, but also in identity formation.

The third theme also discusses issues related to understanding self and others.

The fourth theme, addresses the inter-cultural dynamics within Maltese society that pertain to the sense of belonging. This theme explores religious values of the Maltese people and some of the core issues that put the ability to integrate people coming from different ethnical and cultural background.

The fifth theme concentrates on intra-cultural dynamics. It highlights the counsellors’ encounters with current multicultural issues pertaining to transitional processes within family structures and the gender roles while the sixth theme discusses the different roles and needs of a counsellor within the last two decades of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, and resulting conflicting ethical issues they have to address.

It also sheds light on the interviewees' personal perspectives of being Maltese living in a multicultural society and presents their suggestions.

4.3. Malta's Cultural Diversity Before the 21st Century and Nowadays

This theme together with its subthemes seeks to reflect on multicultural dynamics between the past 40 years and an inter- and intra-cultural level. It also seeks to demonstrate how past multicultural experiences affect the attitude of Maltese individuals towards the contemporary multicultural situation in Malta in order to better understand the nature of the resulting challenges for individuals and counsellors.

All of the participants of the study stated that the Maltese are used to multicultural exposure. However, David emphasises the smallness of the island and expresses his concern with regards to multiculturalism, as well as a reservation to the idea of multiculturalism as being the norm:

“When you go back through history, I think multiculturalism on such a small island was the norm for a certain extent” (David, 17.12.2012, 11-14).

What is this “certain extent” David is referring to? At this point, observations made by Claval (1995) that cultural dynamics during the first part of the 20th century were imposed on society and thus seen as “super-organic” (Claval, 1995, p. 2) come to mind which holds that culture in the past was not, as Axelson (1993) refers to a set of shared ideas among the people of a society, but something that the Maltese people have been subjected to involuntarily.

The following quote taken from the interview with Rose (11.12.2012) seems to support this argument:

“I think it is part of Maltese culture and Maltese history that we are separated on all fronts. We are and we have always been separated because we are an island, eh ... we are a small island, so we always feel threatened anyway eh ... ehm ... by bigger countries (Rose, 11.12.2012, 306-313).

Gina on the other hand does not see this as a drawback. She says: “As a child I was always very drawn to multiculturalism...I love being surrounded by different people. I think it’s enriching as an experience” (Gina, 17.3. 2013, 62-95) She thinks instead that Malta’s rich culture and history can be used as an asset:

“As an island in the middle of the Mediterranean ... eh... I think our ... forte is tourism, just to mention something. And we have always been exposed to tourism”. (Gina, 17.3.2013, 17-22).

Seen from Rose’s perspective, the perceived apprehension towards new influences coming from outside seem to be understandable, as there is also an apparent need for Maltese individuals to preserve what they see as their own cultural, even if this identity is composed of diverse other historical cultural identities as outlined in the literature review (Massey, 2012; Reich, Zautra & Hall, 2010; Claval, 1995; Sztompka, 1993).

Unlike Rose, Gina’s arguments are not taken from a negative perspective. This difference in attitudes towards foreign influence appear to be consistent with Haviland’s (1995) idea of culture as a set of shared assumptions where people, depending on their own disposition, understand, perceive and predict the impact of foreign influences.

Similarly Mario states that he “would rather go for opportunities than challenges, because as counsellors we need to be flexible” (Mario 412 -413). Gina’s and Mario’s strength based focus is consistent with the findings of literature on human resilience by Reich et al (2010)

A variety of other topics emerged to the currently discussed master theme. Table 3 gives a brief overview of the different impacts of Malta’s current cultural diversity as seen by the participants.

Table3. Impacts of Malta’s cultural diversity

Impact	Participant
Rapid social change: most people cannot cope with rapid change, example prison	David (528-533)
limited resources: and not much jobs available	Rose (371-391)
Foreigners accept less pay and occupy jobs that Maltese people can do	Jane (72-80)
Influx of new ideas helped to bring about legislation permitting divorce in Malta to happen	Mary (492-501)
Immigrants can contribute to Maltese economy : example	Rose (434-553)

The topics presented in table 3 indicate the concern of the majority of the participants towards foreign influence. David states that socio-economic change in Malta happened in such a rapid way between the 20th and 21st centuries that people seem to have great difficulty to cope with such fluidity:

“... intra-culturally yes, there is a very rapid change. And most people are not adapting to change. A perfect example is prison. Prison in my opinion is the symptom of what is happening outside. How can you go from a population of 200 people in 2005 to the range of 630 in the space of 7 or 8 years? How can we? It’s impossible! No other country is going through this change unless there was a war. There is something happening that people are not adjusting to “(David, 528-533).

There is seemingly high credibility and dependability (Lyons & Coyle, 2008; Cresswell, 2007) in David's observation, since his argument not merely based on a personal feeling but on professional experience combined with factual data about the dynamics at Malta's State Prison (Ministry of Home Affairs, Correctional Services in Malta, 2013).

Literature by Lee emphasises the importance of counsellors to become facilitators for social justice and help clients cope with issues pertaining to social change (Lee, 2007).

The challenge for counsellors is to develop new perspectives and frameworks to help clients to acknowledge and address above expressed concerns when present within themselves and others and to motivate the respective client to become more open and flexible. Openness and flexibility are important factors for the development of resilience (Reich & Zautra, 2010).

Openness and flexibility are challenged when there is a perceived constraint of basic needs (Maslow, 1954) Rose observes that the number of foreigners living in Malta increased and is worried that Malta has too few resources to accommodate all the people who come and settle in Malta:

“The foreign population, even third country nationals, not EU, has always been significant here. But I think over recent years, I am saying past 15 years ehm has increased considerably.... eh but maybe it is inherent in the fact that you have eh an island that is a very small island, very limited resources, caught with a lot of people living there, ehm eh, so even us, amongst the Maltese, we have to fight for maybe a place of work or a job or resources that we have. Let alone if we have foreigners coming in as well. (Rose. 371-391).

Consistent to Rose's concern Jane, assuming the unemployment rate in Malta to be high observes an increase of Eastern Europeans working in the tourism industry

“Let's take the tourism industry: ehm ... whenever we go for a meal, in most restaurants ehm .. sometimes they look Maltese .. and you speak to them in Maltese and they have this Eastern European accent and you know that they are from Eastern Europe and I am thinking, if there are so many of these people getting this jobs, is it more difficult for people who used to work in this areas to get these jobs? I'm sure it is. Ehm,

I also would consider that the rate of unemployment in Malta is not very high. But would it be less if the Eastern Europeans were not here? And they employ Eastern Europeans because they pay them less? You know, I haven't gone to that. But I have a hunch it may be that” (Jane, 72-80).

I noticed that Jane's observation is biased by her assumptions about Malta's unemployment rate and that Eastern Europeans are working for lower salaries.

Her view about foreigners coming to work in Malta reflects Haviland's (1975) idea that culture can be seen as “a set of shared assumptions where people can predict each other's actions in a given circumstance and react accordingly” (Haviland, 1975, p. 6) mentioned earlier on in this chapter.

On the other hand, the above quoted concerns expressed by Rose and Jane find in part consistence with literature by Moncada et al (2010) and Baldacchino (2004) stating that Maltese society has to cope with a below average Gross Domestic Product and high day-to-day living costs (Moncada et al, 2010) limited resources and structural limitations (Baldacchino, 2004).

Such existential issues request from the counsellor as a Maltese citizen to clarify his own perceptions because these will consciously or subconsciously influence the way the counsellor will position himself/herself towards foreign clients.

Mary relates the influence of European thoughts to the recent acceptance of divorce by the Maltese people:

“I think our encounters with becoming a part of Europe and the European identity that really impacted us. When we look at something and say what was the most impact, I think this was one of them, apart from the asylum seekers issue. The European identity I think was the most... So even the influx of new ideas on our culture. It wouldn't have dreamt that Maltese people would embrace the culture of divorce for example. It was something unheard of, completely unheard of” (Mary, 492 – 501).

Mary's stance towards foreign influence is similar to the ideas found in literature by Sorokin (1937) that includes interaction of attitudes that conditions the behaviour of others. Whether European influence was the sole cause that divorce is now accepted in Malta is debatable.

However, Mary's observation reflects the importance Maltese society gives to family values (Abela at al 2005; Abela 2000; Mizzi 1997).

Rose acknowledges also an enriching factor of foreign influence:

“I think the commercialised areas, this is where you start seeing the influence as well because they start having different kinds of shops ... even I’ve seen shops in eh in San Gwann, not one, but ehm with the different food that they do, ehm ... kosher food, this is something that I ... I experienced myself ehm ... eh ... in England some 25 years ago, but in Malta it was unheard of. Eh ... now, in Malta, I’ve seen at least 2 shops eh with different kinds of foods for instance, specifically catered for different cultures and different religions. Ehm ... eh ... so ...eh ... in terms of cultural influence in that sense, I believe that’s positive” (Rose, 434-453).

In spite of her apprehensions Rose is also able to find an example of a positive impact of foreign influence in Malta, where immigrants contribute with their work and with the use of their products from their culture to feed into the Maltese economic system.

