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# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY: INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

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A Research Paper  
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by

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## PREFACE

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As a person who immigrated into another country and having to work in various different cultures that are other than my own, as well as having to go through couple of mergers and acquisitions I came to understand that the cultural fluency is a key to success, as well as having peaceful and harmonious relationships. I started this research with the idea to investigate best practices on assimilating into a culture of other than the one's own but then I realized that one doesn't experience cultural diversity in this dimension only rather cultural differences are everywhere as long as social grouping exists and we agree to be part of any of them. We face with a sense of separation as long as we see ourselves as part of a social system. While the systems, which we are member of, generating the sense of belonging, the systems, which we are not member of creating the sense of separation.

My goal is to generate a tool which enables others to have joyful and easy dealings with cultural separations as well as using these tools to infuse creativity through embracing and celebrating the perceived differences at hand.

I would like to thank my faculty research advisor, Dr. Sue Freedman for her insightful feedback during my literature review. I would like to thank my friends Susan, Nila, Monica and Jackie for encouraging me to look into such important and fun problem as well as their support as I go through the research process. I would like to thank my survey participants for their time and insightful comments that contributed to this paper, and would like to thank my sister for cheering me up when I was overwhelmed with the amount of work I need to do complete my paper. And finally thank my parents for teaching me to embrace and enjoy the differences, and thank William for bringing such diversity into our multi-cultural marriage as well as abundant of materials for me to observe and to process...

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## BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

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With this research paper, my intention is to explore the best practices to overcome the cultural diversity in any form. During my literature review and research process it became clear that when observed differences taken as a threat there seems to be losses occurring in the social structure, when they are taken as cultivation for generating something new, they become a valuable tool, which is enabling enhancement of creativity within the structure.

My goal with this research is to highlight the themes that contribute to negative perception and best practices that help overcome the negative perception. These themes can be utilized as training and coaching tools for the individuals and organizations as they face cultural diversity.

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## RESEARCH METHOD

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### QUALITATIVE SURVEY:

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#### SURVEY STRUCTURE:

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Online survey with open ended questions was conducted with people who have cultural diversity experience in one or more ways.

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#### SURVEY DURATION:

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Although expected completion time of the survey was to be approximately 30 minutes, actual response time varied between 13 min to 3 hours and 16 min.

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### SAMPLE POPULATION

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Survey was distributed to 68 individuals. Total of 25 completed the survey.

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#### GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION

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Gender was presented as a stratification criteria to understand if there were any differences between the genders in experiencing cultural diversity.

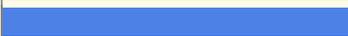
#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		8	32%
2	Female		17	68%
	Total		25	100%

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#### CULTURAL DIVERSITY EXPERIENCE OF THE SAMPLE POPULATION

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It was interesting to note the dietary choices are also creating cultural diversity.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Ethnic		23	92%
2	Religious		16	64%
3	Sexual Orientation		10	40%
4	Functional		13	52%
5	Other		3	12%
<b>Other</b>				
Food - I am a vegetarian and I don't get as much choice of vegetarian food as I would like				

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

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### CULTURAL DIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

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In what ways have you experienced cultural diversity, please check all that apply

- Ethnic
- Religious
- Sexual Orientation
- Organizational
- Functional
- Other .... Text box to define

Think back to a time when you have experienced a feeling of separation based on your cultural diversity (ethnic, religious, organizational, functional, etc.) such working as expat, working with someone from different ethnic background, having to immigrate to another country, being in a relationship with someone who has different ethnic or religious upbringing, going through Merger and Acquisition, working with someone than your own functional area.

### FEELING OF SEPARATION

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1. What made the cultural diversity experience so challenging for you?
2. What threatened you the most?
3. In what ways have you felt that you are separate from the other party or organization?

