



An Investigation Into Western Tech Executive's View of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace and the Implications for Individual Team Members.

Erin Schlosser

Master of Science in Management

National College of Ireland

Submitted to the National College of Ireland August, 2019

Abstract

An Investigation Into Western Tech Executive's View of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace and the Implications for Individual Team Members.

Erin Schlosser

As technology companies become more international and culturally diverse, it is essential that they actively seek to capitalize on the benefits that a heterogeneous environment offers. Literature agrees that workplace diversity is growing, and it presents new opportunities and challenges for organizations. The purpose of this study was to explore the implications of cultural diversity on the workplace. More specifically, due to gaps in relevant literature, the study analyzed the perspectives of eleven technology industry executives from western cultures on their ideas about the challenges and benefits of having a diverse work environment. The executives were from the US and UK and were evenly divided by gender (5 women, six men). The executives were asked to describe real life examples of challenges stemming from cultural diversity as well as behavioral practices they would look for in employees who are on a diverse team. The eleven executives were interviewed over the phone. The interviews lasted on average thirty minutes and they were audio recorded so that thematic analysis could be performed. Transcription was assisted by the use of an artificial intelligence (AI) tool. With thematic analysis, data was transcribed, coded and themes were highlighted. Key findings included five behavioral best practices for employees to handle working in a culturally diverse and international environment: communication, openness, relationship building, respect and do-your-homework. Communication was described by the participants to be the source of most challenges as well as their favored resolution. Cultural conflict was very lightly cited versus miscommunication as a problem source. This was surprising in light of the literature review and provides a promising area for further study and the development of specific behavioral recommendations for managers and team members.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

Research Students Declaration Form

(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Erin Schlosser

Student Number: 17169674

Degree for which thesis is submitted: MSc Management

Material submitted for award

(a) I declare that the work has been composed by myself.

(b) I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.

(c) My thesis will be included in electronic format in the College Institutional Repository TRAP (thesis reports and projects).

(d) I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

Signature of research student: _____

Date: 5th August 2019

Acknowledgements

I first would like to thank my dissertation advisor Dr. Caoimhe Hannigan who let this paper be my own but was consistently available to steer me in the right direction and answer any questions that I had.

I would also like to thank the participants in my study for taking the time out of their busy schedule to help me pursue my research. Without their time and insight this study would not have been possible.

I want to thank my mom, Denise and my sister, Kristen for their encouragement not only through the completion of my thesis but throughout my entire program. I am forever grateful of their unfailing support.

Finally, I want to thank my dad, Brian for always being there for me- even with a nine-hour time difference. This achievement would not have been possible without his support.

Erin Schlosser

Table of Contents

Title Page	1
Abstract	2
Submission of Thesis and Dissertation	3
Acknowledgements	4
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	9
2.1 Cultural Diversity	9
2.2 Implications of Diversity in Organizations.....	11
2.3 Opportunities Associated with Cultural Diversity	12
2.4 Challenges Associated with Cultural Diversity.....	14
2.5 Effective Management of Diversity	15
2.6 Gaps in Research; Opportunities for Further Research.....	16
2.7 Conclusion	17
Chapter 3: Research Question	18
Chapter 4: Methodology	19
4.1 Guided Interview Approach.....	19
4.2 Methodology Limitations	21
4.3 Pilot Study.....	21
4.4 Research Sample	21
4.5 Research Instrument	23
4.6 Thematic Analysis	24
4.7 Ethical Considerations.....	25
Chapter 5: Findings	26
5.1 Growth of Diversity.....	26
5.2 Benefits.....	28
5.3 Challenges	30
5.4 Solutions	32
5.5 Behavioral Practices	34
5.6 Communication	36
5.7 Key Findings.....	37
Chapter 6: Discussion	41
6.1 Practical Implications.....	41
6.2 Limitations of Research.....	42
Chapter: 7 Conclusion and Recommendations	44

7.1 Summary	44
7.2 Future Research.....	47
Appendices	48
Appendix 1	48
Appendix 2	49
Appendix 3	50
References	51

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cultural diversity has been an important aspect in the advancement of society for hundreds of years. As countries around the world become more diverse, it not only affects social and political aspects, but it also affects the efficiency and success of organizations. Global diversity over the years has been altered through developments in geopolitics and technology as well as socioeconomic and environmental factors (Cletus, Mahmood, Umar and Ibrahim, 2018).

The challenges and opportunities associated with cultural diversity in the workplace, specifically, are increasingly relevant today for multiple reasons. The most influential being greater mobility within the migration process, globalization and a general sense of accepted individualism and identity creating a somewhat new acceptance of culture (Lozano and Escrich, 2015). While there are many definitions of diversity, which will be discussed at further length, diversity in relation to business, at its most simple, is the differences between employees that are developed through various cultural differences (Cox, 1991).

Organizations can suffer due to a lack of attending to challenges that arise through cultural diversity in the workplace. These organizations face dealing with an uncomfortable atmosphere that not only slows down production but creates an environment that lacks employee satisfaction as well as motivation. This may result in the organization facing poor stock performance, a damaged reputation and fostering a work environment that promotes conflict (Lovelace, Shapiro and Weingart, 2001).

While a diverse workforce can create challenges for an organization, there is a general consensus that, when managed correctly, a diverse workplace can be a source of competitive advantage, positive company reputation and improved performance due to the many outlooks and opinions associated with diversity (Melé and Sánchez. 2013). Organizations are advised to consider strategies that attain diversity and through this, they

gain a competitive advantage by first heavily involving diversity in the recruitment process (Kippenberg and Schippers, 2007).

In this paper the author reviews the relevant literature describing the impact of cultural diversity on the workplace specifically in, but not limited to, the United States. The challenges, opportunities and the effective management of diversity will be addressed. Due to gaps identified in the existing literature, the author attempts to understand how new hires in global tech companies can create an environment that employs the various benefits that organizational diversity has to offer. In order to determine the best practices, the author conducted a series of guided interviews with senior workers and executives from western countries including the US and UK. These interviews questioned the senior executives on their opinion of best behaviors regarding workplace diversity. The author then asked the sample to give information based on their experience in the increasingly diverse workforce throughout their career. After all interviews were collected, themes were reported throughout the dataset and best practices were disclosed based on the commonality amongst the sample's answers.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Diversity

In order to understand the implications, challenges and opportunities associated with cultural diversity in the workplace it is essential to recognize what cultural diversity means alone and how it relates to an organization's culture.

UNESCO (2001) establishes the general importance of cultural diversity in the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity stating that culture is diverse in nature and manifests in the variety of identities that contribute to all people around the world. It is critical that there are balanced and coordinated interactions between these plural identities within society. Cultural diversity, as a result, broadens the opportunity for economic, intellectual, moral, spiritual and emotional growth. This is important as these opportunities all have a positive impact on an organization's success as well as employee performance and satisfaction.

Two example definitions of diversity are "the varied perspectives and approaches to work members of different identify groups bring" (Thomas and Ely, 1996, pg. 80) and "the mixture of attributes within a workforce that in significant ways affect how people think, feel and behave at work, and their acceptance, work performance, satisfaction or progress in the organization" (Hays-Thomas and Bendick, 2013, pg. 195). In other words, diversity is often defined by differences in regard to demographic attributes such as race, nationality, gender, age, education, sexuality (Triguero-Sanchez, Peña-Vinces and Guillen, 2018; Guillaume, Dawson, Otaye-Ebede, Woods and West, 2015). It is also helpful to understand that literature both agrees and suggests that diversity should not simply be a means of employing a diverse number of identities and cultures to make the organization seem ethical or moral. Rather, organizations should have diversity so as to take advantage of the different knowledge, communication styles, strategies, procedures and practices that various minority groups can bring. In order to experience the benefits that a diverse workplace can offer, organizations must effectively

manage diversity as well as deal with challenges that are often associated (Rattan and Dweck, 2018).