This section reported the different impacts of Malta’s cultural diversity on the Maltese society. It also brought to light that some of the participants, although open towards their clients, make various assumptions that colour their impressions about the consequences of cultural diversity.

4.3.1. Multicultural by “nature”?

So far multicultural issues have been discussed in this study as something that is taking place in a person’s external life, as something coming from outside towards the individual or the group. In fact, only two participants referred to themselves as multicultural beings: Gina believes that the Maltese are multicultural by nature: “... in the Maltese there are a lot of different cultures” (Gina, 2013, 207-208).

Gina’s belief can be substantiated with the works of Pederson (2001) and (Sloman, 2005). However, the literature found does not limit being multicultural as a person to a particular nation. In fact Sloman maintains that all individuals “have multiple cultural identities that derive from the different contexts [people] live [their] lives (Sloman, 2005, p. 4).

Mary thinks that because of Malta’s rich history of being exposed to so many different civilisations throughout history the Maltese people are biologically multicultural

”I suppose that even the genetic attribution, you know of having different genetic influences in our race. So I wonder what the Maltese race (laughs) initially was; the ‘pure’ Maltese was, you know. So there is this issue that as a people, we are genetic multinational” (Mary, 271-274).

Since my parents came from two ethnic origins and being raised between different cultures, I can relate to Gina and Mary. Similar ideas are found in literature by Pedersen (2001): “before we are born, cultural patterns of thought and action were already prepared to guide our ideas, influence our decisions and help us control our lives” (Pedersen, 2001, p. 6).

The issue of human genetic descent has also caught public interest. In 2005 Dr. Spencer Wells together with the magazine National Geographic launched the worldwide “Genographic project 2.0 BETA” using an innovative form of DNA analysis to trace people’s ancestral lineage.

This groundbreaking project has two further purposes: to protect indigenous lineages and to investigate the hypothesis that all human beings are connected. However it is beyond the scope of this study to determine the credibility and reliability of the scientific tools used for this research.

4.3.2. Impact of foreign rule on attitude towards foreigners

All of the participants stated in their interviews that being occupied by foreign powers did affect the behaviour of Maltese people towards foreigners. Gina noticed racist traits present within Maltese society while Rose expressed her concern that Malta has been always subjugated to foreign rule which seems to be a determining factor for the apprehensive attitude of the Maltese people towards foreign influence:

“I am not saying that the idea ehm is right or wrong or it’s founded on a real basis. I mean I am saying it is part of our DNA, whether we are right or wrong, it is simply because we are always at the mercy of someone bigger.

And you always have that ehm ... eh ... sense of caution and sense of fear: ehm “*ok, what’s coming next?*” or “*who is coming next?*” So I think even with the introduction of the EU, we had that same feeling” (Rose, 356-365).

Both, Mario and Mary conclude from the perspective of Maltese history that the Maltese people generally harbour a feeling of inferiority towards other nations:

“There have always been other nations, you know, but most of the times the Maltese were subdued, the Maltese were ruled. And this idea of colonialism, of feeling inferior to other nationals ehm eh ... stems from there I suppose, hails from the history of being ruled by foreigners, ehm ... and thinking that the foreigner is always someone better than us, someone with more power” (Mary, 266-270)

Gina believes that: “the Maltese are initially defensive against other cultures, because they have always been ruled by others...and because we are a very small population, maybe we want to preserve this uniqueness (Gina, 132-140)

The participant’s observations are consistent to the findings of local studies (Lutterbeck, 2008; Baldacchino, 2004; Mitchell, 2002). As mentioned earlier on in the literature review Mitchell (2002) argues that, after centuries of colonial rule, the Maltese had to come out of the shadow of their past rulers and establish their own national identity. They now fear that they might, once again, lose this hard-earned identity.

4.3.3. Dealing with the unknown: immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa.

Counsellors working with this population have not only to take structural socio-cultural differences that distinguishes these people from the Maltese society into consideration but also the hardships they had to endure which often go far beyond the counsellors’ personal field of experience (Lee, 1999; van Beek, 1996).

Working with this group of clients is especially challenging for counsellors as well as for other mental health workers because the American-European concept of mental health is completely different to the concept of mental health from people hailing for example from Somalia (Mohamed & Loewenthal, 2009).

All of the participant's state that counselling immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa counsellors or even encountering people with dark skin colour was a novel experience to them. David for example states:

“It does have an impact on me. For example I remember the first coloured person I saw was in England, meaning (laugh) when I went abroad. I have never seen anyone in Malta for example, never. Not even as tourists. Today, obviously the situation has changed. And the situation has changed rather dramatically, I would say. Unfortunately they are not integrated in Maltese society. This means that they are very much ostracized by most areas in Malta“(David, 557-563).

David's observation is consistent with the mood of the Maltese people reflected in local newspaper articles (Grech, Times of Malta, 15 April, 2013; Debono in Malta Today, 5 July 2012).

“...when the illegal immigrants started to come to Malta in large numbers, Ehm ... eh ... the main ... eh ... shout from the Maltese people was that: *“because they are taking our jobs”* – I am not going to go to whether it's true or not, but that is the same, the same shout, I mean the same fear being expressed over again.” (Rose, 371-391).

The arguments from David and Rose are further substantiated in literature by Cuccioletta (2001) which confirms that “the persistent barriers of racism, fear, ignorance and imaginative stereotypes remain constant obstacles” (Cuccioletta, 2001, p. 1) towards integration of the refugees into local communities. Besides the novelty of their direct exposure to people from Sub-Saharan African countries one also has to take into consideration that Malta was, due to its lack of resources not so long ago a country of emigration rather than immigration (Lutterbeck, 2009; Attard, 1997).

This further explains the sensitivity of the Maltese people towards their social wellbeing, even more so since tiny “Malta has experienced the largest influx of irregular immigrants among all EU countries in the recent years” (Lutterbeck, 2009, p. 120). For Mary the unknown factor was not so much the clash between different safety needs between the Sub-Saharan Africans and the Maltese but the unknown factors pertaining to the ethno-cultural background, life-story and suffering of these type of people. Mary recalls:

“I learned how to stay with the unknown, because there was a lot of unknown, like I didn’t know about the different cultures and the impact of every culture and how people react in a one to one situation....

“I never encountered, meeting a coloured person before, but I’ve learned that underneath our skin, you know we are all the same, you know. And that is another learning experience for me and I need all the learning that underneath the layers of everything, the religious thing, the opening up to other ideas about religion and religiosity and initially think that your religion is the right religion and then you find out that there are different ways for different people.” (Mary, 169-178).

Mary, although not used to working with Sub-Saharan African people was noticeably more concerned with the differences in religious values than with the difference in race. It seems that her own cultural encapsulation (Gladding, 2004; Pedersen, 2001; Lee,1999) lead her to over-focus on issues pertaining to religious values which might have caused her to overlook other issues such as the client's multiple losses which very likely involved social status, family and friends (Lee, 1999)

4.4. Participants' Understanding of the term "Multicultural"

This theme explores the meaning every individual research participant assigns to the term 'multicultural' It is relevant for counsellors to understand the meaning of multicultural because "counselling occurs in a context within an office, school or organisation and, beyond this within a larger community" (Lee, 1999, p.2). The majority of the participants define the term 'multicultural' in terms of people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds hailing from different parts of the world.

Out of the six participating counsellors only one, because of her specialised training in transcultural counselling Gina could relate herself to the term by stating, "we all are multicultural, we have different ways of expressing ourselves different ways of seeing things and different ways of feeling it"(Gina, 674-677). She continues:

"For me, it doesn't mean just different cultures. I believe that every one-to-one encounter is multicultural, because every person is different. I can be similar to a person who comes from a different religion. I see myself as multicultural and I can feel very close to that person, so why not being close to a person who is not from

my culture? So for me, multiculturalism is different cultures, different religions, different sexual orientation, age and gender (Gina, 184-197)

Gina's way of understanding of the term multicultural seems to focus on the difference between cultures. It also describes cultural distances with cultures that are close and cultures that are distant to her.

In this way it seems she is indirectly addressing the gaps between the different categories whereas for Mario 'multicultural' also comprises people's different ways of understanding who they are and how they are seen by people hailing from different cultures:

"Ehm eh ... a multicultural society ... (pause) ... eh ... consists of people with ... with a different way of understanding their own identity, and their own life experience, that's multicultural. Ehm eh not necessarily coexisting in a peaceful and harmonious way" (Mario, 342-345).

When reflecting on the various pauses and the tonality in Mario's observation it seems that he is processing a novel experience with the encounter of the meaning of the term while at the same time harbouring a sense of reservation which is expressed in the last sentence of his quote.

It seems that becoming aware and attributing the significance of 'multicultural' to one's self and consequently to each encounter is a significant learning process a counsellor has to go through in order to effectively help his client understand his own behaviour in a cultural context, and to help the client understand his or her environment in the very same sense.

4.4.1. Multicultural versus multinational

As mentioned in the section above, the majority of the participants understood the term multicultural in the context of multinational. However the term ‘multicultural’ does not only refer to people coming from different nationalities. It can also refer to subgroups within one’s own nation. Jane considered this as “a difficult question” (Jane, 429) because to her the term multicultural referred to people and the cultural backgrounds or traits from the respective country:

“So Malta is not the UK and UK is not Malta. That’s at the basis of it I think. When it comes to culture, there are different cultures in different nations” (Jane, 439-443).