### FEARS

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1. As a result of feeling alienated or separate what types of fears if any have you experienced?  
Check all that apply
  - Judgment
  - Alienation

- Ridicule
  - Being criticized
  - Being rejected
  - Anxiety
  - Other .... Text box to define
2. What made you threatened the most?
  3. What helped you overcome your fear?
  4. What feelings would help you bring forward your diversity as a creative source to the environment?
- Self-confidence
  - Curiosity
  - Desire to learn
  - Desire to offer something different
  - Other .... Text box to define

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### FEELING OF BELONGING

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1. Tell me about a time that, despite the cultural diversity, you felt like you did belong (felt you are an integral part of the group)?
2. What types of thoughts shifted your feelings from being separate to being more connected? Examples might be thoughts such as I can make this work out or the diversity I am experiencing is a good learning experience, etc.
3. What were some of your behaviors that connected you to the environment/people, which you were feeling separate from? Examples include willingness to understand the other party, being open to hear what they say, etc.

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### BEST PRACTICES TO ACHIEVE BELONGING

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1. Which methods and techniques have you utilized to generate sense of connection? Examples could be learning more about the other culture, willingness to make changes on your rituals and set behaviors, etc.
2. How did they work out?
3. What types of behaviors from your environment connected you to the environment/people, which you were feeling separate from? Examples might include: their desire to learn more about your cultural values, rituals, etc.

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### SUPPORT SYSTEM

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1. What kind of support, if any, from your environment would have been even more helpful for you to overcome the cultural diversity you have experienced?

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### PERSONALITY

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1. Which personality traits of yours have you found the most helpful overcoming cultural diversity?

2. Which personality traits of yours have you found the least helpful in this experience?

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## TRANSFORMATION

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1. In what ways has this experience changed you?
2. What types of thoughts or behaviors on your part would have made the cultural diversity an even more pleasant experience for you?
3. What skills if any have you developed out of this experience?
4. How are you utilizing these skills today?
5. What advice will you offer to others who would be going through similar experiences?

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## THEMES

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### THINGS THAT CREATE SENSE OF SEPARATION

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Following items the survey participants listed as the items that create separation:

- Language and communication barriers
- Gender
- Values other than one's own
- Being away from the support system
- Facing unknown
- Prejudices
- Life styles
- Being minority
- Being outsider
- Sense of orientation
- Cultural conversations
- Cultural priorities
- Having different ethnic background
- Skin color
- Value system different than the host culture
- Mental perspectives
- Approaches to problem solving
- Approach to conflict resolution
- Varying grade levels or positions
- Majority versus minority
- Feeling less than, feeling not good enough
- Feeling more than, appreciated background
- Feeling of overwhelmed with the magnitude of the change
- Feeling limited in contributions due to limited understanding of the culture and language

## FEARS

Survey participants listed below fears as what they face in cultural diversity situation

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Judgment	14	56%
2	Alienation	12	48%
3	Ridicule	4	16%
4	Being criticized	4	16%
5	Being rejected	9	36%
6	Anxiety	13	52%
7	Other	6	24%

Other
Erosion of self-esteem
None of the above
No fears
In one sense my fear has been a severing of relationships.
I am now thinking to another experience, in my own country. I experienced diversity as a manager with a certain level of personal insight/awareness vs. the property for whom I worked. I found myself in the position of being chosen for that job also for the above quality and to be alienated, then for the same reason.
not getting clear communication

### FEARS RELATED TO ACCEPTANCE

- Not being accepted as who they are
- Being rejected
- Been seen as the outsider
- Feeling of less than, look down on
- Being judged due to differences such as appearance, etc.
- Lack of recognition by others
- Losing self-identity
- Being criticized unfairly
- Feeling loss of confidence
- Feeling of not going to be complied to
- Being treated differently strictly due to being different or sexual orientation

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### FEARS RELATED TO VALUES AND CULTURE

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- Thinking that one's own values are not valued
- Fear of expressing self freely due to different values and beliefs
- Not being accepted for one's own beliefs and backgrounds
- Perceived as an anti-social due to lack of understanding of the host culture
- Feeling vulnerable due to different value system
- Feeling of hostility when directing others from the host culture
- Anxiety due to lack of understanding of the host culture
- Feeling that the opportunities are limited as an outsider

