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Strategies for Cultural Integration Following Cross-Border Mergers and Acquisitions

Kimihiro Iwao
Walden University

Walden University

College of Management and Technology

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Kimihiro Iwao

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Dr. Matthew Knight, Committee Chairperson, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Peter Anthony, Committee Member, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

Dr. Diane Dusick, University Reviewer, Doctor of Business Administration Faculty

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Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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Kimihiro Iwao

MBA, New York Institute of Technology, 2005

BA, University of California, Los Angeles, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

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Abstract

Ineffective cross-border merger and acquisition (M&A) strategies can negatively impact

value creation. Global information and communications technology (ICT) company

leaders who do not effectively manage M&As risk eventual divestiture of their acquired

targets. Guided by Haspeslagh and Jemison's acquisition integration approach model and

Hofstede's 5 dimensions of national cultural theory, the purpose of this qualitative

multiple case study was to explore strategies that leaders of global ICT companies use to

integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As. The participants were 8 IMs

from low context cultures who supervised acquired foreign workers primarily from high

context cultures. Data were collected through semistructured interviews with participants

in person or via video call and a review of company documents. Three themes emerged

from Yin's 5-phase thematic data analysis: workplace transparencies, business practices

and working styles, and communication styles. The findings may assist IMs in

developing favorable relationships between diverse workers to achieve multicultural

integration and create new value. The implications for positive social change include

potential improvement in employee relationships in merged companies that have distinct

ethnic groups and diverse cultures.

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Dedication

I would like to thank my wife, Chizuru Iwao, to whom I dedicate my study, for supporting me in achieving this goal. Your support of my academic dream and your confidence during this doctoral journey were conducive. You always stood side by side with me during the tough times. Then, you congratulated me every time I made progressive movement in the study, which encouraged me tremendously to stay motivated. I could not have attained this doctoral goal without you. I would also like to dedicate my achievement to our two sons, Alexander Kenji Iwao and Brian Ryuji Iwao. Without your presence and your sacrifice during times I spent working on my study as opposed to interacting with you, I would not have been able to achieve this goal. I hope I could show you one example of achieving a dream, which you may remember when you want to accomplish something you cannot readily perform. I also dedicate this work to my deceased mother, Hagino Iwao, and father, Susumu Inoue. I am sorry they will not be able to see my doctoral study and what I have completed through my doctoral journey. To all of you, I say thank you very much.

Acknowledgments

To my chair, Dr. Matthew Knight, my second committee member, Dr. Peter Anthony, my university research reviewer, Dr. Diane M. Dusick, and all my friends and colleagues, thanks for guiding me through the doctoral journey and helping me complete the processes required to achieve my goal. All the comments and feedback you gave me enhanced my knowledge and created synergies for the study. Success would not have been possible without your kind assistance, constant encouragement, and respectful mentoring. Thank you for inspiring me and keeping me focused on the goals I set and empowering my momentum to work on my doctoral study all the time. I would also like to acknowledge the kindness of the study participants who shared information with me in the interviews. Most importantly, I want to thank my wife and children for supporting me while I engaged in doctoral study activities for several years. I love you all and will devote myself to supporting our dreams toward the future.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Business leaders often view cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&As) as a means to expand in the global market and to continue market presence (Bauer, Hautz, & Matzler, 2015). Cross-border M&As constitute 50% to 80% of all foreign direct investment (FDI) flows taking place in the world (Sharma, 2016; United Nations Conference on Trade and Development [UNCTAD], 2016). By cross-border M&As, organizations can access new markets, diversify risks, gain technologies and resources, and develop competitive advantages more efficiently than greenfield investments (Bauer et al., 2015).

Cross-border M&As are not always successful. Jedin and Saad (2016) estimated approximately 60% of all M&As conducted in the world fail due to unsuccessful efforts to create expected values during the integration process. There are persistent challenges relating to organizational and diverse national cultures influencing cross-border M&A activities (Andriuskevicius & Ciegis, 2017; Caiazza & Volpe, 2015).

