

The New Math of Multicultural Workgroups



My model for business is the Beatles. They were four guys who kept each other's kind of negative tendencies in check. They balanced each other, and the total was greater than the sum of the parts. That's how I see business: Great things in business are never done by one person. They're done by a team of people.

Steve Jobs, *60 Minutes*, 2003

Synopsis

The *New Math of Multicultural Workgroups* portrays a fictitious group work project comprising five university students from different nations. The teacher portrayed in the story is new to the field of teaching, and all of the actors in the video are teachers or students at JAMK University of Applied Sciences in Finland. The challenges portrayed in the film are informed by empirical research conducted at JAMK and at universities around the world. Through their observations of the video and facilitated discussion, students can understand some of the problems that emerge in intercultural small group work, and how they can be reframed and overcome. The video is dense with intercultural interaction and can be employed for a variety of approaches related to communication and teamwork.

For more information about the video, or to discuss teaching in multicultural settings, contact the producer of the video, Steven Crawford, at steven.crawford@jamk.fi.

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Introduction

As a teaching resource, this video provides the teacher with a compelling case study for use in the classroom that addresses the challenges of teaching and learning in multicultural contexts. For students, the video offers an opportunity to engage the experiences of the student actors as they negotiate multicultural group work. Through their observations and facilitated discussion, students can come to understand some of the problems that emerge, and how they can be reframed and overcome. The video can serve students in high school and higher education classes. The running time for the video is about 44 minutes (43:45).

Creative teachers can find multiple ways to employ this resource in their curriculum. Here is one teaching approach suggestion:

1. The teacher should view the video before using it in class.
2. Prior to showing the video in class, the teacher could have students work in small groups to share their ideas and experiences of group work and in working with students from cultures different from their own.
3. Following the discussion time, the teacher would collect the discussion results on a flipchart or board, summarizing the key points and issues that the students raise.
4. The teacher then shows the video, either straight through or by stopping at selected points for review and discussion.
5. A set of suggested topics is included with this teaching note that the teacher can use to facilitate discussion and learning with the students. The debriefing process forms the key teaching and learning tool, as students digest and reflect on the multiple lessons contained in the video. The reflection process, both alone and with peers, may very well occur after the class, particularly when students find themselves in circumstances similar to those portrayed in the video.
6. The teacher could then compare the post-video class discussion points with the small group discussion points collected earlier, again, looking for common themes. Equally valuable would be noting distinctively new points that were raised during the classroom review.
7. As a post-exercise assignment, the students can be tasked—individually or in groups—to research about each of the cultures represented in the film, and prepare a report or presentation that helps to deepen their analysis of the interplay among aspects of national culture portrayed in the film.
8. The teacher can extend the value of the video by preparing for and organizing a class session to review and discuss cross-cultural behaviors, such as proxemics, time orientation, and para- and nonverbal communication evident in the video. An additional exercise could involve students in learning more about the national or ethnic cultures of the students themselves, and comparing this with the cultures portrayed by the student actors.

Learning Outcomes for Students

Students may become more aware of the impact of culture on working in groups and how teams develop over time, while developing new tools for work cooperatively in multicultural settings.

The “new math” analogy (how the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts) can be applied to all types of group work. Potential learning outcomes include

- By reflecting on the “chess pieces” analogy, the students can become more aware of the distinct capabilities and value that each person can bring to a group setting.
- The students can experience new teaching and learning approaches.
- The students can observe leadership interaction in cultural contexts.
- Students can continue their developmental path toward intercultural competence.
- Students can improve their own performance at school and in work life while developing skills for working in international contexts.

Learning Outcomes for Teachers

- Teachers may become more aware of the impact of culture on small group work.
- The video can provide teachers with insights into managing group work scenarios.
- The “new math” analogy (how the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts) can be applied to all group work, including multicultural groups.
- The teacher can become more aware of the individual traits and capabilities of each of his or her students, following the “chess pieces” analogy in the video, and help students to learn to identify and organize themselves around the diverse capabilities of each of their cohorts in small groups.
- Teachers can continue their own path toward developing intercultural competence.
- Teachers can improve their teaching practices in multicultural contexts.