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### FEARS RELATED TO COMMUNICATION AND LANGUAGE

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- Not getting a clear resolution to the problem based on the language barrier
- Unable to communicate sufficiently during a medical emergency
- Unable to understand
- Being misunderstood or underestimated
- Unable to communicate properly
- Unable to contribute sufficiently due to lack of language skills
- Unable to control the environment due to lack of language skills

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### FEARS RELATED TO SEPARATION

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- Being isolated without support
- Being away from friends and family
- Being away from the support system
- Feeling of being in exile
- Perceived as being alienated due to looking different

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### PERSONALITY TRAITS LEAST HELPFUL FOR OVERCOMING DIVERSITY

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- Fear to speak up
- Being so conscious of shortcomings
- Insecurity
- Judgment
- Fear of changing
- Sensitivity
- Impatience
- Being close minded
- Intolerance and prejudice
- Being introverted
- Aggressiveness and anger
- Directive communication
- Arrogance
- Ignorance

- Narrow mindedness
- Stubbornness
- Self- esteem issues
- Desire for control
- Type A tendencies
- Trying to be perfect first time around and the feeling of not being able to achieve success

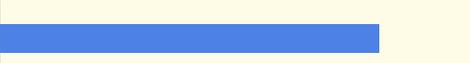
## STRATEGIES THAT HELP OVERCOMING FEAR

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- Trust
- Sharing the same goal
- Education
- Increasing knowledge
- Learning more about host culture
- Volunteering in the community
- Making self-known
- Engaging in conversations
- Compensating fears by working hard
- Forging relationships to dilute differences
- Finding ways to overcome lack of verbal communication skills
- Seeing others vulnerable
- Stop putting so much value on other's thoughts
- Time
- Building track record
- Cherishing one's own diversity and values
- Having a support system that helps value one's own diversity
- Not losing self-values
- Servant leadership
- Finding the mentors, coaches and guides
- Willing to accept small progress
- Developing open dialogue and relationships
- Self-convincing
- Inner strength
- Inner richness
- Increasing self-confidence and self-worth
- Forgiveness

## OVERCOMING DIVERSITY

### THINGS THAT HELP TO UTILIZE DIVERSITY AS A CREATIVE SOURCE

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Self-confidence		20	80%
2	Curiosity		12	48%
3	Desire to learn		22	88%
4	Desire to offer something different		18	72%
5	Other		4	16%

Other
Identify and help/protect others who also were different for many other reasons.
Humility
Courage
Being analytical

### THINGS HELP GENERATE FEELING OF BELONGING

#### PROBLEM SOLVING

- Shared goals, common direction
- Problem solving
- Responsibilities of others or projects

#### SOCIAL STRUCTURES

- Schooling, group activities or being part of cultural or functional organization
- Taking part in the social or cultural activities
- Being part of social structure and events, volunteerism
- Social responsibility cases, like discussing the global warming, girl's education, animal rights
- Taking responsibility in coordinating events

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### CREATING OR RECOGNIZING COMMON VALUES

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- Finding something in common such as sharing same professional background, being part of similar industrial organization, etc.
- Personal hobbies, or cultural events

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### FOSTERING ENVIRONMENTS

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- Spiritual environment where open mindedness and tolerance is offered
- Environments where individuals are accepted as who they are
- Being part of socially diverse groups where no one is minority or majority

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### FOSTERING BEHAVIORS

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- Appreciation and show of appreciation
- Recognition
- Being valued

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### FOOD

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- Meeting over meals

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## STRATEGIES AND BEST PRACTICES THAT HELP ESTABLISHING CONNECTION AND SENSE OF BELONGING