During the interview Jane realised that she needs to get more familiar with the meaning of the term ‘multicultural’. She then noticed:

“Even in Malta, where I work, sometimes I need to understand the culture of the place I am at because it is different to mine” (Jane 484-485).

By becoming more aware of the meaning of the term multicultural it can possibly prevent clients as well as counsellors to make generalisations such as “the Russians”, “the Americans”, “the Arabs” and “the Moslems” (Lee, 1999; Sue et al, 1996; Pedersen,1991).

4.4.2. Diversity within the Maltese culture

All of the participants talked about diversity within the Maltese culture. Gina for example explains:

“Within the Maltese there are a lot of different cultures, and somebody who lives in one part of Malta can have a complete different culture from somebody else who lives in another part of Malta” (Gina, 207-213).

Mary speaks even of a cultural divide between the different regions:

“Also the cultures in Malta, different cultures, ehm eh ... for example Malta is divided into north and south regions. I hail from the north region. So I’m perceived in the south as being a bit snobbish perhaps, but I worked for good 10 years in the south of the island and I remember my reaction the first time when I was told that I would work in Cottonera I didn’t even know how to arrive there, you know. (Mary, 227-286).

Mary’s account addresses not only a cultural but also a socio-political divide (Armstrong & Mitchell, 2011; Baldacchino 2009; Mitchell, 2002) That she did not even know how to arrive in this region of Malta may sound surprising when considering the size of the island and the small distances between the different places and suggests a presence of social inequality (Lee, 2007) and discrimination between different social classes (Singh et al, 2012; Massey 2012; Moscovici, 1984).

4.5. Significance of Language in a Multicultural Context

Language is very important to counselling, since it is a verbal profession. It is essential that the counsellor is culturally sensitive and understands the way the client expresses her/himself (Haley & Combs, 2010).

Language is closely linked to the cultural identity of a person. According to literature it cannot be separated from culture it can go so far that a client may feel estranged and may oppose counselling” (Faubert & Gonzales, 2008)when he cannot express himself in the language s/he feels most comfortable with. Consistent to literature Mary for example observed:

“It was definitely difficult for immigrant clients to come to counselling, especially with the asylum seekers. Initially it was very, very difficult to communicate and how to go about when communicating. I am sure there were many who could not come for help because of the language issue” (Mary, 631-633).

Mary’s difficulty does not only address a language problem (Faubert & Gonzalez, 2008). It also sheds light on issues of ethnocentricity and cultural encapsulation (Gladding, 2004; Lee, 1997; Arredondo et al, 1996)

Mario stresses the importance of what words we use to help clients to define and to clarify things that are meaningful to them:

“... because the clearer something is, the more things are being excluded. The clearer my experience is, or my identity is, the more things are excluded. In the process of defining, the more I define, the more I exclude. For example by defining this as a chair,

I am saying it is not a table. Well, I can use this chair as a table. I can take this chair and drag this one (chuckle) in front of me, and use this as a table” (Mario, 319-325).

Mario’s ideas are consistent to Sapir-Whorf’s hypothesis that our social thinking is intensely influenced by what we agree to be our cultural norm (Moscovici, 1984). This is a fact that a counsellor must bear in mind when interacting with a client.

The use of language in counselling can also act as agent of change as the following experience of Mario demonstrates:

... I changed the word purposefully with that client. He made a statement, and later on in the session I changed the word. It was something personal, but that helped him to become aware of his own beliefs. Because he challenged my way of talking, and then we talked about the meaning of words and how he he became aware more about his own way of looking at things and at the same time becoming aware that there are other ways of seeing things. In fact, language is always important”(Mario, 415-418).

The above examples demonstrated that it is not only important to master different languages, but also to develop sensitivity to the meaning of language for the individual (Geng, 2010; Faubert & Gonzales 2008, Whorf, 1956. It is imperative for the counsellor to be aware that the client does not necessarily share the same meaning to the same word used by the counsellor. That is why active listening and accurate empathy are essential elements in a counselling session.

4.5.1. Being multilingual

Due to their rich multicultural history, Maltese people are naturally multilingual. All the participants expressed that it is normal for them to speak more than one language and state that they have no problem conducting their sessions with their clients in English. Although Gina, Jane and David agreed that they feel more comfortable to speak Maltese when they express themselves emotionally. However, none of them expressed their awareness of “code-switching” which means to move elements from one language into another (Baker, 2003). However, it might be that because of them being used to speak in a “foreign” language, they may take the effort their non-English speaking client is making to be understood for granted.

4.6. Impact on Issues Related to Belonging

A healthy sense of belonging provides a secure anchor for successful personal development (Maslow 1954). The interviews suggest that counsellors are, consciously or not, confronted with their own existential vulnerabilities and with those of their clients.

Rose for example notes:

“the level of stability, or the level of wellbeing inherent in the fact that you have your family around you, that you are close to your roots that provides you stability as much as possible, in terms of identity” (Rose, 885-903).

Although Rose speaks in general terms, there is a sense of existential vulnerability that transpires when reading through the lines which is consistent to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1954).

On the same subject David comments:

“...it would increase it. It’s either you withdraw rather more into you own family, your own roots for example, afraid to lose the roots. The roots were based for so many years, they were based on politics, which is very much a membership of a tribe in Malta, religion and your family. And again the family is very much into the religion and the politics” (David, 566-569)

Rose’s and David’s comment put the finger on a sore point that probably feeds into the actual dilemma the Maltese people have with embracing multiculturalism. This suggests that the vulnerability and need for stability of the Maltese people is currently confronted with the need and the vulnerability of thousands of people from other civilizations and cultures arriving at their shores (Lutterbeck, (2009).

4.6.1. Religious values

As noted in the review of literature, the Catholic religion is the basic pattern weaving itself through the multicultural fabric of Malta’s contemporary society. In fact this was one of the themes where participants shared different opinions.

One significant landmark of Maltese cultural dynamics is the veneration of saints. In fact it is an internal part of the Maltese culture. For Gina and Mario Saints are the personifications of virtues. Gina also observes that in times of need Maltese people turn to prayer. She says it is the faith of the people that helps them overcome difficulties in life. In agreement to Gina’s observation Jane states:

“I think religion does give you values. But then I don’t think it’s only the religion that keeps you in those values. It is your conviction that what you’re doing, what you see as valuable spiritually you keep. So you may be on a crossroad in your life, where religion is not as meaningful as it used to be, or you might need to relearn your religion or you want another religion or whatever. ..but if the value of life, in whatever religion, if the value of life or whatever for you is important that remains important” (Jane, 254-259).

Consistent to this literature states that religion is a strong resilience factor (Pargament & Cummings in Reich et al, 2010).

Taking this factor into consideration the counsellor needs to be familiar with the respective religious precepts in order to help the client in a way that is consistent with his religious views (Manson, 2012)

Catholic religion plays a stronger role in Maltese family life and morality than in other European countries (Abela, 2000) which “makes change happen very slowly” (Abela, 2009, p.151). This is also reflected in the findings of this study:

“The certain Christian values where there’s an absolute, when in reality they weren’t lived as absolutes: for example fidelity in marriage, the family, they were seen as absolute... for example Saint Rita: there was this mentality that women had to submit to their husband. I am talking about that generation who are now in their 60’s, 70’s. I remember my mother telling me that, before she got married, her mother told her ‘now do as your husband says” (Mario, 267-277)

Santa Rita represents the image that the virtue of a good mother is to offer her life for the benefit of the wellbeing of the family and her children has still great influence on moral values of Maltese women. Gina for example believes that it is the woman who has to make all the sacrifices if she wants to go to work:

“the woman has to juggle more, because there is this perception that child bearing and housework is mainly the woman’s role, It is the woman I believe who has to make the majority of the sacrifices if she wants to work and has small children” (Gina, 284-300).

Rose also believes that women are the “anchor for their children” (Rose, 837) while Jane on the other hand argues that Maltese being firmly anchored in their religious values and beliefs find it very difficult to accept other ideas from other cultures:

“Let’s take religion which ... eh... is mostly Catholic in Malta. When. other religions with multicultural people coming in.. eh.. they started new perspectives... on.. .. on religion which ...- some people changes are difficult to accept”(Jane, 20.11.2012, 6-9)

Her comment finds consistency with local literature stating that strong religious traditions which are transmitted from generation to generation create a “strong social fabric which is characterised by social control and a cautious attitude to change” (Abela, 2009 p. 150).

It is also observed that the Catholic educational system in Malta “does not seem to be very flexible” (Abela, 2009, p.151) towards different attitudes as the following lived experience demonstrates:

“I consider myself to be quite ... quite a rebel ... I am, confirmed atheist in the age of 12, completely, you know. That was a radical thing in Malta in those days, when you are going to a church school and you might not believe in Christ. (Laugh) I remember them sending for my mother, and my mother had to go and explain herself and I was sent to counselling, one of my first exposures for example with a counsellor” (David 483-489).