Background of the Video Project

The script for *The New Math of Multicultural Workgroups* was inspired and informed by research conducted at JAMK University of Applied Sciences (JAMK) in Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2011. The findings reflected research results conducted at other universities (see Suggested Bibliography for some examples). The research conducted at JAMK focused on illuminating the intercultural coping strategies of students who attended the school as either degree program or exchange students. The respondents were both Finnish and international, and most studied in courses taught in English.

Four primary themes related to intercultural coping challenges were isolated from the student responses to our inquiry: academic challenges, cultural differences, interaction challenges, and challenges related to language. Within the academic challenges theme, one of the most-cited difficulties expressed by students focused on working in small groups in multicultural contexts. Clearly the research at JAMK

surfaced several interesting and compelling issues, but the topic of multicultural small group work was selected for immediate follow up. For further development, the topic of small group work was taken directly into the intercultural communication classroom through a series of assignments and workshops in which students discussed and elaborated further the underlying issues, and as well produced ideas for improving the process and outcomes of small group work.

Student participants in the research described a broad range of issues experienced in multicultural work groups that could be discussed and understood in terms of individual personality traits; comparative cultural contexts, including different approaches to working; various traditions and styles of teaching and learning; dissimilar attitudes and perspectives toward the concept of school; the challenge of finding a common ground in the group; the challenges of communicating one's ideas in a lingua-franca (i.e., English); different attitudes toward outcomes, goals and objectives; different approaches to work; varying levels of commitment to work; different ideas about leadership in a group setting; dissimilar ideas of and values toward equality and equity in terms of project workloads and roles; dissimilar communication styles; and variations in expectations about managing time and processes.

The data generated in our inquiry supported two of three theoretical approaches to the psychology of acculturation developed by Colleen Ward and her colleagues (Ward, 2004): A "culture learning" approach, and models pertaining to stress and coping. Our research leaves open the pursuit of social identification and social cognition, which represents the third theoretical approach proposed by Ward.

Janette Ryan (2005) studied challenges faced by international students and identified three levels of "shock" that students sometimes endure: 1) culture shock, related to simple and complex differences in the new environment, 2) language shock, in which students must study and interact in a lingua franca or a language other than their native tongue, and 3) academic shock, in which different academic traditions and expectations intertwine.

Interest was generated in crafting a response to the challenges students face in multicultural small group work settings, fitting under Ryan's academic shock category. Ultimately, it was decided to create an educational video that would address some of the issues that emerged in the data and would generate discussion about how teachers and students might develop solutions. The result is this video docudrama and the accompanying teaching notes. The video is intended primarily for use by teachers as a teaching and learning tool in the classroom.

Key Challenges in Developing the Video

The video portrays a multicultural small group project that goes astray and ultimately fails. The video content does not intend to suggest that all small multicultural group projects are problematic or generate poor results, because clearly that is not the case. Rather, the script portrays one example of how the cultural aspects described above, along with individual personality traits and the typical group or team development challenges, can combine to contravene a project's process and results. Moreover, the video and accompanying teaching notes are not intended to represent all possible scenarios, challenges, and solutions pertaining to intercultural or multicultural small group work. Rather, the overall intent is to provide an experiential *introduction* to the

topic through the portrayal of a fictional representation, which hopefully will stimulate discussion about perspectives concerning potential challenges and approaches to improving practice.

Developing the script was challenging for two primary reasons:

1. The developers of this video recognized that while individuals from a given culture may share many values, assumptions, and behaviors with their compatriots, each individual evidences unique personality preferences, values and behaviors. Thus it was acknowledged that portraying these aspects of an individual in a story invites different perceptions and interpretations by the viewer about whether the values and behaviors they perceive in the characters can be attributed to shared enculturation or whether they represent distinctly personal traits.
2. Because the video involves multicultural perspectives, many of the values and behaviors evidenced in the story are drawn from empirically derived characteristics of national culture, as evidenced through empirical studies (see Suggested Bibliography). Thus, a primary challenge in writing the script quickly emerged: What is the best way to portray shared, cultural-level values and behaviors, and in such a way as to not overplay or exaggerate commonly held stereotypes? The manner and extent to which the video conveys individual and shared cultural traits, and the degree to which the script authors succeeded in striking a balance between them, thus becomes a potentially valuable discussion topic that the teacher can facilitate in the classroom.

In seeking to create an authentic and plausible representation of a multicultural small group, the authors were aided significantly by the abundant international research and classroom student participants, who provided a rich set of comments, ideas and suggestions about working in multicultural group settings. Many of the problems and issues embedded in the script were taken directly from the data and workshops.