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### LEARNING

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- Learning something new
- Curiosity and desire to learn about the host culture
- Developing further understanding of the host culture and what is being perceived as negative behavior, and adjust one's own behavioral patterns
- Having to work with or for someone who has been through the diversity experience
- Willingness to learn and expand one's awareness
- Developing an understanding of the non-verbal's of the host culture
- Willingness to learn about host culture
- Learning about other cultures, religions, etc.
- Learning host language, learning few phrases of the host culture
- Learning to listen deeply
- Enhancing conflict resolution skills

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### PROBLEM SOLVING

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- Problem solving
- Common goals
- Having had positive success experiences and being able to associate the diversity challenge as a problem solving skills that one already carries

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## FOSTERING BEHAVIORS AND ATTITUDE

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- Presenting differences in constructive and creative manner
- Adopting non-judgmental attitude
- Willingness to participate
- Believe in one's self and knowledge
- Adopting a joyful attitude
- Being genuine
- Being patient
- Willing to change and adopt
- Using diversity as a creative source and understanding what each party can bring to the social group
- Being open to suggestions from the host environment
- Ability to have open and honest communications
- Compassion and willingness to understand
- Respect to each other's thoughts, freedom to agree/disagree
- Putting one's self into other's shoes
- Willingness to understand different perspectives
- Giving one's self sufficient time to learn the culture
- Not demonstrating frustration of anger
- Openness in sharing happiness and difficulties
- Acceptance
- Willingness to change
- Being more tolerant
- Being friendly
- Being humble
- Being open to feedback and critique
- Being open minded
- Giving up wanting to change others
- Being generous
- Being helpful
- Being curious
- Desire to explore new things
- Adopting positive outlook
- Having an open heart
- Ability to forgive
- Ability to adopt loving approach
- Having sense of humor
- Respecting others
- Empathy
- Extraversion and being sociable
- Ability to relate to others
- Love of people, love to learn and grow one's self
- Being at ease

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## VALUES

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- Accepting that the new experiences do not replicate or replace the one's own values rather complement or add to them
- Being open to adopting to host culture's behaviors
- Demonstrating host culture's behaviors or rituals
- Willingness to participate in host culture's traditional events, including eating their foods, following their rituals and rules, etc.
- Developing an understanding of the norms and what makes them important for the host culture
- Making an effort to understand the behaviors and rituals that are different than one's own
- Connecting host culture to one's own culture
- Observing some of the less well-known or infrequent rituals and relating them into one's own and making connections through that
- Having a desire to assimilate
- Learning about the culture and cultural values

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## SOCIAL STRUCTURES

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- Being part of a professional team or social event
- Taking part in social activities and events
- Making connections
- Providing help and support to others
- Helping others who are feeling the isolation
- Building relationships

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## DRIVE AND AMBITION

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- Lifting the bar of accomplishment
- Keep trying and not giving up
- Developing special skills that generates amazements from others
- Desire to overcome challenges
- Having a pride and ambition
- Being stubborn
- Reminding one's self about past experiences on feeling of isolation and utilizing that as a fueling source to be adoptive of the self and inclusive of others
- Adopting careless attitude about other's thoughts
- Developing a hard-working attitude
- Willingness to not to give up and try again
- Desire to learn and to progress
- Being resilient, perseverance

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## SELF-DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

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- Having a protective layer ('sherpa') in the new culture
- Having a purpose

- Desire to develop strength by overcoming the challenges
- Desire to expose one's self to further diversity by traveling
- Developing trust to be accepted by others
- Trusting one's skills on managing diversity
- Confidence in one's own values and pride in family traits
- Developing inner strength
- Letting go of fear of failure
- Developing self-confidence
- Giving up desire to fit in or like others
- Trusting one's ability to contribute

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#### FOOD

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- Connecting over food
- Establishing connections through food, learning host culture's recipes

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#### BEHAVIORS FROM THE HOST CULTURE THAT GENERATE CONNECTION

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#### LEARNING

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- Desire to learn about guest's culture

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#### VALUES

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- Sharing host culture's values and learning the differences between the guest culture
- Shared values
- Expressing sincere interest in learning the history, demographics, etc. of guest culture