The above quote points to strict adherence of the Catholic precepts which has little tolerance to deviation from its system (Mitchell, 2002; Abela, 2000; Boissevain, 1992).

David’s first time counselling experience was an experience of rejection because of his beliefs. His experience might have implications for his current attitude towards religion” Literature explains that “pastoral caregivers might be biased toward their own faith and often will consider it to be of universal significance “ and therefore see “aspects from the care seeker as deviant from the truth”(van Beek, 1996).

The following statement by Gina seems to be in agreement with van Beek’s observations:

“I went to church school with in itself isn’t very inclusive as well” (Gina, 109-111). Gina also informs that pastoral counselling plays a very important role in Malta even up to this very day: “the clergy and the church show that even now the people who see most of the people’s problems are the priests. I think it was the church that was more influential then and I don’t think it encouraged people to leave their marriage”(Gina, 429-443)

Gina's observations are similar to local research by Baldacchino (2009). However they suggests a power inequality which puts the pastoral counsellor in a privileged expert position towards which the client is looking up to, which is contra-indicative to equal-based position of modern day counselling (Gladding, 2004). Although Gina notes that pastoral care is very popular by the Maltese people, literature by van Beek (1996) notes that "pastoral caregivers might be biased towards their own faith and often will consider it to be of universal significance"(van Beek, 1996 p. 20).

This indicates that multicultural issues might not be always addressed objectively.

4.7. Multicultural Impact on the Family

The family is highly valued in Malta and until recent, "Maltese society was completely attuned to the teachings and precepts of the Catholic religion [which] gives great importance to family and morality" (Doublesin, 2011; Abela, Frosh & Dowling, 2005; Abela 2000). In fact all of the participants expressed their appreciation for their family to them. Rose for example said:

"...we value the importance of the family in Malta for instance. And that is something I really value" (Rose, 745-748).

Many of the participants believe that modern ideas coming from outside Malta threaten the wellbeing of the family:

“I see other problems... which are not out of the Maltese culture, but they are for example single parents. It is something that is a choice....the Maltese culture, if you had to go back to not so many years ago, the family was something that... [deep breath and big sigh]... was sacred” (Jane, 153-168).

The deep breath and the sigh of Jane and her choice of words indicate that she feels that family has been deconsecrated by foreign influences. Mary shared similar sentiments:

“..so even the influx of new ideas to our culture. I wouldn't have dreamt that the Maltese people would embrace the culture of divorce.. it was something unheard of” (Mary, 495-501).

Consistent to the above expressed sentiments local literature informs that Malta was until 2012 “together with the Philippines the only country, where it is not possible to obtain a divorce” (Abela, 2009, p. 149).

At an intra-cultural level this indicates not only a challenge to traditional values but also a shift in the family structure from the nuclear family to a patch-work family as the following account by Mario demonstrates:

“I started having cases of separation and ... eh... reconstituted families, people who are separated way back, having their own separate families. It was a kind of a transition ... a development. Now I have kids who have pressing issues how to relate to stepfathers, stepmothers and stepbrothers and half-brothers and –sisters” (Mario 207-212).

This may challenge the development of identity and sense of belonging (Johnson, 2007; Bowlby, 1988; Bowlby 1969).

According to literature the latter is a critical factor influencing a child's ability to relate to others and to form a healthy intimate relationship later on in life (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

4.7.1. Nuclear family in a state of transition

Reconstituted families and the shift in gender roles strongly indicate a transitional phase within the family structure (Abela 2009). Gina believes that in the 20th century gender roles were more “clear-cut: most of the women stayed at home with the kids and the men went to work” (Gina, 405-408). Similar to Gina, Mario notes that “issues are becoming more complex than in 2000 or 1995” (Mario, 199-200).

What comes to mind is that we are learning through experience. And when children for example don't experience the family as a nucleus because they are spending most of their days outside home, to sleep, to eat and so forth, what will their perception of family be like? It is very likely that nurses, educators and friends will be perceived as family. In this way, the perception of the children about the family as a nucleus may enlarge to an extended family. Could this influence their attitude and behaviour later when they eventually form their own family? (Doublesin, 2011; Abela, 2009; Borg Xuereb, 2008; Bowlby 1988)

On the other hand, Rose believes that the concept of extended family is not new in Malta in the sense that

“Before Malta was very much the extended family type. Very much, I mean people were living with the grandparents” (Rose, 739-742).

However, an attachment theorist may find Rose's argument confounded in the sense that a child's attachment to a grandparent is different to the child's attachment to a carer or an educator (Bowlby 1988). Further challenges that counsellors encounter are problems related to Maltese marrying people from ethnically and culturally different background:

“Once I was working with another family where one partner was from ... from Turkey. They couldn't really understand or appreciate this cultural diversity. It was very judgmental towards this person, labelling him as dependent, as controlling and what not. But actually it was a matter of coming from another culture. It is like that thing with enmeshment: we see it as enmeshment which it is not. And psychology has been developed within the Western culture”. (Mario, 443-451)

For a counsellor to be able to effectively mediate between couples who hail from different ethnical and cultural background requires not only cultural sensitivity but also cultural literacy and the communication skills (Lee, 2007; Lee, 1999; van Beek 1996).

4.7.2. Redefining traditional gender roles

Nowadays more and more Maltese women join the workforce. Couples therefore need to re-define their role within the family (Abela, 2009). The findings of this study are in agreement with literature as it is demonstrated underneath with the following quote:

“Much more women are going to work. So I think all that is opening the mentality of the Maltese...compared to other countries her less women go to work, but I think their number is growing.. I think a lot of women here in Malta are very attached to the family. And for the majority of the Maltese women caring for their own children is very important” (Gina, 243-246)

Consistent to the above, relevant studies highlight the challenge of Maltese couples to reconcile traditional gender roles with emerging needs of wellbeing of all family members (Abela 1998, Azzopardi, 2007, Borg Xuereb, 2008).

This conflict produces guilt and role confusion (Azzopardi, 2007). However it is not only the woman who has to redefine her role. Also the man is faced with a new situation which requires also him to redefine his role. Gina also believes that most Maltese women are currently passing through a very difficult transition (Gina, 279 -281).

Rose also acknowledges that the main responsibility of child rearing lies on the women but she also notes a change taking place:

“I see men taking responsibilities. I mean it’s a process. I always think that things like that take two generations at least to ... to change, to ... to really take effect. Because the first one introducing the change, the second one is already used to it, you know, and then it’s the third one that will feel comfortable with it and implement it” (Rose, 859 -870)

With the argument above Rose emphasizes that change is a process it takes time for change to happen (Massey, 2012).

Family counsellors have to reflect on their own family values and the resulting biases related to gender roles in order to help couples redefine their respective roles within the family (Abela, 2009).

4.7.3. Generational differences and the impact of fast developing media technology

With regards to the culture of media technology in the last two decades of the 20th century there is a noticeable dichotomy between slowly changing trans-generational patterns and the impact of fast developing media technology on Malta's youth. Gina and Rose note a break of inter-generational patterns due to this Gina says that she believes that Malta's multicultural diversity is not only due to people from different cultural and ethnic background, but also due to the fast development of media technology and telecommunication:

“at a push of a button I can speak to I don't know where, and if a country is having a Tsunami, I can actually witness it happening on the internet. I think this internet business as well is in fact multiculturalism... I think technology pushes the Maltese to be more open” (Gina168-236).

David also found this to be one of the challenges Maltese counsellors need to address:

“Trans-generational issues take a long time to break.... What you inherit, let's say from different generations, the particular mind-set, the psyche, the attitude, that takes a while to change.

Saying this, I am seeing a challenge in this. In eh ... in youths today for example, they are very different from the youths I have seen in the 70's and the 80's, radically different the way they think, the way they act. Their culture is completely different. I would say their culture is more en par with normal today European cultures. You would say why? One of the big reasons is social media and social media gives you accessibility, now and across the globe whenever you want” (David, 386-393).

David's observation is consistent to what is the set of mind of the youth within themselves, which is composed of generational patterns handed to them by their family of origin and the set of mind they've acquired when exposed to digital technology.

The mind-set of the youth in interaction with the mind-sets of members of their families of origin, is what creates a gap between the older generation and the youth.

This has been also noticed by Mario:

“... the link between is missing. Ehm ... and things are changing very rapidly. We are no longer talking about a 5 years gap, it's a generation gap. Things are changing all the time” (Mario, 291-293).

I can relate to what David was saying through my personal experience with my 14 year old grandson. Since he is growing up with interactive computer games and modern technologies in educational settings, he feels at home with the digital world which feels almost alien to me.

This reminds me of Claval's argument in literature stating that “everyone is exposed to a different set of models and has a different life trajectory, [so that] what he learns is not exactly equivalent to what has been internalised by other persons “(Claval, 1995 p.2).

David addressed a challenge in understanding and mediating different patterns of mind-sets which involves different parties:

Mario's observation that is substantiated in literature stating that not everybody is equally able to adapt to our digitalized modern world, leaving the generations unfamiliar with these modern technologies behind (Massey, 2012, Constable & Touloumakos, 2009; Borges, 2007).