Cross-border M&As would be more auspicious if business leaders prioritized cultural factors early in the integration process (Hirsch, 2015). By skillfully integrating the acquired foreign workers to create a diverse workforce, business leaders may be able to enhance intellectual capital, market shares, and competitive advantages for the newly established organization (Dow, Cuypers, & Ertug, 2016). The ability to integrate a culturally diverse workforce by recognizing the differences and taking them into account in everyday decision-making to avoid cross-cultural clashes may be one of the most vital

skills that business leaders need to develop to grow organizations in the globally competitive marketplace (Jemielniak, 2016).

Background of the Problem

Cross-border M&As are complex, and many information and communications technology (ICT) companies are failing to achieve desired financial objectives or synergies after completing the deals due to unsuccessful postacquisition integrations of workers from different national cultures (Osarenkhoe & Hyder, 2015). For example, leaders of the acquiring organizations tend to align workers by applying acquirer's national cultures and business practices to the acquired foreign workers of the target firms, which often leads to the destruction of the target's knowledge-based resources and innovative capabilities by triggering employee turnover and disrupting organizational routines (Zaks, 2016). Cross-border M&As constitute 50% to 80% of all FDI flows in the world (Sharma, 2016; UNCTAD, 2016). According to UNCTAD (2016), the global FDI flows recorded $1.746 trillion, of which cross-border M&As contributed $869 billion. The global ICT companies spent roughly $50 billion on cross-border M&As in 2015 (UNCTAD, 2016), and 60% to 80% of the deals failed (Jedin & Saad, 2016; Zaks, 2016) or 40% to 60% of acquirers ultimately divested their targets (Cui, Dong, Liu, & Wang, 2016; UNCTAD, 2016). Jedin and Saad (2016) noted that 50% to 70% of M&As failed to create value for the acquiring firms' shareholders. Many previous studies focused on the challenges of how to achieve the cross-border acquisitions, but little research has been done on how to retain acquired foreign targets and keep growing in the market.

Problem Statement

Some ICT companies fail in cross-border M&As after they complete the deals (Bauer et al., 2015). ICT companies invest an average of 50 billion dollars on cross-border acquisitions annually (UNCTAD, 2016), and 40% to 80% of the leaders of acquiring organizations ultimately divest their acquired targets (Cui et al., 2016; Zaks, 2016). The general business problem is the leaders of the acquiring organizations are unable to project the impact of mixing different national cultures within the organizations on their business performance. The specific business problem is some leaders of ICT companies lack the strategies to integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As using the knowledge of different national cultures.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As using the knowledge of different national cultures. The targeted population comprised leaders of ICT companies in relatively low context cultures in North America or Europe that have acquired overseas counterparts in higher context cultures in Asia and kept operating with those M&A targets as part of the mergers for more than 5 years. The implications for positive social change include the potential to promote spillovers of skills, productivities, and knowledge between the societies where acquirers and targets of internationally merged firms belong (Liang, 2017), which may contribute to enhancing both societies' economy and quality of life. Improving individuals' understanding of the importance of acknowledging different national cultures may also be useful in mitigating

potential unemployment rates as a result of reduced withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism or resignations (Stoermer, Bader, & Froese, 2016).

Nature of the Study

There are three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Venkatesh, Brown, & Sullivan, 2016). I selected the qualitative method by which I conducted multiple semistructured, in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. My primary objective was to explore the strategies that leaders of internationally merged organizations are practicing to handle potential cultural clashes in the workplace, which employees with different national cultures may cause as a result of ineffective integrations following cross-border M&As. Qualitative researchers use open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional questions to seek, discover, and explore a process or to describe experiences (Venkatesh et al., 2016).

Using the qualitative method, I aimed to understand the meanings that participants ascribe to various phenomena because the qualitative method provides opportunities for the researcher to establish trust with participants and gain access to meanings and in-depth understanding (see Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2015). Conversely, the quantitative method is deductive, and the researcher collects numerical data using descriptive, comparative, and specific questionnaires to test hypotheses (Saunders et al., 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016). Researchers choose to conduct mixed-methods research to develop novel theoretical perspectives by combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2016). To examine the relationship between cultural distance and success of cross-border M&A integration, I was not testing

hypotheses, which is part of a quantitative study or the quantitative aspect of a mixed-methods study.