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#### BEHAVIORAL ATTRIBUTES

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- Humility
- Seeking to understand others
- Humor
- Openness, acceptance
- Generosity
- Patience
- Flexibility
- Friendship
- Kindness
- Willingness to see beyond ethnic/ cultural differences
- Curiosity
- Showing interest, asking questions
- Shared interests
- Tolerance

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## PROBLEM SOLVING

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- Shared goals

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## SURVEY PARTICIPANT'S SUCCESS WITH THE ESTABLISHED BEST PRACTICES

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- Worked
- Good
- Very well
- Generally well
- Some worked in some situations
- Still working on it
- Fantastic results
- Extremely well

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## PARTICIPANT'S COMMENTS ON THE HOW ESTABLISHED BEST PRACTICES WORKED FOR THEM

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- Understanding more about other cultures and feel connected
- Bitter pills to swallow toughening of my skin looking outside of this culture for professional opportunities
- Openness to embrace two worlds
- Realization about cultural differences
- Releases negative energy, gives positive energy back.
- At times feeling of given up more of one's self self-identity
- Feel very connected
- Enjoying what others enjoy, speaking how others speak
- Increased knowledge and awareness of other cultures
- Developing an understanding that there will be individuals or functions that are unwilling to be accepting
- The desire to learn only took me so far. Having a 'sherpa' was very effective. It also provided a personalized face for the new culture.
- Maintaining some links to one's own culture was double-edged; it provides stability and comfort but can also slow down one's assimilation to some extent
- Even when I don't fully comprehend the customs, I feel that the effort is appreciated and it serves to show a willingness to collaborate. "It makes a deposit in the trust bank."
- There is an improvement when I know what to expect. My relaxation improves my interactions
- Improved communication

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## SUPPORT MECHANISMS WOULD HELP MAKING THE EXPERIENCE EASIER

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- Taking a cultural awareness class
- Developing language skills
- More information available upfront rather than having to search for it

- Resources regarding to cultural diversity, including books, videos, events, etc.
- Networking in professional and voluntary circles
- Mentor, guide or coach
- Partnering with someone who had been familiar with both cultures or similar experiences
- A mentor who had been through similar experience
- A mentor who had been through similar experience
- Guidance on basic systems and processes such as how to obtain driver's license or credit card, etc.
- Host style leadership training
- On-boarding process to host culture
- Ongoing program which requires participation from diverse cultural groups

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## TRANSFORMATION

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- Ability to speak up
- Enhanced knowledge
- Being independent
- Developing interest in cultural diversity
- Being humbled
- Releasing biases
- Becoming global thinker
- Deeper understanding of my one's self
- Further self-acceptance
- Being more mature
- Having more confidence
- Being more open-minded
- Being more open and curious
- Being more open to other ways of life/doing things
- Being more compassionate
- Being less judgmental
- Valuing one's own culture
- Clarity and deeper understanding on one's own values
- Increased level of tolerance
- Developed skills for managing difficult situations
- Being more open to see other people's perspectives
- Deepened self- acceptance
- Further appreciation of one's own background
- Being more receptive of others' thoughts and backgrounds
- Better understanding on how to assimilate into a diverse culture
- Becoming more sensitive and helpful for individuals who are in cultural change experience
- More understanding and patience with others
- Gaining understanding on soft skills that enables the success in a certain culture
- Growing appreciation for others and other ideas