Diversity itself is not a modern concept as there has always been differences in gender, religion, race, age, sexual orientations, etc. within society. However, today diversity has become more important to organizations for multiple reasons. First, due to the massive impact globalization has had on the world. Globalization has been effectively lowering barriers that previously existed allowing for the free flow of capital, information, goods and technology. It has created a growth in world trade, created more globally spread out value chains and a more open global market (Levitt, 1983). As a consequence of this, many companies have operations across the world which establish a basis for the benefits or challenges of hiring a diverse group of employees (Cox and Blake, 1991).

Second, there is more demographic diversity in westernized countries, for example, the United States. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, as of May 2018 immigrants make up 17 percent (or 27.4 million) of the United States labor force compared to 13.3 percent in 2000. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics also reported an expected rise in the median age of the workforce due to people retiring at a much later age than they did historically. Many studies have also shown that in the United States foreign workers are getting paid more and more foreign graduates from American colleges are remaining in the country to work (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

Lastly, there is a societal demand for workplace equality in the United States that was initiated through the Civil Rights Movement (Cox, 1993). These statistics translate to a growing culturally diverse work environment across the country. Regardless of how these demographic changes impact an organization, firms must acknowledge these changes and align their management of diversity with their goals (Guillaume, Dawson, Woods, Sacramento, and West, 2013).

Along with the impact of globalization and the growth of demographic diversity in the United States, companies are recognizing that they must actively seek out a diverse workplace. The Attraction-Selection-Attrition-hypothesis (ASA) conceived by Schneider (1987), indicates that organizations are inclined to attract, hire and retain the same types of people. This, as a result, creates a natural propensity within organizations to limit diversity in the workplace. However, as time has progressed organizations are becoming more aware of the need for diversity and therefore are actively seeking out ways in which they can be proactive in acquiring and benefiting from a diversified workplace.

All the above factors make it necessary for organizations to recognize and understand how to effectively manage a more frequent occurrence of diversity in their workforce. With a hike in diversity in the workplace, Avery and McKay (2010) suggest that organizations are struggling to keep up with and fully understand how to manage their diverse workforce. As a result, they find it increasingly difficult to capitalize on the highly praised potential benefits. If diversity is not managed adequately, it can cost a company money or even their reputation. Many studies exist that investigate the conditions which result in either positive or negative effects stemming from diversity. These demonstrate both the opportunities and challenges that are associated with diversity and are essential to understanding why a company should actively manage diversity (Dhuppar, 2015).

2.2 Implications of Diversity in Organizations

Cox and Blake (1991) constructed the information and decision-making perspective. This was a theoretical approach that attempted to understand the link between the effectiveness of a firm and the firm's diversity. Cox and Blake argue that cultural diversity directly affects organizational effectiveness in six key categories: cost, human resources, creativity and innovation, marketing, problem solving and flexibility. Where

workplace diversity effects creativity and innovation by bringing in varying perspectives and not following past norms. An organization's problem-solving ability is improved with a diverse environment as it brings more perspectives and according to the cognitive diversity theory, allows an organization to arrive at the best possible decision. Lastly, a more diverse workplace allows for and creates a more flexible organization. Diversity brings fluidity to an organization as it will become less standardized and as a result, can respond more efficiently to a changing environment. In the 1980's diversity management was used by businesses as a means to foster a more positive and inclusive organizational environment as well as an provide equal employment opportunity for minorities (Romanenko, 2012). Since its beginning, diversity management has developed into a form of strategic human resource management.

Other literature shares the perspective that workplace diversity aligns itself with the similarity attraction paradigm and the Attraction-Selection-Attrition-hypothesis (ASA) which both essentially state that similar employees (in terms of ethnicity, age and gender) will work together more effectively as they will be more willing to. They also claim management tends to hire people that are similar to them. As a result, varying social groups form within organizations. This perspective notes a lack of efficiency that sometimes follows the formation of these social groups. Conflicts often arise between the varying social groups within an organization whether it be regarding differing in treatment of the individual groups or a general mismanagement. Brickson (2000) theory asserts that greater challenges arise from diversity in values rather than differing social identity groups. With this view, there exists more problems with diversity than social groups.

2.3 Opportunities Associated with Cultural Diversity

When workplace diversity succeeds, there are many benefits that a company can experience. Having a focus on maintaining workplace diversity is a crucial corporate strategy to not only improve management practices but to also boost profits (Christian, Porter and Moffitt, 2006). Furthermore, having

two employees working on a project with diverse identities and differing perspectives or ways of thinking leads to a greater chance of innovation, critical thinking and problem solving (Page, 2007).

Workplace diversity brings with it range of perspectives which, in many cases, foster creativity. A study by Orlando and Brown (2001) claims that business environments and strategies that require creativity and innovation will benefit more from diversity in the workplace than those which do not. To further this point, the author's state that the level of organizational effectiveness is a result of whether diversity level is aligned with the firm's environment and strategy. Therefore, strategic human resource management plays a critical role in managing workplace diversity, which will be revisited in the next section.

Ethical, legal and moral motives have been and are still increasingly relevant in today's corporate climate. Achieving these types of goals which relate to a company's corporate social responsibilities also leads to that organization achieving economic performance goals as well as better stock performance (Ottaviano and Peri, 2006). Diversity in the workplace can also lead to better decision making, a larger choice in new hire talent and more creativity (Cox, 1991). Literature shows that diversity promotes and supports creativity and openness (Dike, 2013). Many studies conclude that diversity is important and beneficial, though the moderators of the benefits of diversity are less clear.

A study by Amaliyah (2015) demonstrates that organizations are finding it increasingly necessary to develop and invest in diversity. Diversity in the workplace should be a form of corporate strategy as the study reports a relationship between diversity, an organization's mission or goals and overall performance. Furthering this point, a study performed by Cunningham (2009) showed that racial diversity created positive results when an organization took a proactive management strategy. The study also concluded that a diversity management strategy is necessary in order

to experience the potential benefits of diversity that are outlined above. A further look into research surrounding Cunningham's study shows that companies must have conditions that allow for a discussion of the issues faced, an environment that invites any expression of doubt regarding the strategy implemented and an overall valuing of perspectives and opinions (Rattan et al., 2018).

2.4 Challenges Associated with Cultural Diversity

If managed ineffectively, cultural diversity can have negative effects on various aspects of an organization. It can contribute to conflict between employees which, in turn, can lead to decreased employee morale as well as insufficient job performance (Ely and Thomas, 2001). Diversity as a general concept is quite complex, as we are able to observe historically throughout society, therefore it is imperative that firms understand and develop strategies that deal with diversity challenges. There are many different types of issues that result from diversity for example gender related challenges like differences in pay, promotions or power. Also, some employees may hold unjust prejudices which often result in harmful stereotypes. These stereotypes can lead to a variety of issues such as poor communication, low morale, weak relationships between employees or worse, harassment, abuse, hostile environment and intimidation (Dike, 2013)(Christian et al., 2006). Overall, organizations that lack a diversity strategy experience an uncomfortable and unwanted work environment that prohibits cohesion and productive work relationships which effects the company in the long run for reasons previously discussed. Therefore, obstacles to working with and implementing diversity are inevitable and must be addressed.

Farndale et al. (2015) suggest that the view held regarding cultural diversity in the workplace should shift from looking diversity in terms of skills to diversity in values as they are more personal and create an emotional experience. It is important to note that skills are considered to be the competence or proficiency brought to the organization while diversity in values are where the challenges arise within diverse organizations. As a result, soft skills- the skills one possesses that allows them to interact with

co-workers effectively- become more critical in both preventing and solving problems that stem from cultural diversity.

2.5 Effective Management of Diversity

Companies are beginning to view cultural diversity as an asset to their firm but find it difficult to manage effectively. Strategic Human Resource Management plays an important role in managing and training employees to manage diversity effectively. Companies may choose to have diversity and inclusion professionals or delegate the work to human resources themselves.