I considered four qualitative designs to study the challenges associated with cross-cultural M&As: (a) action research, (b) ethnography, (c) narrative inquiry, and (d) case study. Action research allows the researcher to develop solutions to real organizational problems by closely collaborating with the practitioners of the organizations (Nielsen, 2016; Saunders et al., 2015). Ethnography is the firsthand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting by participant observation (Sinead Ryan, 2017). Narrative inquiry involves collecting the stories of the participant's experience to interpret an event or sequence of events (Saunders et al., 2015). I selected a multiple holistic case study design in which I performed empirical investigations of a particular phenomenon. Larrinaga (2017) noted that the researcher could reinforce analytical generalizations through multiple case studies by producing affirmative evidence based on two or more cases. Conducting in-depth inquiries with multiple participants regarding the importance of cross-cultural understanding for post-M&A integrations in a real-life setting, I tested whether I could replicate the findings from one case across other cases because the main advantage to multiple case studies is to reinforce internal validity and theoretical replication (see Larrinaga, 2017).

Research Question

What strategies do leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers after cross-border M&As?

Interview Questions

1. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers' regarding different views of relationships between supervisors and subordinates that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of the post-M&A integration?

2. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, what strategies are most successful for managing their different behaviors regarding the relationships between the supervisors and the subordinates?

3. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers when they dealt with uncertain information or ambiguous communications that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

4. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you deal with their different attitudes toward uncertainties or ambiguous communications and manage misunderstandings between them?

5. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and the home-country workers regarding their different levels of assertiveness or modesty in attitudes toward their colleagues that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

6. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage the conflicts in the workplace relating to their different levels of assertiveness or modesty?

7. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between acquired workers and home-country workers regarding their work styles, either working in groups or working independently, that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

8. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage their different reactions toward working in groups or working independently?

9. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers regarding the views about adopting different business practices that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

10. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage their different views and reactions regarding adopting different business practices?

11. What additional information could you kindly share with me regarding the successful strategies you use to integrate the workers with different national cultural backgrounds that have to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integration?

Conceptual Framework

To investigate strategies the leaders of ICT companies use to integrate workers they acquired after completing the cross-border M&As, I grounded my study with two conceptual frameworks: Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach model and Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultures theory. In the

acquisition and integration approach model, Haspeslagh and Jemison suggested that business leaders could improve an acquisition's potential and contribute to strategic renewal by better managing postacquisition integration processes. In a cross-border acquisition, diverse workers from different national cultures can cause cultural clashes that the leader of the newly created organization may find it difficult to resolve, which may lead the organization to fail in achieving objectives of the acquisition (Hirsch, 2015; Stahl & Tung, 2015). Cultural conflicts may not emerge as a result of cultural diversities but may arise depending on how leaders of the merged firms recognize the cultural differences between the acquiring and acquired firms and manage all combined employees (Caiazza & Volpe, 2015). Hildisch, Froese, and Pak (2015) found that top management and supervisor support had positive effects on employees' work attitudes. By analyzing the differences in national cultures of the employees, the leaders may be able to predict potential negative consequences related to employee stress, depression, or indifferent attitudes toward cooperation and to reduce conflicting business values and communication styles for building new capabilities (Caiazza & Volpe, 2015) so that the leaders may be able to lead their organization to create new value as the stakeholders initially aimed to attain as a goal of the cross-border acquisition.

Hofstede (1983) developed the national cultural theory based on four dimensions to explain cross-cultural decision-making differences: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, and masculinity versus femininity. Hofstede (2001) later added long-term orientation as the fifth dimension to distinguish the ways of thinking between the East and the West. The scores that Hofstede (1983,

2001) developed based on five cultural dimensions for each country may be helpful to measure how national cultures of the acquired firms' workers might differ from those of acquiring firms. As applied in the current study, the differences in each of the five dimensions between the acquiring and acquired firms indicated that I would be able to provide the integration managers with useful tactics to handle challenges and conflicts that might negatively affect relationships between the home-country and host-country workers. Using Hofstede's (1983, 2001) theory, I also expected to find information to align acquired foreign workers with the newly created firm's overall strategies and common business goals that might apply to other future cross-border M&A cases. Leaders of acquiring firms may find it beneficial to learn different national cultures of the workers from the target firms (Ahammad, Tarba, Liu, & Glaister, 2016; Ai & Tan, 2017; Yan, Wu, & Zhang, 2016). Hofstede's (2001) theory depicts how differences in cultural dimensions may influence the creation of value of the people in the workplace and may represent independent preferences for one state of affairs over another that distinguish the countries from each other. Therefore, I used both Haspeslah and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach model and Hofstede's (1983, 2001) five dimensions of national cultures theory to provide a framework for this study and explore strategies the leaders of the internationally acquiring firms use to manage their postacquisition cultural integrations.