## SKILLS DEVELOPED

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- Ability to speak up
- Being independent
- Resilience
- Ability to learn about other cultures
- Ability to build relationships
- Toughened exterior
- Conflict management skills
- Recognition and appreciation for my core values
- Better understanding
- An understanding of a deeper cultural aspect of each human being
- Having more flexible and creative approach to problem solving
- Improved self-confidence
- Being able to socialize more
- Ability to understand others more
- Greater listening skills
- Understanding self-induced limitations
- Developing trust to others
- "Local" leadership skills
- Language and communication skills.
- Deepened curiosity
- Deeper understanding of one's self
- Depend self-approval and self confidence
- Using diversity as a creative source
- More acceptance of others' cultures, beliefs, behaviors
- Compassion
- Embracing the practice of servant leadership
- Developed sensitivity about one's own actions and their impact on others
- Sensitivity and understanding of political structures in social circles
- More empathy
- More patience
- Being less judgmental
- Improved comfort in the host culture
- Deeper understanding of what matters the most

## HOW ARE THE DEVELOPED SKILLS BEING UTILIZED

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- Being able to speak up more freely
- Lessened need for assistance from others
- Storytelling, being able to share more with others
- Taking rejection less personally, understanding one's sense of self-worth
- Being more confident

- Infused learning's into one's profession
- Experiences being embedded into one's own way of life
- Being more compassionate
- Deepened sense of joy for life and enjoying people
- Being more resilient to change
- Being able to establish deepened relationships
- Developing deeper understanding of other's backgrounds, beliefs and cultures
- Being more sensitive to one's own surroundings and audience
- Being able to collaborate
- Deeper understanding of what matters
- More networking
- Being more circumspect and patient when evaluating new situations to analyze what might be acceptable by the interacted culture
- Understanding that it takes time to build relationships

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### ADVICE BEING OFFERED TO OTHERS

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- Don't be afraid to speak up
- Be prepared, ask questions and have knowledge about what you are getting into
- Willingness to learn new things and willingness to accept change
- Live and let live honey attracts more flies than vinegar
- Put your ego behind you. You are going to be on a learning curve; enjoy the ride and learn as much as you can
- Time will make you change and become a part of a new culture
- Listen and show great respect
- In you mindset, separate the new systems from the new experiences. The new systems will require much more time and attention to detail, but once you are set up, don't let the frustrations derail your new experiences (IQ + EQ = total experience!)
- To learn more about details of other cultures and trying to respect their beliefs
- Be open and non-judgmental
- Support yourself with psychologists, coaches, meditation and yoga
- Think family first and the effects that the expat assignment will have on them. Find a coach or mentor who can create a safe haven and help you bridge the gap between your cultural and the new one you are going to. Have an exit strategy in place.
- Approach it with open heart, mind; have patience and confidence in yourself
- To find what you excel at as soon as possible and use it to make yourself proud. Learn to evaluate yourself rather than relying on others to judge you. Recognize others in a similar situation (that is, isolation) for the same or different reasons and support them. Reach out to them.
- Never lose the deep sense of yourself, stay centered
- To be as inclusive as possible
- Be who you are, believe in yourself and your abilities, stay strong
- Take the cultural differences seriously, be humble and learn what behaviors are frowned upon in the host culture
- Be true to yourself

- Make sure to find or utilize a personalized support structure in the new culture. Understand and accept that the energy required can be exhausting and overwhelming, so maintain a system that keep exercise, diet and rest in order. And, be patient
- Even when you think you have a good dialog, always challenge yourself to make it better. It is too easy to fall back into false assumptions about other cultures built up by our own culture. We must constantly work to collaborate, include, partner, and befriend others in order to build the trust and understanding and ultimately grow the relationships
- Plan ahead and educate yourself on what you will experience, be open minded and welcoming of new people, ideas and food
- Let go off old prejudices. Communicate. Don't agonize over spilt milk
- It is very important to raise your opinion/ voice and not get subdued when you are a minority.