The script development was supported by theories developed in the academic fields of intercultural communication and multicultural education, and, to some extent, by my (Steven Crawford) experiences in multicultural higher education contexts. These same foundations support the development of these teaching notes designed to facilitate teaching the lessons of working in multicultural small groups.

Culture

Culture is a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. (Hofstede 1997)

There is a wealth of research that attempts to describe national or group culture. Research that seeks to describe groups typically employ statistical methods to generalize about a group's shared values, although research based on qualitative research methods has recently been increasingly accepted. Intercultural communication as a field is inter- and cross-disciplinary, intersecting, for example, research in the fields of psychology, sociology, linguistics, and communication. Cross-cultural psychologists often focus on values orientations research that aims to identify shared values within groups. This research often produces data that compare groups. However, these etic-imposed investigations produce

perspectives that too often are employed on an off-the-shelf basis to explain behaviors in individuals. Clearly, empirical studies that create a forest-level perspective may be useful at times, but we also know that much of what constitutes human interaction ultimately is conducted between two individuals. In this respect interpersonal, intercultural communication involves individual and group characteristics, values and behaviors.

Following The Story

Bruce Tuckman's (1965) work on group performance research created perhaps the most commonly cited model used to describe how teams function. In the first stage, forming, the group members come together either physically or, as is common nowadays, virtually. In the storming stage, problems may arise that interferes with the processes and progress of the team's work. Norming, the third stage, represents the team's overcoming these challenges and becoming a cohesive, functioning group. The fourth stage, performing, represents the outcome of the team project(s). The final stage, adjourning, occurs when the group has either completed its work or ceases to be relevant in some way, and disbands.

In *The New Math of Multicultural Workgroups*, the student group develops in much the same way as Tuckman's model predicts. Each stage is clearly evident and builds on the previous one. During stage one, the teacher Mikko, who is new to teaching, assigns the groups somewhat randomly, simply making sure that each group comprises students from different cultures. The students have no role in assigning the groups. Diego, at the point when he notices that a fellow Mexican student has been assigned to another group, asks to be assigned to that group as well. Mikko declines his request based on his stated goal of having "mixed" groups.

During stage two (storming), issues and problems soon become evident. During the group's meetings these issues and problems continue to grow leading up to the failed presentation. From the start, Alexandra takes the initiative in establishing herself as the group leader. How the group is led forms a conflict that each student has to deal with in order to communicate and promote his or her own ideas and desires. It becomes evident that each of Alexandra's group mates are either not suited to the roles that Alexandra assigns to him or her, or simply would prefer other roles. As a result, everyone becomes dissatisfied. A cascading series of starts and stops lead to the failed presentation that results in a perhaps failing grade. The poor outcome disappoints Mikko, while at the same time confuses him as to what went wrong. After all, Mikko believed he had conveyed the project guidelines clearly in a written document at the very start of the project, and created groups with the intention of creating synergy.

In the norming stage, we see a more experienced teacher, Warren, help Mikko to deconstruct and analyze the scenario, while also providing a suggestion on how the project and the team might yet be able to recover. Warren explains his "new math" analogy in which the value added by each individual of the group is viewed in the context of a greater whole. The analogy is then furthered by characterizing how the combination of the distinct capabilities of each team member mirrors how chess pieces each possess specific and distinctive abilities that form a strategic advantage when they are employed as a team during a chess match. The overall message that Warren conveys to Mikko is that the group needs to discover more about each other and then re-form based on improved understanding and communication.

Mikko takes Warren's advice and immediately calls the group to a meeting. This opportunity allows the underlying issues to be voiced, and then discussed, by each team member. Mikko shares the concept of the "new math," which resonates with the members in regard to their conflict over leadership, team organization, and communication. Each team member describes the experience in his or her own terms and the ensuing discussion addresses how the group wishes to be re-formed. In light of the new start and plan, the students agree that a social program would allow them to get to know each other more deeply. The result demonstrates how the various new decisions helped the individuals coalesce into a stronger group.

During stage four (performing), the viewers witness the improved communication and functioning of both the individuals and the team. This leads to the conclusion of the story in which a new and very successful presentation is made, which results from the students' grade moving from a failing grade to, as Hanna points out in her personal learning commentary, "the best possible grade." During stage five (adjourning), set one month after the conclusion of the project, each member of the group and both of the teachers reflect on their experiences and learning outcomes from the project.