It is especially important for the diversity and inclusion professionals and/or human resources professionals to ensure that employees possess or rather, develop what much of the human resource management literature calls 'cultural intelligence' in order to operate diverse teams to their full potential and prevent them from hurting the performance of the organization. Thomas et al. (2008) describes cultural intelligence as an employee who can:

- Understand the basics as well as the importance of intercultural interactions and approach those interactions thoughtfully.
- Adapt to and understand unfamiliar cultural contexts.
- Build upon culturally adaptive behaviors and skills.
- Gather, understand, recall and react to many different cultural cues.

The management of diversity has an effect on social integration in the workplace, work performance and employee satisfaction. In a study done by Triguero-Sanchez et al. 2018, findings show a positive correlation between managing diversity through the human resource management and organizational performance. This study suggests that firms seek to gain employee commitment rather than control in order to experience the positive effects of workplace diversity.

A paper by Rattan and Dweck (2018) outlines multiple studies all which share the purpose of minimizing prejudice in the workplace. They

attempt to create a theoretical framework for comprehending stigmatized employee's responses when faced with encounters of prejudice and bias. All studies find that that confronting prejudice can serve as an amendatory role for stigmatized employees who have a generally positive mindset (Rattan et al., 2018). Similar studies further suggest that organizations and upper management should help facilitate the coping of employees who have faced prejudice (Lozano et al., 2017). Coming to the conclusion that managers, human resources and upper management in general should help repair negative experiences relating to diversity. Given this, many recommend that organizations establish a clear atmosphere which supports the use of confrontations in order to resolve issues deriving from prejudices or stereotypes.

2.6 Gaps in Research; Opportunities for Further Research

This literature review demonstrates that extensive research performed on the concept of diversity in the workplace discusses how to manage diversity effectively, the benefits of a diverse workplace, the challenges associated with diversity in organizations, how to react if discriminated against and how management should support those who are discriminated against. With no true consensus on whether or not the benefits outweigh the challenges (Visagie and Linde, 2010).

What may be lacking in the understanding of cultural diversity is a descriptive guide for new, employees joining a culturally diverse work environment. Rather than focusing on research for upper management about handling workplace diversity, which exists throughout the relevant literature, more research is needed regarding best practices for individual employees who have recently started their career or are recently joining a diverse organization.

This research attempts to uncover behavioral practices that must be developed in order to help create an environment that accepts, embraces and capitalizes on the discussed benefits of workplace diversity. Following

this research, one should gain a new perspective and understanding in workplace cultural diversity on an individual level, where soft skills are explored rather than corporate level trainings or expectations.

2.7 Conclusion

There is an often-examined direct relationship between organizational success and workplace diversity. In order to derive maximum benefit from cultural diversity, strategy must be implemented with the purpose of managing diversity. As a result, there exists extensive literature as well as research and studies on the benefits and challenges associated with workplace diversity. More recently, there has been research on the moderators of workplace diversity in terms of social integration and performance. Modern research considers the strategies that must be implemented in order to achieve the benefits or face the negative consequences that can be associated with workplace diversity. What lacks in literature is the individual employee's role in creating an environment with the capabilities to experience the benefits of workplace diversity.

Chapter 3: Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the implications of a diverse workforce on the business as well as the individual level. The research question for this study reads below:

From the perspective of western executives, what are the behavioral practices that a new hire should develop in order to create an inclusive and accepting environment within a culturally diverse organization?

To further understand the proposed topic, sub questions and research objectives include:

- What factors are most prevalent in workplace diversity?
- What are real life examples of the benefits and challenges of workplace diversity?
- What does success look like in terms of integration and acceptance of workplace diversity?
- What are real life examples of resolutions of issues resulting from workplace diversity?

The aim of this study is to identify and understand the best practices for establishing an effective environment for workplace diversity. The best practices have been determined through guided interviews with senior workers and executives in the high-tech sector of commercial business in westernized countries including but not limited to the United States. The findings of this study is a benefit for not only global organizations, but it also benefits the new hires themselves as it will provide a framework for approaching cultural diversity.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Guided Interview Approach

In order to address the research question, a qualitative research interview was used. This approach was useful in fully understanding each participant's personal experiences and opinions. The study gained a broad insight of the sample's thoughts and therefore, also gained a deep understanding of the real-life implications of diversity in the workplace. A quantitative method, on the other hand, would lack the means to gain a greater understanding of the participant's personal thoughts and feelings, therefore, it was not used.

A qualitative study was conducted through exploratory research with the use of in-depth guided interviews. As a result, this research is interpretivist as it makes sense of reality through specifically chosen individual's subjective experiences with diversity in the workplace. The logical process for the reasoning in this study was inductive rather than deductive. This means that the data was collected, examined, coded and commonalities in responses between participants were collated to determine themes. This stands in contrast to a deductive approach that would have outright tested a theory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009).

An interview is both an appropriate and effective means of conducting research for this topic as interviews are seen as a more personal mode of qualitative research- compared to a survey or questionnaire (Foddy, 1993). Similarly, as discussed in the previous literature review section, diversity is a complex and at times controversial topic that demands a thorough and personal examination. Furthermore, interviews are much easier to facilitate when a goal of getting respondents opinions is present (Campion, Campion and Hudson, 1994). Interviews allow for the researcher to ask follow-up questions and the conversation can be guided. In this sense, a non-standardized, one to one, guided interview approach was implemented in order to guarantee that similar information was addressed in each interview

so answers can be compared, and themes can be recorded. This approach contributed a sense of focus to the study while still allowing for flexibility in obtaining important and necessary information from the respondents. The questions asked were generally open-ended with the purpose of ensuring each interviewee had the opportunity to share all of his or her thoughts on the proposed topic.

Due to the distance the sample is located from Ireland, strictly audio interviews were conducted. It was necessary to schedule the audio interviews in advance due to challenges associated with the distance as well as the time change. Many interviews were scheduled a month in advance. The time limit of thirty minutes was necessary for scheduling. Each respondent was asked to allocate thirty minutes for the interview. However, interviews lasted between 24 minutes and 41 minutes. If the respondent wanted to extend the length of interview, the interview would simply continue until its natural end. See Appendix 1 for email communication template.

Before the study was performed it was noted that each interview must include the following:

- Ensure each interviewee reads, understands and signs a participant consent form.
- A quiet location without distraction such as background noise.
- The sample must understand the topic of cultural diversity, why this study is being performed and how long the study will take.
- The interviewer must address, and the sample must understand confidentiality associated with the study.
- Interviewer must explain the guided interview format.
- Interviewer must allow for respondent to ask questions regarding the study before the interview begins.
- There must be a method to record data.

4.2 Methodology Limitations

Some limitations of conducting research through the process of interviews follow. The interviews themselves were reasonably time consuming and the scheduling needed to occur far in advance. In addition, the information was gathered from a smaller number of people than other methods (again, like a survey or questionnaire) could allow. Lastly, there was a dependence on technology as it was necessary to audio record each interview. The limitations of this study will be discussed at further length in Chapter 6.

Throughout the process, the interviewer was sure to be careful to conduct the questioning in ways that did not create bias in any of the respondent's answers (Hollowitz and Wilson, 1993). The interviewer was clear in their tone of voice, concise in each question, asked one question at a time, stayed neutral to all answers and lastly, remained in control of the interview.

4.3 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with two participants in order to practice interviewing skills and become proficient so that interviewer was prepared for any contingencies that may have occurred. The pilot study also provided the opportunity to test which questions elicit the most productive responses. The intention was to pilot more questions than would be used in the full study and reduce the least productive questions so that it fits within the scheduled interview time frame. The pilot study was extremely helpful in organizing and understanding how the various technology platforms, like Zoom and Otter AI, would work for the data collection. The interviewees who participated in the pilot study were not included in the full study.