## CONCLUSION

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This research highlighted couple of things:

- There seem to be not much different in the way people feel or the way overcome the diversity based on diversity type such as ethnic, religious, organizational, etc.
- Feeling of separation, feeling of failure and anxiety is present during the cultural diversity experience.
- Certain types of diversity such as being a female seems like escalating the discomfort of the experience as the person already was feeling minority in one way, within the social structure. Therefore discomfort and fears of failure is increasing.
- In order to overcome these feelings and anxiety the survey population finds below as helpful
  - Learning:
    - Learning more about host culture
    - Having a mentor, coach or trusted advisor
  - Inner work:
    - Increasing self-awareness
    - Increasing self-confidence
    - Learning to be humble
    - Learning to be open-minded
    - Learning to forgive self and others
  - Physical exercise:
    - Engaging physical exercises
  - Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution:
    - Having common goals
    - Understanding host culture's problem solving style
- Encountering diversity is a transformational experience. At the end of it people seem to become more open-minded, open-hearted, more forgiving, skilled and quick learners, better communicators and better problem solvers.

## GUIDANCE TO ORGANIZATIONS

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Since the diversity seems like a transformational experience organizations can utilize this to develop talents in the above mentioned areas.

Also as organizations face cultural diversity through mergers and acquisitions, between various functions or global presence it would be helpful for them to adopt following as a best practice based on this research:

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### TRAINING

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- Providing training about host cultures to expats
- Making cultural values known to the parties who experience diversity. Although most companies publish their value statements, they all demonstrate home values that are unspoken. For example in some US corporate culture, which has been to merger recently one part of the culture participants demonstrated multi-tasking during the meetings as valued behavior versus the other culture valued coming to the meeting with full dedicated intention to the issue at hand, and not bringing their laptops. These unspoken valued behaviors created separation and alienation on each side of the equation as one side assumed that the other ones are not as skilled as they are since they were not multi-tasking and the other part thought that they were being ignored and not listened to. In a merger scenario such as this, these unspoken values often create challenges as they are not clear to each party. It would be helpful to understand unspoken values and communicate them so that when parties are in the problem solving mode they can understand each other's value system better.
- Providing basic language training
- Providing power and politics training relates to the host culture
- Providing problem solving styles training
- Providing guidance and training on how host culture socializes by utilizing food as a social avenue and customs with food and diet

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### MENTORING AND COACHING

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- Providing mentors in the host cultures who will provide support to the expats on understanding the culture, behaviors and value systems
- Assigning mentors to expats who have been through the expat experience
- Providing coaching support for the expats and for the key person's in each organizations for M&A situations on items listed under fears and the things that creates separation
- In M&A, providing mentors to key individuals from the unfamiliar part of the merging culture

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### GOALS

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- Creating common goals for each party to collaborate on and making them known

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## SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND NETWORKING

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- Creating social structures such as arts, volunteerism, etc. aligned with company values and having parties work within these social structures.
- Creating networking opportunities for cross pollination
- Creating expat networking

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## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

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- Include physical fitness/mind-body trainings part of the expat package
- Make physical fitness/mind-body exercises mandatory for key resources during M&A

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## FOOD AND DIET

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- Providing basic understanding of the host culture diet for the expats

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## TALENT DEVELOPMENT

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It is clear that having to go through cultural diversity experience is a transformational experience. Talent Development departments within the organizations can add this to their tool kit in order to bring forward some of the leadership behaviors. It is not only creating expat assignments but also having leaders work with the diverse groups and go through the training and coaching skills listed above would be helpful in this purpose.

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## GUIDANCE TO INDIVIDUALS

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### TRAINING

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- Get familiar with the host culture by reading books, etc.
- If possible acquire basic language skills
- Learn administrative processes such as obtaining credit history, driver license, etc. work in the host culture. Prepare yourself with the easiest methods to get you going

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### MENTORING AND COACHING

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- Find a mentor, who is from the host culture, prior to going to the host culture, , and learn basic skills to live in their culture.
- Find a mentor prior to going to the host culture, who is from your own culture and had been in the host culture as an expat
- If possible obtain a coach on the helpful skills listed above or obtain self-improvement books, and other methods to support your personality traits and diminish fears.\

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## GOALS

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- Set yourself reasonable and achievable goals, know that administrative and other integration steps take longer than expected. Be compassionate towards yourself towards professional and personal accomplishments during this time.