This implies that counsellors have to also consider digital technologies as part of the lifestyle of younger generations (Borges, 2007; Constable & Touloumakos, 2009) and search together with the client for integrative methods that can bridge the digital gap between the younger and older generations to help eliminate the sense of alienation of older generations who have more difficulties to acquire new skills (Broderick & Blewitt, 2003).

- The relationship of counsellors with the world of digital technology and how they position themselves in a counselling process with young clients whose frame of mind has been shaped by the use of modern technology.
- The mind-set of Malta's older generation not being *en par* with the European mind-set

The above presented arguments by Gina and David are addressing issues that are likely to be overlooked in counselling, since traditional forms of counselling focus mainly on interpersonal issues, decisions and choices to be made by the client (Gladding 2004; Lee, 1999). In fact only she and David addressed the importance of technology in a multicultural context. Digital technology has developed at high speed within a very short time span. In contrast to the 20th century, the use of digital technology has now become part of our day-to-day life at home, in educational institutions and at work.

4.7.4. Attitudes towards the family: individualistic versus collectivistic behaviour

On this issue Mario commented as follows:

“I am thinking about a situation I had recently where I have been working with two ... two families from the Inner Harbor area where I think you still find (thinking)eh the ... the idea of collective identity is stronger than from other areas of the island, like Sliema or Attard, where there is a more individualistic lifestyle” (Mario, 357-360).

Bronfenbrenner (1993) holds that the influence of a person’s environment should be taken into consideration when analysing a person’s lifestyle or behaviour. It would be interesting to ask in what way the above mentioned areas reinforce the different lifestyles of these two families.

Mario also believes that a person’s collectivistic oriented behaviour can be mistaken as enmeshment:

“What we see as enmeshment. (laughter) In fact I generally challenge that idea of enmeshment. It’s not enmeshment. It’s very because it’s ... the person I was working with couldn’t understand himself in any different way.

Because if I had to work with him towards individuation, that would have led to a sense of loss. What we did instead was: “listen, this is what you have. There are certain things which you are finding useful and you appreciate ... what we are going to keep from this collective identity and what can you afford to let go and what you can’t afford. Otherwise he would have been ostracized by the family.” (Mario, 363-398).

Mario's critique on the use of the term enmeshment in this particular case is understandable. However, I disagree with Mario challenging the entire concept of enmeshment because the term enmeshment "refers to family environments in which members are overly dependent on each other or are undifferentiated" (Gladding, 2004, p. 385).

Obviously Mario's client identified himself as such. Literature offers the following explanation to the client's behaviour: in collectivistic oriented cultures "the group takes precedence over the needs of the individual" (Lee, 1999 p. 104).

However considering Mario's bias I would reassess the case. This is a good example of how personal opinions can lead to foreclosure and how important it is to have good understanding of theories as well as to constantly update on multicultural literacy (Nesbitt-Larking 2008; Lee 1997; Nwachuku & Ivey 1991; Pedersen 1982).

4.8. The Counselling Profession and the Challenge for Counsellors

One of the roles of counsellors is to help their clients understand and integrate their experiences in a way which is congruent with their clients' world view (Manson, 2012). I wonder if this observation is consistent with multicultural dynamics of Malta's contemporary society. What if the client's presented worldview is precisely the cause of alienation or inner and outer conflict? When put under an existentialistic analytic lens (Binswanger 1881 – 1966), personal worldview is coloured by the following factors: the interpretation of perceived demands of society, the degree of the ability to relate to self and others meaning given to interactions with others (Binswanger as cited in Hergenhahn

2001). This first counselling experience exemplifies how opinions and stereotypes about counselling can be formed:

“... the experience I had was indoctrination. The ... the sole emphasis of guidance was, and this is the notion: if you are normal, you do not need counselling. If you deviate from the norm, you deserve counselling “(David, 494-495).

These basic beliefs, as noted earlier on in the review of literature, differ between each individual depending on gender and age (Claval, 1995) and also depending on education and degree of exposure to different cultures, religions and ethnicities. In an institutional setting, the counsellor had not only to deal with personal misconceptions but also with the misconceptions of the clients and also those of the respective staff. From Mary I learn that when working with institutions she often finds herself as a sort of mediator between the needs of her clients as well as those of the system.

This is another challenge, and calls for specialised training so as to be better prepared for such situations. Besides the challenges Mary also speaks about the dilemmas Malta’s counsellors have to face until today:

“The helping profession had to meet that need, when the profession was so young. There were a lot of challenges and not even having the legal standing, and how to build up our identity within this culture of professionals who look down on us” (Mary, 393-397).

Although Maltese counsellors have come a long way (Degiovanni 1987), the legal standing of Maltese counsellor’s is about to be resolved, Maltese counsellors do not only have to do deal with complex issues of their clients, but they also carry the burden of having to defend their professional standing.

Mario noticed that because of the strong religious influence in Malta:

“The main challenge or at least one of the main challenges is that we have a very strong religious presence and the Christian values are upheld very strongly. But at the same time, at grass-root level, there are changes taking place. So we have the official values, which are very strongly held, yet there are these changes taking place and somehow I think there is a gap. The development isn’t smooth and maybe at one point we find ourselves with a void, kind of, because people then start questioning these strong religious values and there is a gap between the professed and the lived” (Mario, 245-250).

4.8.1. Roles of the counsellor in the past and present

One of the responsibilities of the counsellor is to regard the client’s dignity and vulnerability (Bond 2010). As noted in the review of literature, Counselling is rooted in the “guidance movement” that mainly focused on “helping people make choices” (Gladding, 2004, pp. 4-5).

However, the participants in this study note that the roles of the counsellor became more complex in the sense that a counsellor not only must understand the client in his or her specific cultural context (Lee, 1999) but must be flexible so as to skilfully discern how to effectively help the client:

“... I think ... the counselling profession needs to give a voice, a voice in favour of transcultural perspective which is different from multicultural.

Counselling is bound on respect. So I think that counselling needs to play an important role in giving a voice and to ... to encourage people to be open. Not tolerance, I don't believe in tolerance" (Mario, 390-393).

Rose and Jane also hold that the counselling profession might change because of the great ethnical and cultural variety of clients as well as because the needs of these clients are more complex and differ greatly from the traditional needs that were addressed in the past in counselling. Jane point to two different roles she is taking on depending whether she is working with parents or with children:

"I use my counselling skills with the parents, but I am more directives with the parents. With the children, you know, it's a bit different. Because what they bring, is their own perspective of the situation. So, whether they're Chinese or Japanese or Arabic or Maltese, pain is always pain" (Jane, 445-450).

It is evident from this quote that Jane does not focus so much on the ethnical or cultural difference of the children she is counselling but at the pain these children bring into the session, which in her eyes is a universal phenomenon which goes beyond the boundaries of ethnicity and culture this is consistent with literature by Gilbert (2008).

For Gina openness and the capacity to empathize are important in counselling:

"I think openness is one of the traits, and even empathizing. I can empathize and that makes me very open as a person. I understand diversity, because I live in diversity all the time and I am challenged by it daily. So I think, this makes me understand the person more" (Gina, 706-718).

The above mentioned interviews with the participants bring to light that the role of Maltese counsellors in the 21st century is to integrate, mediate and advocate helping their clients to successfully cope with the complexities of modern life in Malta.

4.8.2. Facing the unknown

The interviews reveal that the participants face many issues they are unfamiliar with. Mary for example notes

“I learned how to stay with the unknown, because there was a lot of unknown, like I didn’t know about the different cultures and the impact of every culture and how people react in a one to one situation. (Mary,72 -3).

And:

“I remember my horror when seeing the conditions some people are living in. I remember my horror in one particular place, ehm ... in in Verdala, ehm and that is where I suppose that is my first exposure to ... to bigamy, you know.

And these were not Muslims, they were Maltese... ... Ehm it was like as if I wasn’t living in Malta, you know. Ehm eh and I remember saying I have done something I have never done before, and I was around 35 at this time” (Mary, 235-244).

In both experiences Mary expresses that she had to learn by practice, because at that time there was little or almost no multicultural specialized professional training available that would have prepared her for these encounters.

When Mary narrated her exposure to I could see how difficult, almost traumatic it must have been for her. Counsellors working in high emotionally charged environments, as the above or detention centres and in correctional settings are highly vulnerable to vicarious trauma, which is often the result of repeated empathic engagement with clients with severe traumatic experiences (Trippany, White Kress & Wilcoxon, 2004). Therefore proper self-care is highly recommended.

Reflecting on the case narrated above it appears that the individual is in a constant transition, or not in a state of being but in a state of becoming (Perls, 1973; Allport, 1983; Rogers, 1995).

From the perspective of constant transition the main function of the counsellor is to be a mediator of change (Lee, 2007; Gladding, 2004; Lee, 1999; van Beck, 1996; Pederson, 1991).

This requires development of self-reflective attitude, awareness of own biases, cultural sensitivity. According to Pederson (1991), to discover and to acknowledge own culture bound biases can be quite challenging at times because these biases are often deeply ingrained in the unconscious.

As the individual is thought to be in a constant state of transition, there are also moments of uncertainty. The challenge for the counsellor in this regard is to stay with these moments of uncertainty. A possible therapeutic intervention could be to help clients befriend their uncertainty.