Discussion Topics for the Classroom

The video is intended to stimulate conversations in the classroom about diversity and inclusion, communication between cultures, teaching and learning practices, and specifically the phenomenon of small group work in multicultural settings. To assist further, the teacher may choose from among the following suggested discussion topics. The teacher should read the statement first, and then present the questions to the students for discussion. It may be useful to use a flip chart or board so that comments and new ideas produced by students can be recorded.

1. STATEMENT: Sometimes we ascribe characteristics, values, and behaviors we perceive in others to national culture, whether through our exposure to stereotypes or based on our own experiences with different cultures, however limited these experiences may be. The scriptwriters tried to find a balance between shared, cultural-level (group, region, nation, etc.) values and individual values and behaviors. The writers found this difficult because they did not wish to overplay or exaggerate commonly held stereotypes based on nationality or some other aspect of group culture.

DISCUSSION: Ask the students,

- a) Were you able to "see" aspects of individual and national culture?
- b) How did you feel that culture was treated in the script by the authors and by the actors?
- c) Did you find yourself uncomfortable regarding how any of the characters were portrayed? Did you view any behaviors or scenes in the film to be exaggerated or otherwise inaccurate or unfair portrayals?
- d) What might you have done differently in creating the script?

2. STATEMENT: In Act I, Mikko tells Warren how he intends to organize the students into groups. He says that he wants "mixed groups to create synergy," and

that he would assign them randomly by nationality, and then let them work on their own from there.

DISCUSSION: Ask the students,

- a) If you were Mikko, how would you organize the groups and what would your criteria and rationale be for doing so?
- b) When meeting alone with Mikko, Jirani says, “The teacher should be in charge.” Describe the relationship between teachers and students in your school? What are the traditional ways of teaching and learning in your culture?

3. STATEMENT: Jirani, our Nigerian student, reacts to Alexandra’s leadership initiative by asking, “Does it really have to be a female in charge here?” Jirani later discusses this issue with his African friend while playing pool, during which he seems confused about whether the issue is about being told what to do or because the orders come from a woman. Finally, during the recovery meeting Jirani votes for Alexandra to be the leader of the reorganized group.

DISCUSSION: Ask the students,

- a) Why do you think that Jirani had this issue, and how do you think he was able to reconcile his feelings about it?
- b) What helps Jirani to embrace Alexandra’s leadership at the end?

4. STATEMENT: In the recovery meeting, Alexandra and Hanna clash over the leadership of the group. Hanna states that she felt that Alexandra had taken control, and that in Finland “each person takes a fair share, and that everyone is more-or-less equal at the start.” Alexandra explains that her position was not about equality but simply about getting and keeping the group’s work process moving, while explaining that in Russia it is usual for a leader to take control of the process.

DISCUSSION: Ask the students,

- a) Some students may come from cultures where small group work is not a part of teaching and learning. But for those of you here who are used to this type of approach, how are groups organized and managed in your home?
- b) How do you students who are not used to group work perceive this process as a part of your education now?
- c) What is the role of leadership in your culture in work group contexts?

5. STATEMENT: Alexandra says, “When we go to the stressful situation, we just tend to go back the way we used to.”

DISCUSSION: Ask your students to discuss,

- a) When facing a difficult interpersonal or group situation, how do you react?
- b) In what ways are conflicts managed by students in your school?
- c) Do you believe that Alexandra’s comment is true? What do you think might be a better way to manage intercultural group conflict?
- d) In what ways do you think Alexandra adapted to “how things work in Finland?”

6. STATEMENT: In the beginning of the video, Hanna advocates for making rules that the group will follow. Diego then says, “Why would you want rules if we are going to bend them anyway? Later, during the recovery meeting, Hanna states that, “I really needed to know what the group rules were.”

DISCUSSION: Ask your students to discuss,

- a) How do you feel about Hanna’s concerns, and how would you address them in your home setting?
- b) What do you think Diego meant by his statement, and what is the role of rules in your home nation and school system?

7. STATEMENT: Jirani is consistently late for each meeting, and seems to be struggling to balance work and school. Hanna criticizes Jirani’s tardiness in a group meeting. At one point he misses one of the group meetings completely.