Operational Definitions

The following terms appear throughout this study. I provide definitions so that readers understand the intended meaning of terms I used. I did not include terms found in a basic dictionary and listed only the terms that the reader might not be familiar with.

Acculturation: A phenomenon in which the cultural patterns of groups with different cultural backgrounds interact with each other causing their cultural elements to diffuse between the two cultures when these groups engage in long-term, direct interaction (Cui et al., 2016).

Assimilation: In mergers and acquisitions, one party adopts another party's identity and culture (Cui et al., 2016).

Cultural distance: The difference between countries in terms of norms, ideas, values, and beliefs (Azar & Drogendijk, 2016).

Culture: The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category from people from another group (Hofstede, 2001).

Individualism/collectivism: The degree to which people in society are integrated into groups (Hofstede, 2001).

Integration process: A value creation and an adaptive process of interaction that takes place when firms come together in an atmosphere conducive for people from both organizations to collaborate and transfer capabilities as a result of the acquisition so that the merged organization can create the expected benefits or discover others (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

Long-/short-term orientation: The degree to which the people connect the past with the current and future actions/challenges (Hofstede, 2001).

Masculinity/femininity: A society's favor for male-attributed traits such as assertiveness or materialism, or female-attributed traits such as altruism and modesty (Stoermer et al., 2016).

Power distance: The degree to which societies handle inequality and how strongly they accept status differences (Stoermer et al., 2016).

Uncertainty avoidance: The extent to which societies are comfortable or uncomfortable with unstructured situations and try to avoid ambiguity or unknown situations (C. J. Chang, Ho, & Wu, 2016; Stoermer et al., 2016).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

My goal in conducting a qualitative study was to explore strategies by interviewing participants and examining relevant company documents, websites, social network service (SNS) pages, and employee testimonials for data triangulation purposes to enhance the reliability and trustworthiness of the study (see Annansingh & Howell, 2016). The quality and reliability of the study findings may depend on the degree of trust between the researcher and the participants and their openness, truthfulness, and fairness in perceptions of different cultures (Ajmal, Helo, & Kassem, 2017). I hoped that participants would provide detailed descriptions of their experiences in successful and unsuccessful integration efforts after completing the cross-border acquisition process.

Assumptions

Assumptions are unexamined assertions that the researcher considers true as guidance to initiate the study (Cavalcanti, 2017). In conducting this qualitative multiple case study, I made six assumptions. First, I assumed participants would have sufficient knowledge and would be honest in answering interview questions given to them as long as I listened carefully and kept rapport with them (see Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). Second, I assumed the sample size would provide sufficient data to answer the research question. Sampling until the researcher reaches data saturation can be used as a justification for the particular sample size used in a qualitative study (Boddy, 2016). Third, I assumed the conceptual framework and the theory I chose would be suitable to analyze the data. A researcher can explain the phenomena by use of the theory or conceptual framework as a lens to study the phenomena (Gaus, 2017).

Fourth, I assumed the semistructured interview protocol would enable dialectic initiative by key informers (see Larrinaga, 2017) and would be the most appropriate research tool to generate rich qualitative data given the potential institutional sensitivity of the information being sought (see Martinus & Hedgcock, 2015). Fifth, I assumed the purposeful sampling method would be appropriate to ensure that all participants were aware of the specific business problem addressed in this study. Using a purposeful sampling method, the researcher can discover, understand, and gain insights into specific cases to learn about issues of importance to the purpose of the inquiry (Cibangu, Hepworth, & Champion, 2017). Finally, I assumed that successful leaders of acquiring organizations, when combining two different national cultures of acquiring and acquired

organizations, would not only demand that the acquired workers assimilate their national cultures into those of the acquiring firms, but also take the lead in fostering the diffusion of different cultural patterns and elements between the two cultures through long-term direct interaction (see Cui et al., 2016).