I think that this might help the client, because a lot of our anxieties seem come from our efforts to reconcile our experience, with our own ideas.

4.8.3. The counsellor's personal perspective as a Maltese living in a multicultural society

“Most probably I managed to connect on this level because somehow it resonated with my own experience. In fact eh ... I ... I have that image from childhood of our main door always put on a ledge. It's closed but on a ledge. But at night it will be locked. But ... but there is the door closed, but still kind of ajar you know. But know that you are entering a new space” (Mario, 381-384).

Mario's example does not explain how he learned to guard his boundaries but the words “you know that you are entering a new space” has an emphasis on the word “new” which is only known to the host of that space, but unknown to the one who is about to enter. This suggests consistency with Clavals's argument that every person “reinterprets constantly what” s/he “has received or experienced in order to deal with evolving environments” (Claval, 1995, p. 2).

“Obviously, whether I like it or not, this means that I am still a product of the social cultures that I was exposed to. What's the notion of Maltese? Is it just religion and politics and the occasional rabbit? I am afraid I can't answer the question yet. To be honest with you it is a discovery, meaning exactly what it means to be Maltese especially in a wider context. (David, 483-584).

David point's to the fact that he is in still in the process of redefining himself as being Maltese. It seems that his struggle is only a tiny reflection of a process what other individuals might be passing through since the individual and consequently also society is constantly evolving (Massay, 2012).

. “It’s when the people try to .. ehm... force you into believing,... into ehm.. I think it is important that you try to understand, but that you are part of it, or ... ehm... that it interferes with me, because I am Maltese, I am Catholic by religion, whether practicing or not is another story, but ehm.. as long as you don’t impose your culture, your religion on me, we can work splendidly” (Jane, 32-36).

“I don’t believe in multiculturalism ...eh... being able to have different cultures living in such a small place and everyone doing their own thing or their own culture. I think it creates, eventually it creates problems” (Rose, 483-488).

Rose’s rejection of multiculturalism might be rooted in the fear of losing cultural coherence (Merry, 2005) and also in the fear of values being taken over by foreign influences that do not treasure the same values or in the same way. Jane voiced similar thoughts, when saying “as long as you don’t impose your culture, your religion on me, we can work splendidly” Jane’s position indicates a disparity to a multicultural approach in counselling (Sue, 1978). However I do understand these concerns because change in a cultural landscape is also a loss of what has become dear to them, even more so since this change came unbidden.

4.8.4. Ethical issues

It transpires from the interviews that one of the greatest challenges is also the flexibility to work within the framework of ethical boundaries and translate these into the cultural context of the client, without losing one’s congruence.

Counsellors are, like any other mental health worker bound by the code of ethics. The clients may not necessarily have the same values the counsellor. For example the values of a female hailing from a Muslim society: what comes here to mind is the issue of autonomy, as she sees herself as part of the collective. Another example mentioned was when it comes to counselling a client who has experienced domestic violence.

“Ehm eh ... there are issues which I am very strong about: for example violence, abuse, those, I don't compromise them. I ... I stated openly that violence is unacceptable, abuse is unacceptable. So far for example I might have an issue with for example ... ehm ... abortion. I think there I would have. I have also an issue where there is lack of respect. For example I would stay with ... with a person who is betraying his wife or the wife betraying her husband but I see it as a lack of respect towards the partner. So I would work on that with the client” (Mario, 557-262).

This often involves issues concerning confidentiality, safety and autonomy of the client. However all of these have to be seen in the context of the environment the respective person is living in. It may also be necessary to reflect on which ethical codes apply to multicultural and multi-ethnic contexts.

Mary says that she deals with ethical dilemmas by the use of virtue ethics she explains:

“Ethics are there to serve a particular purpose and it is to protect us and to protect our clients. Ehm the moment that ethics come up as an excuse or come in between, you know but even though the shift, and we alter our way of being as a counsellor to accommodate someone from another culture does not mean that we do not reassess again our professional boundaries, you know.

I mean the fact that, for example once I felt I had to attend to a part of the Christening of an African lady who had been just giving birth to her son. Ehm because I thought it would interfere with my relationship, because I was still in a counselling relationship with her and she would have perceived it as me rejecting her. I don't mean that my boundaries were diluted in such a way that I couldn't work with her anymore" (Mary, 437-446)

Mary example demonstrates her respect for the client and the client's culture by actively validating what is important to the client, without losing her professional attitude towards her client. Acting ethically entails moral decision making "about people and their interaction in society" (Kitchener, 1986, p. 306). Although ethics is very essential to counselling only two of the participant spoke about ethical dilemmas they had to face in their counselling practice. The other participants were more concerned with the multicultural phenomenon and its impacts on themselves and on society.

4.8.5. Suggestions for colleagues

Rose, Mary and suggest their colleagues to be open, flexible and critical, but most of all to keep cultivating a reflexive attitude in order to remain congruent. Jane suggests studying more about the meaning of multicultural and what it means in a day-to-day context. David and Mario suggest the following:

"Treasure these moments of uncertainty, because if you manage to stay with your own uncertainties then you will be able to stay with your clients' uncertainties"(David, 302-304).

“one of the main skills we need to learn is the ability to adjust. I think the ability to mediate or to ... to negotiate ehms brings with it a lot of uncertainty. And for a counsellor I think it’s important to learn how to stay with uncertainty. Make this shift from focussing on the individual only to systemic thinking” (Mario, 296-300)

At this point I would like to draw the attention to the importance of continuous supervision. Supervision and the participants’ relationship to supervision in the context of challenging situations were hardly mentioned by the participants.

Supervisors bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience. This holds especially when dealing with client’s issues that are beyond the field of personal experience or cultural experience. For their own benefit and the benefit of the clients I therefore would like to encourage colleagues to build a strong and trusting relationship with their supervisor and not to face challenging situations on their own.

4.9. Summary

This section aimed to shed light on the complexity involving multicultural issues Malta’s society is facing between 1974 until 2013 and the resulting challenges for counsellors. Tables used in this chapter were aimed to provide a clearer picture of the many aspects that were addressed by the participants. A detailed outline of themes emerging from the interviews were presented and linked with relevant literature to enhance the credibility of this study.

The *in vivo* quotes and interpretations presented were discussed with literature and personal observations and reflections with the purpose to provide a deeper understanding of how counsellors experience issues related to the topic under investigation. An overall conclusion of the findings will be presented at the end of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5 - CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This concluding chapter starts by offering suggestions for practice and research inspired by the findings listed in Chapter 4. The following section in this chapter outlines limitations that were observed during the process of carrying out this study. Then, this chapter will close with an overall conclusion which includes a brief summary of each chapter and with the overall findings of this study.

5.2. Implications for Practice and Research

This section proposes ideas for practice and research to help the counsellors develop their skills and improve their efficiency in helping their clients embrace multiculturalism and cope with the current impact of multicultural exposure.

5.2.1. Implications for practice

The findings of this study indicate that Maltese counsellors and are facing increasingly complex situations pertaining to multicultural issues in their counselling practice. Therefore I suggest the following for counsellors as well as for the public:

- **Multicultural sensitivity training programmes for practicing counsellors**

The findings of this study brought to light that multicultural issues are often seen as something outside the self, indicating a gap between the counsellor in living and practicing in a multicultural environment, and the counsellor self as a multicultural construct. Therefore it may be useful for practicing counsellors to offer specially tailored multicultural sensitivity programs to help them reflect on their own multicultural identity and on the multicultural identity of their clients.

- **Advanced multicultural competence training for practicing counsellors**

These training programmes designed to give counsellors the opportunity to learn from African, Arab, and Indian, Asian, North American Indian, Tibetan and other practitioners around the world. This program should ideally stretch over a longer period of time (minimum 6 months).

- **Specialized programmes for counsellor working with trauma survivors in a multicultural setting**

Counsellors working with trauma survivors in detention centres, correctional environments or in private practice are vulnerable to suffer vicarious trauma. Such programmes can, next to introducing multicultural models for to help their clients cope with their trauma, provide counsellors with the opportunity to learn coping strategies and applicable self-care methods.

- **Specialized civic education programmes for the public**

It seems that the term “multicultural” is only vaguely understood which can lead to misconceptions of what it means to live in a multicultural environment. The review of literature and the results of this study indicate that multiculturalism is seen as something where everybody does what everybody likes on the expense of the wellbeing of the Maltese people.

Specialized civic programmes may help the Maltese people to strengthen their national identity and to embrace different cultures at the same time.

- **Multicultural education programmes in primary and secondary schools**

Fruitful and peaceful coexistence between different cultures and civilizations may be successful when learned and practiced early on in life. Multicultural education programmes in addition to the inclusive education programs in primary and secondary schools can help address the need for a peaceful coexistence.

The above suggested programmes can help to better understand and to transcend issues pertaining to xenophobia and racism.

5.3. Implications for Research

The topic of this study is currently under researched and needs more investigation at a larger scale in order to further address the needs of Maltese counsellors and society at large as well as to inspire scientific multicultural dialogue between the different disciplines within the academic community. Furthermore it would be interesting to conduct a study in order to develop a Malta specific theoretical framework for counsellors which can aid Maltese counsellors to better help their clients hailing from different ethnic backgrounds and who have different explanatory modes and who experienced problems and pains which are beyond the counsellors' field of experience.