DISCUSSION: Ask your students to discuss,

- a) What is the role of time in your home country and how is managed time there?
- b) In your home country do students typically have to work while in school and if so, how does that affect their lives and relationships at both home and school?
- c) How do you feel about Hanna’s handling of Jirani’s tardiness?

8. STATEMENT: Warren introduces the “new math” analogy in which each group member’s contribution to a team has the potential to combine synergistically with the input of the other members such that sum total of the team’s result is compounded, and then continues the analysis by comparing the team members with different pieces on a chessboard. He tells Mikko that if his team continues to perform like five pawns, they won’t get much done.

DISCUSSION: Ask your students, perhaps while working together in groups,

- a) What sort of working model(s) can you propose for how a group works?
- b) Can you show how the model can have both positive and negative outcomes?
- c) What concrete ideas about group work can you carry forward in your studies?

9. STATEMENT: At the end of the video, the students reflect on their experiences as group members in the project. Alexandra says, “I thought learning came from books and lectures.” Diego reports that, “For me, studying in another country with so many international students has caused me to see Mexico in a whole different way.” Jirani says that, “I was surprised to encounter so many different ideas about teaching and learning in Finland. I had to learn so many things about myself...” In his meeting with Mikko, Warren says that students from abroad come to our schools with their own “traditions of teaching and learning.” But it seems also that through this experience the students have learned as much about their own culture as they have about other cultures. Your students may already have some experience working in a multicultural setting at your school.

DISCUSSION: Ask your students to discuss their own experiences at your school:

- a) What have you learned about yourself while studying here in our school while working in a multicultural setting, and how has it affected your work here with teachers and other students?
- b) How do you think these lessons might affect you in the future?

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Intercultural Education

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International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rbeb20/current>

International Journal of Intercultural Relations

<http://www.journals.elsevier.com/international-journal-of-intercultural-relations/>
Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/rmmm20/30/5>
Multicultural Perspectives
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/hmcp20/current>
Journal of Studies in International Education
<http://jsi.sagepub.com>
The International/Intercultural Development Education Connection
<http://escotet.org>
Culture Shock: A Fish Out Of Water
<http://international.ouc.bc.ca/cultureshock/>

Notable online resources

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/interculturalinsights/>
<http://www.dialogin.com>
<http://www.thiagi.com>
<http://www.diversophy.com>

Professional organizations

Institute of International Education (IIE)
<http://www.iie.org>
Intercultural Communication Institute
<http://www.intercultural.org>
International Academy of Intercultural Research
www.intercultural-academy.org
SIETAR (International Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research)
Europa <http://www.sietareu.org>
USA <http://www.sietarusa.org/>

The Cast

Hanna is played by Milja Taivassalo (Finland)
Alexandra is played by Tatiana Gordeladze (Russia)
Diego is played by Christopher Puro (Mexico)
Ngoc is played by Kim Ngan Dau (Vietnam)
Jirani is played by Chibuike “Edmund” Uboegbulam (Nigeria)
Mikko is played by Petteri Ruuska (Finland)
Warren is played by Steven Crawford (United States)



Tatiana Gordeladze (playing Alexandra)

My name is Tatiana Gordeladze and I am from Stavropol, Russia. I am 22 years old. I came to Jyväskylä, Finland, in 2011 to study in the International Business Degree Program at JAMK University of Applied Sciences. I always wanted to be in an international environment and get to know more about different people and their cultures. I decided to come to Finland because it is an international place and also because it is close to my home country.

I was happy to be a part of the video project. It was a new experience for me and I totally enjoyed it. Through this video project, I had a chance to look at some problems that might arise in a multicultural group work and what we should do to get through them or the way to solve them. This video project helped me to understand that different cultures have different approaches to doing things and if the whole group wants to succeed then we need to consider it.



Kim Dau (playing Ngnoc)

I am a Vietnamese girl studying Facility Management at JAMK. The way I came to Finland could be called a destiny. Despite that fact, in Finland, I have found myself working hard for my dreams, spending time with my friends, learning how to respect things and the most important, enjoying life. My favorite quote is “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step” [Laozi, 604-531 BC]. No matter how slow I might be and how long it will take, I will definitely reach my goals with a persistent, or even a stubborn, streak.