Limitations

Limitations are potential weaknesses of the reliability of the results and transferability of the conclusions (Larrinaga, 2017). Although the purposeful sampling method I chose was appropriate for this study, I may have encountered challenges in identifying the sample because I would not have known the range of variation in the sample at the outset of the study (see Palinkas et al., 2015). Also, participants might have had biases and might have provided only publicly pleasing or politically correct feedback instead of honest feedback during interviews. Participants may not have provided candid responses to avoid potential misinterpretation by me, or because the feedback may not be considered socially acceptable or may be considered xenophobic. I required participants to consent orally to recorded interviews, which might have caused some participants to withhold information for confidentiality or privacy reasons. Participants might also have affected the accuracy and reliability of the study findings if they did not have sufficient knowledge of Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultures at the time the participants implemented their integration strategies. Finally, although the conceptual framework I chose was appropriate to analyze the data for this study, the conceptual framework might have had weaknesses (see Angwin & Meadows, 2015; de Mooij, 2015;

Garcia, Mendez, Ellis, & Gautney, 2014; Saleem, Larimo, Ummik, & Kuusik, 2015;
Tanaka & Kleiner, 2015; Touburg, 2016).

Delimitations

A delimitation is a boundary that the researcher defines for an integrated system of the business phenomenon to investigate (Yazan, 2015). I selected participants who were business leaders of selected organizations that had implemented cross-border acquisitions and successfully supervised integration processes of the acquired foreign employees into the acquiring organization in the ICT sector in North America, Europe, and Asia. The leaders originally belonged to acquiring organizations and were responsible for developing favorable organizational cultures during the integration phase of the cross-border acquisition. I considered the leader successful in integrating a diverse workforce after the cross-border acquisition if the merged organization had been operating continuously for more than 5 years since the time the cross-border M&A deal was closed, or had started international business operations under joint venture or partnership and experienced growth in sales, net profits, or share prices. I further restricted my selection of participants to leaders who were expatriates assigned from acquiring organizations living in the host countries where their foreign partners were located and who were supervising local workers and other expatriates from the countries of origin. Expatriates in the host countries might hold more experience in cross-cultural adjustment and be facing complex challenges to work with foreign employees with different national cultures on a daily basis than the leaders based in headquarters (Canhilal, Shemueli, & Dolan, 2015).

Significance of the Study

Contribution to Business Practice

This study may contribute to a desirable work environment for the workers of an integrated organization created as a result of a cross-border M&A. This study may also be beneficial to the leaders of the acquirers in the cross-border M&As in enhancing their abilities to integrate targets to achieve expected business results. By understanding the challenges and solutions to incorporate cultural differences between the acquirer and the target, the manager of a newly created organization may be able to motivate its workers and managers to align themselves with the organizational strategy. To gain necessary knowledge of acquired workers' cultures, leaders of the merged firms may often need to retain some directors of target firms holding more directorships or experience as top management in the target firms in managing the workers of the target firms (Xie, Cai, Lu, Liu, & Takumi, 2016). The results of the study may help integration leaders reduce the risk of failing to achieve their expected business outcomes.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change from this study include the potential improvement in human relationships across the countries that have distinct ethnic groups and diverse cultures. This study's findings may serve the people living in different societies as a guide to enhance their ways of communicating and interacting with a proper understanding of other cultures (Ghauri & Rosendo-Rios, 2016). Using the findings in this study, the people in home and host countries may also be able to predict how their neighbors originating from different countries may react to the same phenomena, issues,

or agenda. By acknowledging the differences in national cultures existing in a diverse society, an individual should be able to avoid xenophobic sentiment against other people in the reciprocal cultural environment (Andriuskevicius & Ciegis, 2017).

Failures in cross-border M&As may affect not only financial performance of the firms, but also stakeholders' mentality and family well-being, which may cause deterioration of the economy of the communities (Moilanen, 2016). Increasing the success rates of cross-border M&As may foster spillover effects in home and host countries, such as improved lifestyles as a result of adopting innovative technologies not initially available in the society before the advent of foreign subsidiaries through the cross-border M&As (Liang, 2017; Muqiang, Chengling, & Lee, 2017). By improving the success rate of cross-border M&A integrations, this study may also contribute to helping multinational organizations to reduce the likelihood of triggering an economic downturn in the society and to provide the society with new lifestyles through the spillover of innovative technologies, products, processes, and services developed in the foreign countries (Liang, 2017; Muqiang et al., 2017).