4.4 Research Sample

The sample in this research study consisted of 11 senior leaders and executives all of which have had experience in working at a culturally

diverse organization and in managing a diverse team at a global organization for many years. The sample's experience ranges from 20 years to over 45 years working at technology companies. All of the sample currently hold a leadership role, shown below in Table 1. There is moderate diversity with the gender and geographical location of the sample size including five women and six men. The sample was largely Caucasian, with one African American man. All respondents consider themselves to be "tech executives." Every participant had at least an undergraduate education though many also held a master's degree. All of the participants were from the United States or Western Europe. The most frequent cultures that they cited working with in their experience were eastern Europe and Asia, frequently mentioning India. All were currently working for US companies, although several said that they worked for non-US companies in the past. Again, see Table 1 below for a breakdown of each participant.

Table 1: Research Sample Demographics

Participant	Gender	Years Managing	Current Role	Location
1	Male	35+	Vice President of Consulting Services	Virginia, USA
2	Male	20+	Director of Business Development	San Diego, USA
3	Male	30+	Chief Executive Officer	Denver, USA
4	Male	20+	Chief Executive Officer	Los Angeles, USA
5	Female	30+	Global Vice President Internal Communication, Change and Employee Engagement	London, UK
6	Female	10+	Account Executive	Dublin, IRL
7	Male	40+	Chief Marketing Officer	Seattle, USA
8	Male	30+	Sales Manager	London, UK
9	Female	25+	Senior VP of Sales Effectiveness and Optimization	Boston, USA
10	Female	25+	VP Global Sales Enablement	Boston, USA
11	Female	15+	Director of Product Development	Seattle, USA

4.5 Research Instrument

A guided interview was conducted with executives over a web communication service. Each interview was recorded on two devices as a backup in anticipation of technological error. To supplement the recording, the interviewer took notes and recorded any information that presented itself as interesting. After the interview, the interviewer wrote down observations. See Appendix 2 for the questions asked during each interview.

Zoom Video Communications was used to schedule and conduct the interviews using audio only. Calls were audio recorded on the Zoom platform as well as Quicktime Player as a back-up. The interviews were transcribed using Otter AI then were checked over by the researcher for accuracy.

4.6 Thematic Analysis

After collecting all interviews, all the data was organized so that themes could be identified. After the organization, the themes were thoroughly analyzed. The data analysis was conducted through processes including familiarization with the data followed by coding and identifying themes within the data set.

Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyze data, using Braun and Clark (2006) as a guide for understanding. More specifically the semantic approach to thematic analysis was used as it best serves the purpose of producing a detailed description of the contributor's experiences in working on international and culturally diverse teams (Connelly and Peltzer, 2016). Braun and Clark (2006) separate the process of thematic analysis into six phases which were used as guidelines in the analysis of this research study:

1. Researcher must become familiar with the data collected by reading and rereading the interview transcriptions.
2. Code, or identify meaningful data points that will aid in answering research questions.
3. Generate potential themes by examining the codes to highlight important patterns within the data set.
4. Review themes by checking the potential themes against the data and research questions and objectives. Themes may be divided, combined or rejected in this step.

5. Finalize themes by providing a name as well as an in-depth analysis of each theme.
6. Write up findings by connecting analysis to the data and relevant literature.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the interview process, ethical issues could have arisen. Although problems were unlikely, it was important to address these issues prior to their occurrence. Steps were taken to counteract potential issues including:

- While the study described the background and qualifications of the participants, their specific names and companies were not be listed in order to maintain privacy.
- If a participant became uncomfortable answering any question, it would have been noted, and the participant could skip that question.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Growth of Diversity

Table 2: Thematic Analysis

Theme	<i>Growth of Diversity</i>
Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Technology advancements - Slack, Zoom</i>• <i>Ability to work remotely</i>• <i>Internationalization of the workforce</i>• <i>Lack of diversity in executives</i>• <i>Growth creates more opportunities to capitalize on benefits</i>• <i>Organizations are making an effort to be more diverse</i>• <i>Working remote</i>

Each participant witnessed a growth in culturally diverse teams in their years in the workforce. Many stating that while there has been a significant growth, there has also been a diverse and heterogeneous environment since the start of their career. Most of the sample saw growth especially in working with Asian cultures including China, Japan and India. The participants view this growth as opening both opportunities and challenges that all organizations have to handle. The notion being that having a workforce that includes people from a certain culture for example, China, makes doing business in that country more effective.

Technology was mentioned by multiple participants as being a facilitator for the growth of diverse teams. Stating that technology, specifically programs like Slack and Zoom, have provided the ability for many different cultures and ethnicities to communicate and collaborate. One participant commented that when he first began to manage teams in India, he had to make phone calls at 11 pm in order to communicate with them while now he is easily managing 60 people in twenty countries as most of his team works remotely. A shift from synchronous to asynchronous occurred with the use of emerging technologies. For instance, messages can be sent instantaneously as people do not have to be in a specific location. They can also be received on any device. Having the ability to work remote allows for and often leads to

a more diverse team. Levitt (1983), wrote about the impact globalization has had on the world. He continued to argue that a main driver of globalization is technology and that it proletarianized, or made easier, transport, travel and more importantly communication.

There were multiple comments made regarding the continuous struggle to have a diverse group of executives. There was an overall consensus that a truly diverse organization, one that will experience the benefits, begins at the top. When the board or the company's leaders are not diverse, employees often become cynical. This is especially true as the company claims to place importance on diversity and diversity training (Thomas et al., 2008)

Research suggests that organizations establish corporate strategies with a focus on promoting diversity. It recommends to include and consider diversity in the very beginning of the recruitment process (Kippenberg and Schippers, 2007). Additionally, all participants also noted that companies pay attention to diversity during the hiring process. Companies are recognizing the potential benefits and are trying to build diverse teams in order to be more productive and drive business growth.

Many participants commented on the idea of unconscious bias by pointing out that they tend to hire people like themselves. One participant recommended to "look at yourself and look at your complete team that works for you and ask yourself what are the profiles of the people that you're hiring. Do you feel like a lot of them are like you? If so, make a conscious decision to find someone that is different to me but can still meet the needs of the job." She added that hiring diverse people with different expertise will be a greater benefit to the organization than to hire a homogenous group. Christian et al. (2006) also suggests this as it claims that maintaining a level of diversity in employee is not only an important corporate strategy which will improve management, but it is also a strategy to boost profits.

5.2 Benefits

Table 3: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Benefits of diversity in the workplace
Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Varying perspectives</i> • <i>Richness of business solutions</i> • <i>Rewarding</i> • <i>Obtaining technical skills</i> • <i>Broader range of thought</i> • <i>Different innovations and solutions</i> • <i>Cost/economic advantage in some cases</i> • <i>More creative environment</i> • <i>More productive day to day 'follow the sun'</i> <p><i>*All benefits drive business growth and shareholder return</i></p>

Participants found that diversity in the workplace is important for business growth and shareholder return as it brings varying perspectives that allow for broader range of thought and more creativity in innovations and solutions. Many participants, as well as the literature, noted that the benefits far outweigh the challenges, but the challenges and issues must always be addressed (Orlando and Brown, 2001).

The idea that diversity creates a richness for organizations through differing perspectives was common between interviews. When team members come from different places and have different perspectives on life, there is a new dimension to problem solving and a new approach to business solutions as well as business results. Along with a broader range of thought, communication and relationships with customers are more effective. Workplace diversity brings insights from a work perspective as well as personal experience that is more rewarding both for the company as well as the individual.

It was interesting to note that, with all the discussion of increased productivity due to workplace diversity, no one made comments about a 'follow the sun' strategy. A 'follow the sun strategy' or FTS is essentially when work is stopped in one time zone then continued in another. For

example, the end of the work day occurs in the United States and the day starts in India therefore the work is continuously worked on while the other team is resting for the evening in order to increase day to day productivity (Carmel, Espinosa and Dubinsky, 2010). Some participants were asked about this strategy post interview, they all concurred that it absolutely exists. It is suspected that the structure of the interview did not encourage that answer.