With my considerable interest in culture, this video project helped me to see and reflect on some issues concerning culture, particularly multicultural group work. Group work is an essential part of student life, yet one of the most challenging things in an international environment. The video is like a guide; it shows some ways to deal with that challenging and interesting concern. However, no one can have the same experience. The way one smiles and

enjoys new friends from different nationalities, or struggles with the group work, or even desperately fights back the tears, they are all bittersweet enough to become nostalgic and enduring memories. Listen to others, but let your origins ignite.



Milja Taivassalo (playing Hanna)

I am a Finnish girl from Jyväskylä, Finland. I am currently studying International Business at JAMK University of Applied Sciences. I enjoy traveling and getting to know new people. A year ago I found out that I didn't have to travel far from home to experience new cultures. My cohort class, and the rest of the university, is truly international, and during my studies I have met amazing people from all over the world.

Although a multicultural class is nice, cultural differences may cause some problems. We are all different and we work in our own ways and sometimes it can be difficult to find a way to work together. As you may learn from the video, teamwork gets easier when team members talk about their feelings and expectations. I have noticed the same in my own courses. During one group project debriefing session I found myself saying a line that Hanna said in the video: "I'm sorry we didn't have this conversation a long time ago!"

I had so much fun when we were filming the video. I laughed a lot, but I also learned much. Maybe I didn't learn to eat with chopsticks or pronounce Ngoc's name perfectly, but I learned that it is possible to achieve something great by working together.



Christopher Puro (playing Diego)

I was born and raised in Mexico City and I lived there for 20 years until I moved to Finland. My mother is Mexican and my dad is Finnish. The main reason why I came to Finland in the first place was to sort out my military service and to visit my father and my family in Finland. After being liberated from the army, due to medical reasons, I decided to give Finland a try and stay to

study. Spanish is my mother tongue but I also speak fluent English and understandable Finnish. I am currently studying in the Music and Media Management Degree Programme at JAMK University of Applied Sciences.

During the shooting of the video, I experienced many different sensations. The first one was being surprised when I realized the length of the project (this almost made me quit!). I also experienced a feeling of uncertainty since I have never been in such a project like this one. I guess that the main fear I had during the filming was to deliver the wrong message concerning my personal opinions but, during the process, I understood that it is only a role and my personal opinions have nothing to do with the educational purpose of this video. In the end I actually enjoyed participating in the video; the overall experience was smooth and the other actors made it easy and even fun.



Edmund Uboegbulam (playing Jirani)

If you have been wondering who the chocolate-skin guy you saw in that movie is, then here is a little gist about that guy to make you stop pondering. My names are Uboegbulam Chibuike Edmund. Most people call me Eddy, and I am from Nigeria, precisely the eastern part of Nigeria. I am a 21- year-old male studying facility management at JAMK University of Applied Sciences in Finland. I have successfully completed my high school education in Nigeria and was studying estate management at Imo State University Owerri, in Imo state Nigeria, before I came to Finland in September 2011. I know the question in your mind: Why did I come to Finland? It's pretty simple: Finland is a very well structured and organized country in so many aspects—transportation, education, and security, just to mention a few. Finnish education is perceived to be above average, thereby making its degrees and certificates recognized in many countries all over the world. One of the best things about Finland is the security of people and property; I want to be in a safe environment with an environment that is conducive for study. The internationality in Finland is one of the reasons why I like Finland. People from different parts of the world all come together to study, work and live in a multicultural environment. So far my experience with Finnish people has been nice.

This video project is one of the most wonderful projects I have ever been involved in; it portrays so many different characters around the world showing how differences in perception among people from Asia, African, Europe, etc. Personally speaking, all that I portrayed in the movie is not my real person but as an African man, one thing I must say is that I am African even if you take me away from Africa. What I mean is, that that the African man always sees the differences between the sexes (man and woman); although he is ready to agree on a common ground when faced with an international setting, he does not lose touch with his African pride or values.

Being an actor is very great experience. I have acted several times in short dramas with minor scenes in movies, and I enjoy the feeling of being an actor, being creative and passing a message to the viewer through acting. Though it could be challenging at times, I do act and still do some other things such as studying or working but I enjoy it more as a hobby than a job. In

this movie I hope the viewer will recognize the uniqueness of every culture or individual values. We can wish most times that others are like us, but we cannot make them us, because if everyone is like you then you are just living in a world where only you exist.