Additionally, this study also showed that the fast developing digital technology and the use of social media adds another dimension to the multicultural identity of the individual. Further research involving identity and digital technology could help counsellors to better understand how virtual identity affects multicultural understanding and self-perception.

5.4. Limitations

This qualitative narrative inquiry is based on the experiences narrated by the research participants and only be used for informative purpose. The outcome of this study cannot be used for predictive purposes. The topic under investigation is multifaceted and has a high degree of complexity and was very difficult to contain. Although I tried to address as many multicultural issues as possible in order to provide a total picture, I have to offer my apologies that I did not include people with different abilities and sexual

orientation because I consider these as very specialized areas which would have taken me beyond scope of this dissertation. During these last month's I built an intense relationship with this study that now that is coming to an end I have the feeling that I am just about to begin.

There is so much more that could be said, so many things that might have been expressed in a better way or taken from different perspectives. Being a novice in the field of academic writing I acknowledge my lack of experience as narrative researcher and hope to be able to improve my skills with practice.

- **Topic locally under researched**

This study depends heavily on data taken from interview and literature found in the review of literatures. The impact of multicultural exposure on Maltese society and its challenge for counsellors is locally under researched. Although there is a good amount of literature to be found on multicultural issues, there are only a few academic works that are Malta specific. The literature found addressed only parts to the topic.

- **Language**

As German national and not an English native speaker I experienced two major challenges:

- finding the words equivalent to how I would have expressed myself when writing in my mother tongue, because the English words given as equivalence had in fact not always the same meaning;

- listening to the participants and semantically understanding the correct meaning not only of what they are saying but also what they mean to say when analysing the data.

- **Small number of participants**

Because of the small number of participants in depth interviews were taken to increase the quality of the study. Data analysis and interpretation was painstaking and thus time consuming.

- **Novice Researcher**

As I mentioned above in the introductory part of this section, the quality of a narrative ethnographic research depends highly on the reflexive abilities and on the analytical reasoning skills of the person carrying out the study. Personal biases might have been overlooked.

- **Fluid research framework due to interview-conversation**

Although a semi-structured interview guideline provided a good direction, and the overarching question that was placed to all the research participants, the prompts had to be altered according to what emerged in the research conversation in order to learn more about the different points of view and about the different aspects pertaining to the topic under investigation.

- **Influence of the researcher's personality and nationality**

My personality, gender and age as well as the fact that I am a foreigner might have affected the way the participants responded to the questions. I wonder if they would have replied if I would be a Maltese national or of a different age or gender.

- **Research participant speaking in English**

Because the in-depth interviews were conducted in English it is likely that some of the participants could not express them freely or more precisely and in depth. Maybe they would have felt more comfortable when the interviews would have been conducted in the Maltese Language.

The findings also revealed that Malta's culture is not, as Axelson (1993) theorizes, a set of shared ideas among the people of a society, but something that the Maltese people have been subjected to involuntarily, thus "super-organic" (Claval, 1995, p.2) which explains the legitimate need of the Maltese people to develop and stabilise their own identity first in order to be able to embrace multiculturalism without losing their own identity.

Furthermore one of the interviewees noted that socio-economic change in Malta happened in such a rapid way between the 20th and 21st century that people seem to have great difficulty in coping with such fluidity

The participants reported that the biggest challenges they face in their dealings with their clients are related to the increase of complexities in issues pertaining to family, gender and youth. Two of the participants reported that they felt a great challenge when dealing with the traumatic experience of clients from Sub-Saharan African countries. They also said that their client's sufferings and were beyond their own field of experience. Half of the participants reported that although being open and interested in different cultures, they had to acquire their understanding of the culture of their clients during the sessions with the client.

This study also uncovered that some of the challenges counsellors are facing in their dealings with their clients are the result of misconceptions of the term ‘multicultural’. Actually three of the interviewees understood the term ‘multicultural’ as ‘multinational’ and two of the interviewees had a vague understanding of the meaning of the term.

This indicates a need for specialized training programs in topics pertaining to multicultural counselling. Although a very young profession in Malta, counsellors can play an important role in helping the Maltese society embrace their own multicultural existence and render their service to help bridge socio-cultural gaps and enhance the quality of coexistence between people hailing from different cultures and civilizations in Malta.

5.5. Conclusion

This narrative ethnographic study was an attempt to gain deeper understanding of the impact of multicultural exposure on Maltese people over the last 40 years its challenge for counsellors. This study also seeks to unveil misconceptions pertaining to multiculturalism and is conducted with the hope to serve as a contribution to facilitate multicultural understanding. The study makes use of a narrative ethnographic approach because of focus on the multiple cultures which is combined with the narrative of six counsellors. I chose this method as I was interested in the participants’ experience with multicultural issues in their day-to-day private and professional encounters.

Although a sufficient international literature addressing issues pertaining to multiculturalism and social change was available, very little local literature addressing the topic under investigation was found. I therefore conclude that this topic is under-researched. Further research extending on this topic would be needed. From the interview conversations with the counsellors this study concludes that the apprehension of the Maltese people to embrace multiculturalism is rooted in their experience of being subjugated by foreign powers in the past and in the belief that embracing multiculturalism will be at the expense of moral values.

The findings also revealed that the term culture when applied to Malta cannot be solely seen as a set of shared ideas among the people of a society, but as something that the Maltese people have been subjected to involuntarily. Furthermore it was noted that socio-economic change in Malta happened in such a rapid way between the 20th and 21st century that people seem to have great difficulty in coping with such fluidity. The participants reported that the greatest challenges they face in their dealings with their clients are related to the increase of complexities in issues pertaining to family, gender and youth. The interviews also brought to light difficulties in dealing with the traumatic experience of clients because the sufferings they encountered were far beyond their own field of experience. This study proposes the development of Malta specific theoretical models and training programmes that would help improve the efficiency of Malta's counsellors and enhance the quality of coexistence between people hailing from different cultures and civilizations in Malta. Although a very young profession in Malta, counselors can play an important role in helping the Maltese society embrace their own multicultural existence and render their service to help bridge socio-cultural gaps and enhance the quality of coexistence between people hailing from different cultures and civilizations in Malta.

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APPENDIX 1

Maria Gabriele Doublesin

Kennija

7, Triq il Qrempuc,

San Gwann, SGN1642

Tel: 21387744

Email: mdou0002@um.edu.mt

Information Letter

Dear Participant,

My name is Maria Gabriele Doublesin. I am currently reading for a Master Arts degree in Transcultural counseling and I am looking for English speaking Maltese counselors aged 25 -65 interested to be interviewed for my dissertation. The topic of this dissertation concerns the impact of multicultural exposure on Maltese society and its challenge for counselors for my Master of Arts degree in Transcultural Counseling.

Purpose of this study

This study addresses the need for coexistence between the various cultures and civilizations. Malta today is facing a rapid influx of people from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is twofold:

1. To explore how Maltese counselors experience their personal exposure to people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and their views on how this will affect their psychological, social and economic wellbeing.
2. To explore challenges Maltese counselors face in their day-to-day practice with clients from different ethnic backgrounds and who have different explanatory models than their own, as well as how Maltese counselors see themselves in these cross-cultural encounters.

How would you be involved in this study?

I seek to gather the experience and attitude of Maltese counselors with regards to their direct and indirect encounter with people from different cultural and ethnic background than their own. For this reason I am looking for participants who are interested and afford the time to allow me to conduct an audio-taped, in-depth semi-structured interview that will last between 90 and 120 minutes.

Your wellbeing and anonymity will be guaranteed with the following:

Respecting the privacy and the feelings of the participants, each participant will be asked not to answer to questions they might perceive as too intrusive or uncomfortable. Each participant will be provided with a copy of the audio-taped interview as well as a copy of the transcript with the request for approval before the data will be used for the study, if requested. This is to make sure that the participant's words are interpreted correctly.

(Kindly find an interview guide consisting of one overarching question and several prompts attached to this request).

Participants will be given pseudonyms and identifying details will be changed. Audio-recordings will be destroyed a few years after this study is complete. Data that has not been anonymised will only be seen by me and the supervisor. In the published thesis only anonymised data will appear.

If you are interested in participating kindly send an email to above address or give me a call.

Best regards

Maria-Gabriele Doublesin

APPENDIX 11

Consent Form

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. I am aware of my responsibility to safeguard your anonymity and wellbeing and I pledge to abide by the ethical and scientific standards governing research with human research participants (ACA, code of ethics and MACP ethical framework). Please take note of the following and sign if you agree:

Statement of purpose of the study:

This study addresses the need for coexistence between the various cultures and civilizations. Malta today is facing a rapid influx of people from Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. With this in mind, the purpose to this study is twofold:

1. To explore how Maltese counselors experience their personal exposure to people of different ethnical and cultural backgrounds what they think about how this will affect their psychological, social and economic well-being and the well being of Malta;
2. To explore what challenges Maltese counselors face in their day-to-day practice with clients from different ethnical backgrounds and who have different explanatory models than their own, as well as how Maltese counselors see themselves in these cross-cultural encounter

Methods of data collection:

Data will be collected in form of 90 minute audio taped in-depth interviews.