One specific driver of diversification that many participants mentioned is the idea that outsourcing is more cost effective. One participant noted that it would make more financial sense to have an engineering team in India, than the United States. Additionally, he noted, due to the excellent education level in India, it is much easier to put together a talented team. Another participant spoke about the idea that different cultures bring different skill sets to an organization. Citing examples like Russian developers are renowned for their superior skills. Due to industry and workforce maturity levels in the west (including the United Kingdom and United States) it is easier to obtain the needed technical skills in less developed economies (Cha, Pingry and Thatcher, 2009).

Overall, the central concept, when discussing the benefits of having a diverse organization, was varying perspectives. Although many of the benefits above were noted, but they always came back to perspective. These perspectives bring different creative solutions and innovations and in turn drive business growth. Rattan and Dweck (2018), research on cultural diversity is consistent with the participants thoughts. The literature and participants agree that a multitude of perspectives means the organization must take advantage of the different procedures, communication styles and knowledge that a diverse group of employees offer.

5.3 Challenges

Table 4: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Challenges with diversity in the workplace
Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Miscommunication</i> • <i>Not recognizing/confronting errors</i> • <i>Insensitivities- cultural differences are not recognized</i> • <i>Location/time zone</i> • <i>Language barriers</i> • <i>Bias</i> • <i>Protective of what has been done in the past</i> • <i>Resistance to change</i> • <i>Cultural upbringing “yes culture”</i> • <i>Cultural differences- laws, personalities, education, religion, customs</i> • <i>Different behavioral practices both socially and business-wise</i> • <i>Challenges from technology</i>

Challenges associated with diversity in the workplace included both practical and behavioral issues. Most participants mentioned the more obvious challenges like language barriers and location as well as specific behavioral challenges from experiences that they had often seen in their career.

Multiple participants spoke in more depth about language barriers. One participant explained that she coaches her team on communicating with people whose native language is not English. She insists on her team speaking slowly, in straight English sentences, and limiting the use of slang. She noted that this technique is somewhat overlooked in the United States as only 20% of the population speaks two or more languages while in Europe that figure is 54% (Pew Research, 2018). She also asks her direct reports to limit the US centric conversations, for example conversations about American football or baseball.

Many of the participants were sensitive to the challenge that their own unconscious biases presented for having a diverse environment. One executive who leads sales operations teams spoke of her own unconscious

biases, saying that she tends to hire employees like herself and makes a conscious decision to limit this; “you have to catch yourself so that you don’t hire people that are just like you, for instance, or that you are open and you’re making a conscious effort to be diverse.”

Other challenges include the idea that employees are resistant to change. A different respondent recalled a time where the organization she was working was becoming a more global company and therefore she managed employees that were not used to working in a diverse environment. She mentioned the Netherlands specifically, but found this to be a common problem elsewhere. She explained that these employees were very protective of what they had done in the past and did not seem to be interested in listening to how others worked. In order to avoid this issue, she was sure to communicate with them by asking what their concerns were regarding the changes and why they were hesitant in implementing the changes. If the concerns and hesitations were valid, the participant would address those concerns one by one so that the direction of the company was clearly communicated.

Almost every participant spoke of the concept of a ‘Yes Culture’ which highlighted the challenges often faced by participants. As described by participants, the concept of a ‘Yes Culture’ is those cultures that display an often-intense aversion to delivering bad news, directly contradicting managers and coworkers, and especially, admitting difficulty and lack of progress against goals. Examples of how participants dealt with or worked around the implications of ‘Yes Culture’ follow in the next chapter and it is remarkable the resourcefulness the participants spoke of.

Issues deriving from miscommunication were mentioned consistently and were explained to be an important issue to address. Miscommunication often came from language barriers, misunderstanding how something was said or a lack of communication when issues arose. Many said that the reaction to such challenges should be to communicate more clearly and/or

put communication or process mechanisms in place so that they are better able to handle problems.

5.4 Solutions

Table 5: Thematic Analysis

<i>Theme</i>	Prevention strategies and solutions for diversity challenges
<i>Sub-theme</i>	<i>Management Perspective Solutions – Examples</i>
<i>Codes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Communication</i> • <i>Specificity in tasks</i> • <i>Understand/respect learning process</i> • <i>One on one clarifying conversations</i> • <i>Training orientated to understanding cultural differences- greetings, project management etc.</i> • <i>Internal discussions about the importance of diversity in workplace</i> • <i>Conflict resolution</i> • <i>Confronting the issue</i> • <i>Flexibility</i> • <i>Address each concern- take cultural issues seriously</i> • <i>Recognizing your own bias</i> • <i>Unconscious bias</i> • <i>Create a positive team environment</i> • <i>Human connections –know the individual</i> • <i>Constructive feedback</i> • <i>Recruitment</i>

Many participants provided personal examples of challenges stemming from diversity that are helpful in getting a full understanding of the implications of international teams. Robertson's (2004) Model of Diversity and Inclusion claims that diversity in organizations are both supported and maintained by processes to solve unfair treatment challenges, a commitment to diversity by organization's leaders and an increase in the diversity of stakeholders. Inclusion, however, is sustained through employee participation and diversity integration. In this case, it is a leader's role to maintain and support diversity as well as develop their employee's ability to handle diversity and inclusion. Common examples of the sample's role in handling diversity and inclusion issues will be discussed at further length below.

Example 1: An American was at a meeting with a Japanese colleague. The American employee gently kicked the Japanese man's leg under the table to ask him not to talk about something. The Japanese man was extremely offended as it is an extremely rude gesture in Japan. The American employee did not intend to offend the other employee and explained that he was only trying to get the other man's attention. The manager in this situation had to step in and take the Japanese employee's complaint very seriously. The manager explained that while the incident may not seem like a serious issue to an American, it was extremely important problem in the Japanese culture, so it had to be taken seriously.

Example 2: As the CEO of a software company with a couple of Muslim employees who pray five times a day in an open floor plan office. This was causing a problem as other employees were on the phone with customers all day and the prayers were distracting. The CEO solved this by giving the employees his office for a space to pray. In this case, he felt that what is important was his flexibility to avoid any further issues. He concluded this example by explaining that he had never come across a major challenge when it comes to managing diversity, only little ones that can be overcome with the right management style such as this.

Example 3: A version of this example was repeated by multiple participants. They spoke of what many called "yes cultures" which, from a US perspective, is difficult to understand at first. For instance, one participant recalled working with people in Japan and getting frustrated when they would say they understood a task, but the work would not turn out to be what they had agreed upon. In this case, clear and concise communications on what was expected had solved the issue.

Another participant would check in with members of his team in India and they would explain that everything was going well when he knew that progress was not being made. He became frustrated until he came to the realization that these team members came from a culture that does not tell

their direct supervisor bad news. After this realization, he started meetings by asking the team to say three things they are most worried about. Doing this legitimized the idea that it was necessary to tell the manager both bad and good news.

A participant remembered a scenario where an employee engagement survey was given to the office in India and Japan. The results were very positive and showed a high engagement level. However, their attrition was quite high. She eventually understood that it was a cultural norm in those countries to answer surveys in that way. Instead of employee engagement surveys that may work in the United States or United Kingdom offices, they began to do focus groups in order to get a better and more accurate gauge of their employee engagement in international offices.

Surprisingly, what united these participants in their solution to these diversity challenges was creativity. There was no formulary response to the challenges. There were broad themes such as communication, personal attention, sincere concern, however, the actual implementation was almost never the same.