One important thing I want you all out there to grab from this is that we have to be flexible somehow with our principles. When we move to different countries or locations, we try to put off the glasses which we used in our home country and put on the one of the present location in order to see things from the others' perspective, but this does not mean that the people of that location will not consider that you are different person and have a different way of life. *Understanding* is the key word here, learning to accommodate changes that should be noted. When working with people from different countries, you should try to create a common ground to agree and not just say or act based on the way you do it in your country because everyone has their own ways. Therefore to ascertain success, the work group needs to have one team spirit, a shared mental model, and undivided minds and attention. And don't forget, you have to love what you do and do what you love. If not, speak up and act fast.



Petteri Ruuska (playing Mikko)

I was born in Saarijärvi, in central Finland, and I have lived in Jyväskylä since the 1990s, excluding my assignments in Spain, Bolivia, and the UK. After having worked as a language lecturer at the Upper Secondary School of Jyväskylän Lyseo for 10 years, I moved to JAMK University of Applied Sciences in 2009. Presently I work as a senior lecturer of Spanish and English at JAMK.

To be honest, the multicultural workgroup video project came out of the blue, and it really surprised me quite a few times. My character, Mikko, plays an innocent, novice but well-meaning lecturer who attempts to guide a group of students with different cultural backgrounds to work as a team. Conflicts arise. Anyone may face similar situations in intercultural settings.

I hope seeing this short movie provides some perspective for dealing with a lot of challenging issues in joint tasks and also in everyday life. It certainly gave me some perspective on several topics, e.g. at my work and also on filmmaking, which surely created some extra challenges for the director and his crew. I am very glad and lucky to have taken part in the project, which was very educational and needed to be done. Watch the great cast and the work of our awesome crew. I believe that for us it really made a difference.



Steven Crawford, Producer and Co-scriptwriter (playing Warren)

I came to Finland in the Fulbright program in 2001 to undertake a master's degree in intercultural communication at the University of Jyväskylä in central Finland. Soon I began to teach and I am presently a senior lecturer at JAMK University of Applied Sciences specializing in cross-cultural management. My research since 2001 has focused on education in multicultural contexts. This video project emerged from research conducted at JAMK in 2011 and is also informed by research in the field of international education.

For me, this project was very challenging. For example, when writing the script, Ronan and I had to deal with the stress produced by deciding exactly how to deal with issues pertaining to national culture. These issues included aspects related to values, behaviors and norms at a cultural, group level, and how those factors affect a multicultural group project. Our approach was to try not to be overly stereotypical while striking a balance between individual and group characteristics. What really helped us were the informants in our research who reported about their own experiences and observations as students working in intercultural contexts. Ironically, we realized that these same stressors we dealt with in producing the video might serve to stimulate discussion among our student and teacher viewers about how to face these challenges in the classroom.



Ronan Browne, Co-scriptwriter and Director/Editor

I am from Dublin, Ireland, and I moved to Jyväskylä with my Finnish wife and our two children in August 2010. I have a BA degree in media & journalism from Griffith College Dublin, and a Master's degree in television production from the University of Liverpool. I have been involved in the production of many different video and TV projects, including documentaries, quiz shows, reality TV shows, music videos, live sports broadcasts, and advertising, and in many different roles, from cameraman to editor to “executive tea maker.”

I had been working at JAMK for about a month producing videos and live lecture streams for the university when Steven and I first spoke about the potential for this project. As a recent emigrant to Finland, and having studied abroad for my Master's Degree, the topic of multiculturalism was both interesting and pertinent for me.

The script-writing stage presented many challenges for us, as we wanted our characters to be realistic, true-to-life, and to possess some characteristics of their national identity; at the same time, we did not want to overly stereotype or negatively portray any character. It was a challenge also to ensure that our storyline and script reflected the true experience and testament of JAMK students that was evident in Steven's research data. It was a difficult balancing act and we had to review and re-write many parts. We also invited the actors to discuss their character, to suggest changes to the script, and to make the character their own.

The filming stage was also not without its fair share of challenges, but I was very impressed by the dedication, patience and acting ability of our (mostly) amateur student and teacher actors. We did have some problems and some technical issues along the way. But it occurred to me after one particularly long day of filming, when everything went well and our actors performed brilliantly, just how successful a multi-cultural work group can be.

Photography for this teaching note was provided by
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