Use of the information:

The collected data will be used for in a dissertation leading to a Masters of Arts of Transcultural Counseling degree. The information given will be analyzed and categorized in emerging themes in order find common as well as individual topics, so as understand how multicultural exposure affects members of the Maltese society...

Guarantees:

I will abide by the following conditions:

- If you decide that at any other time during the research that you no longer wish to participate, you can notify the researcher and be withdrawn from the study immediately, without prejudice and without the need to provide any reason
- Pseudonyms and identifying details will be changed
- Data that has not yet been anonymised will only be seen by myself and the supervisor
- In the published thesis only anonymised data will appear
- Audio-recordings will be destroyed a few years after the study is complete.
- Deception of data collection will not be used
- conclusions from the research will be communicated to you either verbally or in writing upon request

I have been fully informed about the nature of the research and I herewith agree to the conditions

Name of the participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of the researcher:

Maria-Gabriele Doublesin

Signature:

Date:

APPENDIX 111

Tentative Interview Guide

Note: This interview guide is tentative because the prompts always depend on the reply of each research participant.

Thank you for participating in my research on the impact of multicultural exposure on contemporary Maltese society and its challenge for counselors. The interview will be audio-taped and last about 90 to 120 minutes. Please feel free to stop me, if you don't feel comfortable with one question or the other. I would like you also to know, that you are not obliged to answer if you think that the questions are too personal. We can also have a short break during the interview, if you feel you need a rest.

Overarching question:

- From your perspective, what kind of multicultural exposure do you think did the people of Malta during the last 40 years until today experience and how do you think did this influence them and you as a counselor?

Thematic prompts

- What does the word 'multicultural' mean to you?
- When looking back into history and Malta's exposure to different cultures what in your opinion is different in contemporary Malta?
- Bearing previous question in mind, where in your opinion are the challenges for the Maltese people and their values?

- How do you think it impacts the counseling profession?
- When you go back in time, do you perceive any different kind of issues clients that presented to you or your colleagues than the presenting problems of nowadays?
- What in your opinion are the biggest challenges you are facing as a counselor in this regard?
- How did these challenges affect you professionally and personally?
- What in your opinion could facilitate your dealings with individuals from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds?
- What role do you think the counseling profession can play in modern Malta?

Prompts to explore personal assumptions

- If you can remember any, do you mind sharing with me issues you had to deal with that were elicited through encounter with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds?
- What in your opinion is the biggest challenge the Maltese society is facing with regards to their fellow citizens from Eastern Europe, Arab countries and Sub-Saharan Africa?
- How would you react when one of your children or your spouse starts identifying him/herself with religious or cultural philosophies and values that are opposite to your values: e.g. becoming a Rastafarian, or Muslim, etc...?

Thematic prompts asking for the participant's suggestions to others

- What in your opinion can be done, or could you do to help overcome these challenges?

- What in your opinion can Maltese people and the people of the different migrant communities learn from each other?

Debriefing

It seems that we have covered a lot of ground so far.

- Do you feel we have talked about everything you would like to share with me?
- Is there anything you feel like adding?
- How was it for you talking with me about your experience?

If you wish you will receive a copy of the audio-taped interview and a copy of the analyzed transcript. Please kindly let me know if you agree or not with the transcript and the analysis.

Thank you once again for your participation

APPENDIX IV

Excerpts of Transcripts Analysis & Coding

NOTES	EXCERPT	THEME
<p>Rephrasing to help the client see himself from a different perspective</p> <p>Use of language: challenge to be semantically in tune with the client</p>	<p>Mario: Because he challenged my way of talking, and then we talked about the meaning of words (1071-1074). Just this morning I had another session and eh we were talking about ... eh ... (silence)... I am trying to remember the exact words, but aha ... I changed the word purposefully with that client. He made a statement, and later on in the session I changed the word. It was something personal, but that helped him to become aware of his own beliefs. mhm he became aware more about his own way of looking at things and at the same time becoming aware that there are other ways of seeing things. In fact, language is always important (1092-1097).</p> <p>But I think, in both cases they came to accept, because when agreed to go beyond the label or ... or prejudice eh ... trying to find a word ... preconceived ideas of the other, and connect to the person, which I think there are a lot of universal qualities (1124-1132).</p>	<p>Significance of language</p> <p>in a multicultural context</p>

<p>Immigrants from African countries and Eastern Europe</p> <p>Narrowing the distance between people from different countries through internet</p> <p>gender inequality</p>	<p>Mary: and even at that time, simultaneously, there was a greater influx of Philippines, Russian people and people from Eastern Europe coming over to Malta. Ehm eh and most of them were coming over either to ehm eh... stay with someone, to partner up with someone, or in the case of the Philippines, to work as servants, most of them in their population. It was a lot what was happening. And also, in the case of these Eastern Europeans, some of them carried with them some traumas which were quite severe as well. (72-84)</p> <p>David: with the birth of media for example I mean free media etc., we started to see how people live abroad for example. The impact of tourism for example cannot be understated for example (263-268)</p> <p>Gina: I think the main change, not just in Malta I think this immigration issue is sweeping the whole world.</p> <p>Not just immigration, even technologically, you know a ... at a push of a button I can speak to I don't know where, and if a country is having a Tsunami, I can actually witness it happening on the internet. I think this internet business as well you know is in factor in multiculturalism (163-176) ... I think first of all of technology I think it pushes the person, the Maltese to be more open, ok, second of all, the concept of family is changing. For example the rate of separation, the rate</p>	<p>Facing the unknown: clients' pain beyond personal and cultural field of experience.</p> <p>Impact of fast development of information technology</p> <p>Nuclear family in state of transition</p> <p>Redefining gender roles</p> <p>Nuclear family in transition</p>
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	<p>of unwed mothers, you know and all this, even the gender roles: much more women are going to work so I think all that is opening more the mentality of the Maltese(234-246).. lot of women here in Malta are very attached to the family. And for the majority of the Maltese women caring for their own children is very important (258-263).. I think it produces a lot of guilt and there is a lot of role confusion and one has to see how to, you know, manage the time better (267-271). I think it is a difficult transition at the moment for most Maltese women (279-281).</p> <p>Jane: the fact that more mothers are working. Now I am all for women working, don't get me wrong. So, I think they have as much right as the men to work. And unfortunately, ehm ... society sometimes thinks that the separation and all this halabaloo and divorce is mostly due because the woman has started working.(288-297)</p>	<p>Transition in family structure</p>
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Excerpt and analysis transcript interview conversation with Mary

Colour code: challenges, information leading to themes, resilience & positive attitude

NOTES	EXCERPT	THEME
<p>Feeling overwhelmed:</p> <p>Asylum seekers came in great numbers and were perceived as a burden</p> <p>Maltese people felt threatened by the strong influx</p> <p>Not sufficiently training available</p> <p>Only trained in</p>	<p>Our island cannot take this influx every year of two thousand asylum seekers, plus the amount of Russians coming in blah blah blah. So what could our role be in all this? And what would the aid of the EU be? The first time we talked about burden share was around this table basically. Europe has to help us. This is too much for Malta.</p> <p>Gabi: how did this affect you personally?</p> <p>Mary: on a positive note I think I grew up a lot. In the sense that I learned how to stay with the unknown, because there was a lot of unknown, like I didn't know about the different cultures and the impact of every culture and how people react in a one to one situation.</p> <p>Ehm I learned that different African tribes had different words of communicating, who looks in the eye, because they would think that this is disrespectful, ehm the distance to keep with different types of people coming from different tribes, different places. Ehm to take nothing for granted, one of our first mistakes was, to think that people who come from Sudan (laughs) ehm come from the same culture. In fact, we know that there</p>	<p>Facing the unknown</p>

<p>conventional intervention method</p> <p>Suffering of her clients beyond her field of experience</p> <p>Entering the client's frame of mind</p> <p>Respecting the client's culture but she did not feel sufficiently prepared</p>	<p>are about 4 or 5 tribes who are really envious of each other and who ... who at one point in time, you know, in a group setting started to swear at each other and accuse each other and they were members of the wrong tribe. So this was a particular session, were we were working with Sudanese people, because we were thinking that these are all Sudanese and we can group them together. It would have been better to have some coming from anywhere else than Sudan, you know. So it was a great learning experience. I think it was also an experience where I could touch and feel suffering in a way I had never experienced before.</p> <p>Ehm eh ... to be aware as a counsellor of the collective and the collective identity of these people in our individualistic society, I had never read anything on that before, but then I started to read about it, because I needed to be informed. But first I experienced it, and then I read about it. The ethical issues and how we need to adjust as counsellors.</p> <p>Gabi: maybe we can extend a little bit on the ethical issues: when you are thinking about the ethical issues, what comes up first?</p> <p>Mary: yes, ehm eh ethically wise I think I had to make a lot of adjustments. In the sense if boundaries: ehm eh ... some of them would call me "mama",</p>	<p>Facing the unknown</p> <p>Ethical Issues</p>
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