5.5 Behavioral Practices

Table 6: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Individual's Behavioral Practices
Codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Do your homework”</i> • <i>Communicate</i> • <i>Build relationships- create trust and break down barriers</i> • <i>Patience</i> • <i>Honesty</i> • <i>Question the status quo constructively</i> • <i>Bring a freshness and unbiased perspective</i> • <i>Transparency</i> • <i>Contribute</i> • <i>Respect everyone the same</i> • <i>No preconditions/preconceptions/bias</i> • <i>Openness</i> • <i>Willingness to communicate</i>

Alder (1997) claimed that there are three approaches to managing cultural diversity challenges including ignore differences, minimize differences and lastly manage differences. Kautish (2012) furthers this research and argues that there are two approaches to training managing diversity differences. The first approach is diversity training given to all entry level positions while the second approach is to focus training on the management of the organization. Diversity training is an important aspect to strategic human resource management. Participants in this study described what they felt was important behavioral practices for dealing with challenges in diversity on an individual level.

The participants communicated the importance in accepting that cultural differences will always exist. Therefore, organizations must have a clear understanding of how to handle issues that do occur. The participants also spoke of how a member of a diverse team can behave so that the heterogeneous environment will thrive. All recommendations were similar in nature. Many believed that understanding the specific cultural differences that will be encountered. For example, if an employee knows they will be on a team with Russian colleagues they should attempt to learn about their culture beforehand to better understand how to approach them in a work as well as a social situation.

Along with learning, individuals must be open to the differences in people, transparent and willing to communicate. It is important to build relationships, getting to know your team. One participant commented that “when you are working either as a close team or a diverse global or disparate team, it is important to actually understand the individuals.” This relationship development will break down barriers and establish trust through key traits like patience, honesty and transparency. Many participants have found that relationships and trust among team members is a key to success in business.

One respondent, an extremely senior internationally experienced executive, pointed out that starting with a new organization provides fresh relationships and an opportunity for the new person to establish who they want to be within the organization. Along with that, the new hire is the most open and receptive to new ways of thinking. In particular, this is relevant to learning to deal with multiple cultures. While people are always able to learn, over time, this window of openness tends to close. While still on the topic of culture, he went on to point out something similar through his company's perspective stating that:

One of the things I tell new members is to come in and question everything we are doing in a constructive way. Because we want people to come in and say why do you do it that way? Have you considered doing this? That doesn't seem to make sense. Because if we can, as we continue to add new people to a team, we get those new perspectives, it makes us smarter and it makes us learn and it helps us to change and evolve in directions that will make us more successful.

5.6 Communication

Table 7: Thematic Analysis

Theme	Communication
Codes	Process mechanisms Intent Challenge customers and team members Clear and concise Consistency Understand the differences in communications Communicate expectations Global communications Communication with different learning styles How do people receive information

The participants note that communication challenges most often come from a miscommunication in terms of intent. This means that often the way something is communication may be misconstrued as offensive, though it was never intended to be. This could be an issue for customers or team

members and therefore, participants believe that the most important aspect of working in a culturally diverse environment is how well the organization and the people in it communicate. They suggest developing communication process mechanisms which will create consistency in how one effectively communicates. Miscommunication presents a challenge for both customers and team members. Process mechanisms must allow for communications to be consistent, clear and concise regarding expectations.

In this case, while the challenge is communication, the solution is more structured communication. One participant explained that almost all challenges that occur on a diverse team, once broken down, are “all about communication.” Another participant comments that once a communication process is in place, people open up and flourish as they are able to communicate what they think to their team. When teams are joined across oceans, communication becomes even more critical.

All participants commented on the idea that everyone on their team needs to be committed to communication. In order for this to happen, the lines of communication have to be open and there must not be ambiguity in any messages. If there is confusion or miscommunication it must be addressed immediately. A study by Cunningham (2009), as discussed in Chapter 2, also claims that in order for diversity to be beneficial organizations must actively manage diversity. More specifically, the study found that companies must have an environment that invites discussion, allows for expression of doubt and lastly exhibits an appreciation for opinions and perspectives.

5.7 Key Findings

Based on the above responses from the sample, best practices for a new hire joining a multi-cultural, multi-national team or company have been determined and are listed below.

Communicate

Communication was the most common recommendation by the sample. Some placed emphasis on the individual's willingness to communicate, while others felt that being clear, consistent and concise with communications was most important. Nevertheless, it is crucial that a new hire on a team with a lot of diversity communicates often and clearly. Noting that it is especially important when issues or challenges arise that communication and transparency is used as a tool and a solution. A study by Triguro-Sanchez et al. (2018) argues that firms should attempt to gain employee commitment, in this case a commitment to effective communication, in order to secure the benefits workplace diversity offers.

Openness

This idea was often said in relation to an individual's biases and judgements. It was noted by many participants that, while biases and judgements do exist, it is important to actively ignore personal biases in order to bring a fresh unbiased perspective. Being a new addition to an organization is a significant time in that both the new addition as well as the organization have the opportunity to approach the situation with more openness and fewer preconceived notions. This idea was repeatedly supported by participant's responses and is documented previously in quotes from the participants. Literature also adds that workplace diversity not only supports openness and individuality, but it also promotes these notions (Dike, 2013).

Relationship Building

Many participants viewed it as important to foster both professional and social relationships when on a diverse team. Building these relationships will effectively break down barriers and, over time, establish trust which creates a more inclusive and successful work environment.

One participant's ability to create relationships with his coworkers was particularly notable. He discussed his experiences with working with people from Asia, noting a cultural difference whereby they want to please their manager by saying yes, and as a result, they struggle to say no. He found that the best solution to a challenge such as this is by building a relationship with these individuals. The participant broke down his thought process in this

situation: he asked himself “is [this employee] ever going to say no to me when I ask them to do something?” to which his answer was “no they are always going to do their best to try and sort it out.” As a result, the participant took it upon himself to find other ways in which he can be sure the team member is not overwhelmed with the work. He often asked employees such as these if there is anything he can do to help them, if they had a good weekend or what they are up to in their social life. With this, he makes an attempt to understand the individual as well as their culture.

Respect

Participants often noted that respect is important in any relationship, but it becomes even more important and complex when looked at in the context of diversity in the workplace. The sample believes that new hires must focus on respecting the individual team member and also the culture as a whole. In discussion, it came out that people from any individual culture do not inherently respect other cultures and that this respect seems to grow with familiarity. These managers attempted to accelerate that process through discussions and information.

Do-Your-Homework

The last and more practical best practice is to do-your-homework on the cultures that will be encountered at an organization. If the new hire will be working with a primarily Indian team, for example, then it would be important to research cultural differences and customs to better understand the other employees. One participant suggested a simple search on the internet to get a base understanding of a particular culture. The participant also noted that it is important to remember that research such as this will provide generalized information about cultural differences. This is helpful as a foundation; however, building individual relationships as discussed previously is extremely critical in terms of being successful in a diverse work environment. Preparation such as this, will provide support to the other best practices.

These five best practices are grounded in the cultural intelligence framework discussed in previous sections above. Thomas et. al (2008)

explained that one must have cultural intelligence in order to work successfully on a diverse, international team. Having cultural intelligence means that one recognizes that intercultural interactions are important, one adapts to the unfamiliarity of unfamiliar cultures, has culturally adaptive behaviors and skills and, lastly, has a full grasp on many different cultural cues. Each best practice relates and brings more specificity to the various levels of cultural intelligence.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Practical Implications

Based on the interviews with the sample, the best behavioral practices for a new hire joining an international and culturally diverse team were uncovered. They include communication, openness, relationship building, respect and preparedness.

All participants see immense value in having a diverse organization, as the benefits outweigh the challenges. Therefore, it is critical that cultural diversity management is used as a means of capitalizing on the potential benefits that a diverse work environment brings. This research has produced a summary of specific themes and behaviors regarding new hires and cultural diversity.

From a managerial perspective, it is important to discuss, alone or in groups, various forms of cultural interactions for employees or new hires who are new at interacting with members of cultures other than their own. It is important that it is not assumed that new hires will get through it without the help of management. Managers must take the implications of cultural diversity seriously and discuss those implications with their team on an ongoing basis, especially when there are new hires on that team. Management must explain to their reports the importance of engagement in the cultures that they will work with.