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## SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND NETWORKING

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- Participate in social structures such as arts, volunteerism, etc. aligned with your values, especially if you have a tendency to be an introvert

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## PHYSICAL AND MENTAL WELL-BEING

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- Include physical fitness/mind-body trainings part of your regime to keep stress levels down

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## FOOD AND DIET

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- Get yourself familiar with the food and diet customs in the host culture. This often reduces physical stress about not enjoying the food, concerns about not being able to get what one needs, or gaining/losing weight until one get familiar with the environment

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## GUIDANCE TO COACHES

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Based on this research any my experience with my clients as well as my social network I will recommend the following coaching method for the coaches who are engaged in coaching through diversity.

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## COACHING FOR FEARS

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It is clear that the facing unfamiliar and unknown is creating loss of control on the individuals who are facing this situation. Therefore the exploration about needing to have control would be a helpful avenue. Below questions might be helpful in this part of the coaching conversations:

- How does it make you feel facing unfamiliar situations?
- How comfortable are you being vulnerable facing the unknown?
- How do you manage being vulnerable?
- What benefits would you see going through a situation where you have no control?
- How would this experience help you in trusting others?
- How would this experience help you in trusting your environment
- How would this experience help you in trusting others?
- How would this experience help you in trusting your abilities?
- What would bring the sense of safety in this situation?
- How would this experience transform you?
- If you were to put the fears on one hand and the transformation you will achieve at the end on the other hand which would weigh heavier?

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## COACHING FOR BEING OPEN-MINDED

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It is often that people are not willing to be open-minded as they feel their core values are challenged or when they feel they are losing control of their environment. Since I provided suggestive coaching questions about losing control in the above section I would provide guidance around values in this section. Following questions might be helpful when exploring the fears relates to values and gets in the way of being open mindedness.

- What prevents you going into this situation with an open mind?
- What core values do you have that you feel being threatened by this situation?
- What are your non-negotiable values?
- How are they serving you?
- In what ways you feel the values in your environment are different than yours?
- If you were to take one moment and see yourself adopting your environment's values, how would you see yourself being changed?

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## COACHING FOR ADOPTING DIFFERENT PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS

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It was clear with this research that one of the key separation in adaptation was to adopting into a different problem solving approach than the ones that individual was accustomed to. This issue is often overlooked by other fears and conflicts as it stays under the deeper layers of the psyche. And this becomes a real time consuming issue during the M&A situations or between various functions. For exploring individual's or organization's problem solving skills following questions might be helpful:

- What is creating the distinction between your and other party's approach to this problem?
- What is your strategy to problem solving?
- What other problem solving strategies you observed from others and find them helpful?
- What problem solving techniques the other party is using based on your perspective?
- How is it similar to yours?
- If you were to create a brand new problem solving methodology that was inclusive to both method how would that look like?
- How would the company benefit from that?

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## COACHING FOR ESTABLISHING CONNECTIONS

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It was also clear that the diversity is triggering sense of separation and alienation. Exploring this area, which I call "ugly duckling syndrome", is crucial for the coachees in order to get back in touch with their self-confidence and to integrate into the culture as the creative, diverse, resourceful resource. Following questions might be helpful for exploring this area:

- In what ways you are feeling separate from the community?
- How these areas, where you are different, can benefit the community?
- How much resistance this feeling of being separate or different, creating for you?
- How is this preventing you becoming a productive member of the community?

- How much of this resistance is truly coming from the environment versus how much of it is as a result of your disowning them?
- What would be like you embracing your new community?
- What would it be your experience like if you were to embrace you being different?
- How the differences you have can enhance the community, which you are part of?

## GLOSSARY AND TERMS

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- **Host Culture:** In this paper, host culture refers to the dominant culture when more than one cultural background present. Although Merger scenario assumes equality in the merging cultures, this is rarely the case. There seems like one culture often dominates the other or presents itself as the superior.
- **Community:** The social environment where the cultural diversity is being experienced can be organization, function, family or other social communities.