It is important that managers specifically commend their team members on their cultural interaction. This will emphasize the importance of the task as well as notice and encourage the behavior. Executives in the study noted that too often the focus is only on the task and not the interaction and that causes cross-cultural problems. The literature identifies many cross-cultural problems that are encountered in the workplace. It is interesting to note that the executives that were interviewed provided specific

recommendations for the individuals and for their managers rather than a generalized organizational plan for managing diversity.

6.2 Limitations of Research

It is important to note that these best practice recommendations are based upon and rooted within the answers of the sample. The sample size consisted of 11 respondents. All of the respondents were given the opportunity to answer each question as in depth as they would like to. As a result, the participant's responses provided color and explanation in response to the questions, notwithstanding, they should not be considered to be statistically valid or complete representative of western executives.

The interview questions were open-ended, and the interviewer did not restrict the respondents by time. The interview was conducted through an online conferencing service called Zoom. All responses were transcribed by Otter Artificial Intelligence and verified by the researcher; however, all interviews were conducted using audio only due to distance and bandwidth factors.

As briefly mentioned above, limitations exist in the methodology of the research paper. Guided interviews require a smaller sample size as they are much more time consuming than a survey or questionnaire, for example. Thematic analysis, while a straightforward form of qualitative analysis, can be misconstrued and affected by personal biases. Therefore, it was important that the researcher attempt to limit any preconceived notions while performing the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The research sample of executives is relatively diverse with five females, six males, from three different westernized countries and modest racial diversity. It should be noted that these are executives that were recruited through networking. The sample was arrived at by associations starting with the researcher's previous internships, as well as executives that the researcher knew and people that those people knew. This was the only

practical way to get access to such a high level of technology executives. However, inherent in that process is a self-selection that could narrow the diversity of perspectives.

Chapter: 7 Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the concept of cultural diversity in the workplace, specifically tech organizations, through the lens of executives from westernized countries including, but not limited to, the United States. The sample for this study, although limited in scale, was reasonably representative of software tech executives. This research has acknowledged that the sampling is imperfect, the researcher networked to executives through personal contacts and contacts of theirs. Participants were from multiple westernized countries, there were multiple companies represented and gender was an even mix. The interviews with this pool of executives yielded both interesting points of agreement, primarily in broad themes, and a wide range of specific solutions. Moreover, this research explored the implications of a diverse workforce on the business and the individual level. Specifically, this study looked for a consensus amongst the expert participants as well as best practices.

The research found that there were common themes that stood out as important. First, it is important to examine the growth of diversity and multicultural teams. The companies that the participants worked for experienced a growth in the participation of new cultures. Specifically, in Asian (especially Indian) cultures as well as eastern European (especially Russian). These cultures are participating in organizations as more than low level team members. They take an important role on projects and are also supervisors and leaders.

Participants also came to the consensus that the benefits of cultural diversity outweigh the challenges. Literature agrees with this as studies such as Rattan and Dweck (2018), argue that it is important that organizations capitalize on the benefits of workplace diversity and as a result, they must also manage the challenges associated.

Most participants identified economics as a driver for the growth in working with diverse teams. They declared that it is crucial that companies exploit the cost advantage that they are currently getting from non-western countries. All identified that teams from multiple locations enables their company to experience more revenue in that country. All believed that diversity on their teams produced superior results. Teams from multiple locations leads to a better ability to do business in those countries and many of these locations are important and high-growth emerging markets.

Secondly, technology, in concert with the economic points above, is a primary driver in the growth of diversity. Collaborative technologies like Slack, Zoom, Smartsheet, Microsoft Teams and even email enable instantaneous synchronous and asynchronous communications. Asynchronous communication is especially important given time zone issues. The new technologies allow for a 24/7 'follow the sun' approach to problem solving and business solutions. Moreover, mobile devices mean that team members are accessible in any possible way they need to be as well as whenever they need to be.

Third, many participants spoke about getting to know the individuals rather than the culture. They note that it is important that one acknowledges that cultures are different. Respondents gave descriptions of cultural collisions that were often unique/humorous, however all transitioned to getting to know the individual rather than the culture. The solutions to challenges faced due to cultural diversity did not always become a rule and was never resolved by policy. They were resolved by mutual understanding and respect.

In light of these themes, the participants tended to agree on key elements of best practices. Five best practices were identified after all interviews were compiled and they are as follows:

1. Communicate: many participants emphasized the importance in the level of clarity of communications.

2. Openness: ignore biases.
3. Relationship building: understand the individual team members which in turn will establish trust.
4. Respect: respect each culture that is a part of the organizational environment. Understand and embrace differences in cultural customs.
5. Do-your-homework: anticipate challenges by preparing beforehand.

The most remarkable concept that participants commented on is the idea that communication is both the problem and solution in an overwhelmingly large number of instances. When a miscommunication occurs, whether it be by intent or language barrier, the participant's solutions always start with a conversation to fix the issue. The literature often emphasizes conflict and conflict resolution. The sample specifically noted that the challenges that they faced in regard to cultural diversity were often intra-conflict rather than inter-conflict. In other words, employees of the same cultural group would experience more challenges among one another. The sample further discussed that they most often faced cultural diversity challenges, or intercultural conflict, that were grounded in flaws in communication.

The methodology used in this study was appropriate in that it successfully got in depth answers from participants about their thoughts, feelings and recommendations regarding the topic of cultural diversity. However, in light of providing recommendations for future research, it may have been helpful to develop more specific research objectives. For example, a research objective focusing on unconscious bias or the participant's personal feelings about the importance of cultural diversity in the work place would have been beneficial as many of them spoke about these objectives anyway.

7.2 Future Research

The reasons for the literature's discussion of conflict rather than communication is unclear. It could be much easier for academic literature to discuss and focus on conflict rather than miscommunication. On the other hand, it could be that the executives in the sample were hesitant to admit outright conflict. Nevertheless, future research could explore the concept of miscommunication in the workplace and more specifically, miscommunication derived from cultural diversity.

In the relevant literature, there are many studies on the challenges and benefits of diversity, even studies which measure the differences in attitudes towards diversity in the workplace (De Meuse and Hostager, 2001). However, there appears to be limited study on the effectiveness of techniques for dealing with those issues or attitudes. The respondents in this research paper are on the front line and, despite their creativity and success in dealing with cultural diversity issues, it is apparent that no one taught them how to do this. Therefore, the need for practical research into the success and effectiveness of techniques dealing with cultural diversity is urgent. If this is true of the managers, it is also true of the team members. Thoroughly researched methods for becoming a more effective team member would be highly valuable, these areas of research have the potential to be both fruitful academically and impactful to the global business community.

Appendices

Appendix 1 *Email Communication Template*

Hi _____,

I hope you're doing well today! I wanted to reach out to you about participating in my final dissertation study, give you a little more information and hopefully schedule a time to chat.

I am currently completing a Master's of Science in Business Management at the National College of Ireland. In order to receive this qualification I have to complete a final dissertation research project.

The purpose of my study is to investigate cultural diversity in the workplace and how an environment can be created that capitalizes on and benefits from this diversity. The interview would last around 30 minutes during which you will be asked questions related to your experiences regarding diversity in the workplace. I will provide the questions beforehand so you have a better understanding of what will be asked.

As a leader with experience in managing culturally diverse teams, your perspective would be extremely valuable to my study. I have attached a more detailed information sheet as well as a consent form below.

As for the next step, could you either sign or type your name into the space provided on the consent form and email it back to me along with some dates and time you have available in May or early June. Once we decide on date, I will schedule the interview through Zoom.

Thank you!

Best,
Erin Schlosser

Appendix 2 Interview Questions

- Can you describe your background? Including your education and past work experience?
- What role are you currently in and where in the world do you primarily work?
- How long have you been managing culturally diverse teams?
- Have you experienced a growth of culturally diverse teams over the duration of your career? Can you describe how a change in cultural diversity is handled?
- Through your own experiences, discuss what you feel are the benefits and challenges associated with cultural diversity in the workplace.
- What do you see as the main factors that drive workplace related cultural differences?
- Can you give a specific example of a challenge you have faced that arose from cultural diversity?
 - Could this have been avoided? If so, how?
 - What actions were taken to resolve the issue?
- Can you think of a colleague or employee of yours that was particularly successful in working with a culturally diverse team? Why was he or she so successful?
- In your opinion, what is the most valuable behavioral practice in a new hire in terms of cultural diversity?
- Do you consider the ability to handle diversity when recruiting for your team? How do you determine that?
- Please describe any preparation that you can recommend for a new hire joining your organization that would help them succeed in regard to cultural diversity.
- Do you have any further information you would like to provide?
- What are your impressions of this interview? Any suggestions for improvement?

Appendix 3

Submission of Thesis to Norma Smurfit Library National College of Ireland

Student name: Erin Schlosser

Student number: 17169674

School: National College of Ireland

Course: MSc Management

Degree to be awarded: Masters of Science in Management

Title of Thesis: An Investigation Into Western Tech Executive's View of Cultural Diversity in the Workplace and the Implications for Individual Team Members.

One hard bound copy of your thesis will be lodged in the Norma Smurfit Library and will be available for consultation. The electronic copy will be accessible in TRAP (<http://trap.ncirl.ie/>), the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository. In accordance with normal academic library practice all theses lodged in the National College of Ireland Institutional Repository (TRAP) are made available on open access. I agree to a hard bound copy of my thesis being available for consultation in the library. I also agree to an electronic copy of my thesis being made publicly available on the National College of Ireland's Institutional Repository TRAP.

Signature of Candidate:

For completion by the School:

The aforementioned thesis was received by _____

Date: _____

This signed form must be appended to all hard bound and electronic copies of your thesis submitted to your school

References

- Adler, Nancy J, (1997). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, Cincinnati, Ohio: South- Western College Publishing.
- Amaliyah, A. (2015) 'The importance of workplace diversity management', *International Journal of Sciences*, 17(2), pp. 175-182.
- Avery, D. R. and McKay, P. F. (2010) 'Doing Diversity Right: An empirically based approach to effective diversity management', *International Review of Industrial and Organisational Psychology*, 25, pp. 227-252.
- Campion, M., Campion, J. and Hudson, J. (1994) 'Structured interviewing: a note on incremental validity and alternative question types', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 79, pp. 998-1002.
- Carmel, E., Espinosa J. and Dubinsky Y. (2010) "Follow the Sun" Workflow in Global Software Development', *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 27(1), pp. 17–37.
- Christian, J., Porter L. W. and Moffitt, G. (2006) 'Workplace diversity and group relations: an overview', *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 9(4), pp. 459-466.
- Cletus, H. E., Mahmood, N. A., Umar, A. and Ibrahim, A. D. (2018) 'Prospects and challenges of workplace diversity in modern day organisations: a critical review', *Journal of Business and Public Administration*, 9(2), pp. 35-52.

Connelly, L. and Peltzer, J. (2016). 'Underdeveloped themes in qualitative research: Relationships with interviews and analysis', *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, pp. 51-57.

Cox, T. (1991) 'The multicultural organization', *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(3), pp. 34-47.

Cox, T. (1993) 'Cultural diversity in organizations: theory research and practice', San Francisco, CA, Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Cox, T. and Blake, S. (1991) 'Managing cultural diversity: implications for organisational competitiveness', *Academy of Management Executive*, 5(3), pp. 45-56.

Cunningham, G. (2009) 'The moderating effect of diversity strategy on the relationship between racial diversity and organizational performance', *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 39(6), pp. 1445-1455.

De Meuse, K. and Hostager, T. (2001) 'Developing an Instrument for Measuring Attitudes Toward and Perceptions of Workplace Diversity: An Initial Report', *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 12(1), pp. 33-51.

Dhuppar, S. (2015) 'Managing workplace diversity challenges and strategies', *International Journal of Research*, 2(3), pp. 346-351.

Dike, P. (2013) 'The Impact of workplace diversity on organizations', *Department of International Business*, 59.

Ely, R. and Thomas D. (2001) 'Cultural diversity at work: the effects of diversity perspectives on workgroup processes and outcomes', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 46(2), pp. 229-273.

Foddy, W. (1993) '*Constructing questions for interviews*', Cambridge University Press.

Guillaume, Y., Dawson, J. , Otaye-Ebede, L., Woods, S. and West, M. (2015) 'Harnessing demographic differences in organizations: what moderates the effects of workplace diversity?', *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 38, pp. 276-303.

Guillaume, Y., Dawson, J., Woods, S., Sacramento, C. and West, M. (2013) 'Getting diversity at work to work: What we know and what we still don't know', *Journal of Occupational & Organizational Psychology*, 86(2), pp. 123–141.

Hays-Thomas, R. and Bendick, M. (2013) 'Professionalizing diversity and inclusion practice: should voluntary standards be the chicken or the egg?', *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 6(3), pp. 193-205.

Hollowitz, J. and Wilson, C. (1993) 'Structured Interviewing in volunteer selection', *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 21, pp. 41-52.

Cha, H., Pingry, D. and Thatcher, M. (2009) 'A Learning Model of Information Technology Outsourcing: Normative Implications', *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 26(2), p. 147.

Kautish, P. (2012) 'Paradigm of Workforce Cultural Diversity and Human Resource Management', *Vidwat: The Indian Journal of Management*, 5(1), pp. 37–41.

Kippenberg, D. and Schippers, M. C. (2007) 'Work group diversity', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 58, pp. 515-541.

Levitt, T. (1983) 'The globalization of markets', *Harvard Business Review*.

Lovelace, K., Shapiro, D. and Weingart, L. (2001) 'Maximizing cross-functional new product teams' Innovativeness and Constrain Adherence: A Conflict Communications Perspective', *Academy of Management Journal*, 44, pp. 779-793.

Lozano, F. and Escrich, T. (2017) 'Cultural diversity in business: A critical reflection on the ideology of tolerance', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 142, pp. 679-696.

Mazzolari, F. and Neumark, D. (2012) 'Immigration and product diversity', *Journal of Population Economics*, 25, pp. 1107-1137.

Melé, D. and Sánchez, C. (2013) 'Cultural diversity and universal ethics in a global world. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 116, pp. 681-687.

Ottaviano, G. and Peri, G. (2006) 'The economic value of cultural diversity: evidence from US cities', *Journal of Economic Geography*, 6(2), pp. 944.

Page, S. (2007) 'Making the difference: applying a logic of diversity', *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(4).

Rattan, A. and Dweck C., (2018) 'What happens after prejudice is confronted in the workplace? How mindsets affect minorities' and women's outlook on future social relations', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(6), pp. 676-687.

Robertson, Q. (2004) 'Disentangling the meanings of diversity and inclusion', *Centre for Advanced Human Resource Studies*, Working Paper 04-05 Cornell.

Romanenko, A. (2012) '*Cultural Diversity Management in Organizations: The Role of Psychological Variables in Diversity Initiatives*', Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009) *Research Methods for Business Students*. Pearson, New York.

Thomas, D. and Ely, R. (1996) 'Making differences matter: A new paradigm for managing diversity', *Harvard Business Review*, 74, 79-90.

Triguero-Sánchez, R., Peña-Vinces J. and Guillen, J. (2018) 'How to improve firm performance through employee diversity and organisational culture', *Review of Business Management*, 20(3), pp. 378-400.

UNESCO (2001) 'Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity', *UNESCO*

United States Department of Labor (2018) 'Labor force characteristics of foreign-born workers summary', *Bureau of Labor Statistic*.

Visagie, J. and Linde, H. (2010) 'Evolving role and nature of workplace leaders and diversity: a theoretical and empirical approach', *Managing Global Transitions: International Research Journal*, 8(4), pp. 381.