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the leaders of ICT companies use to integrate a diverse workforce following cross-border M&As using the knowledge and experience relating to national cultures of both acquiring and target organization workers. Cross-border M&As are a complex phenomenon compared to domestic M&As (Sinkovics, Sinkovics, Lew, Jedin, & Zagelmeyer, 2015). For this study, I used Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach

model and Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultural theory as the conceptual framework to address the research question: What strategies do leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers after cross-border M&As?

The literature review begins with a review of a theory and a conceptual model that a leader of a multinational organization may adopt in management practices. Next, I shift the focus to cross-cultural integration and management challenges of diverse workforces after cross-border M&As. The final section of the review focuses on the link between cross-cultural knowledge and the success of cross-border postacquisition integrations.

My review of the literature included 134 references, 122 (91.0%) of which were peer-reviewed articles published within the past 5 years, including one book. I collected references from the Walden University online library and accessed multiple databases including EBSCOhost, ERIC, ProQuest, and Google Scholar to retrieve relevant scholarly articles. Table 1 indicates the number of items reviewed.

Table 1

Items Reviewed in the Review of Literature

	References (Within the last 5 years from 2015 to 2019)	References Older than 5 years	Total
Books	1	2	3
Peer-reviewed journals	122	7	129
Not peer-reviewed journals	1	0	1
Other resources	1	0	1

Using advanced search engines provided in these academic databases, I retrieved peer-reviewed scholarly articles published within 3 years from the date I performed the search that might be suitable for this literature review. From the cross-cultural management perspectives, I sought to investigate how the information gathered might contribute to understanding the challenges for business leaders to conduct cross-border M&As and integrate diverse workers. Collaborations among all stakeholders between the acquirer and the target are an important process that involves leaders, board members, managers, and employees (Sinkovics et al., 2015). I covered the literature that focused on contemporary issues related to cross-border M&As and conflict management specific to a multicultural work environment in which different perspectives and expectations of stakeholders, shareholders, board members, and employees would coexist. Studying cross-border M&A integration strategies might be helpful in generating knowledge to

analyze similarities and differences in communication practices across the globe (Hoffmann, Röttger, Ingenhoff, & Hamidati, 2015).

Some business leaders viewed cross-border M&A as a strategic growth scheme in the global competition to meet stakeholders' expectations by creating competitive advantages, diversifying risks, entering the international market, overcoming adverse government policy, enhancing productivity, increasing market power, and gaining knowledge and technological spillovers (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Although business leaders might be aware of the effects of cross-border M&As, Jedin and Saad (2016) found more than a half of the cross-border M&As were unsuccessful in meeting stakeholders' expectations to create value. Some researchers criticized national cultural differences as one of the reasons for the high rate of failure of multicultural management of organizations (Hofstede, 2015). In this section, I explore the effects of national cultural differences between the acquirers and targets on successes or failures of postacquisition multicultural management.

Theories and Conceptual Frameworks

I based this study on Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach model and Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultural theory. The acquisition integration approach model and the national cultural dimensions theory aligned with this study addressing the challenges that leaders of ICT multinationals might face during the integration process after completing cross-border M&A deals. In a cross-border M&A, national cultural differences might not only be an impeding factor for the integration of the acquired firm but could also be a crucial hindrance for the firm's

organizational learning process, potentially causing a negative impact on the firm's performance (Nuno, Carvalho, & José, 2015). The integration managers may need to understand the differences in national cultures between the acquiring and acquired firms' backgrounds to create new value and to implement new organizational strategies because the worker integration would be a critical success factor for cross-border M&As (Yan et al., 2016).

Haspeslagh's integration acquisition approaching model. Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) introduced a concept that business leaders could improve an acquisition's potential to contribute to strategic renewal by better managing the preacquisition decision-making and the postacquisition integration processes. The postacquisition integration would be an essential process through which the business leader might be able to identify new insights into how to reallocate resources to more productive uses and more efficiently renew strategies for the merged firm (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Some acquisition leaders do not reach their potential because the leaders fail to create an environment in which workers can exchange information and transfer valuable knowledge or technologies to create value (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Leaders can create value after the acquisition deal is closed and employees of acquiring and acquired firms start collaborating by transferring capabilities and colluding to realize the potential benefits and to discover others (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

When studying the success factors of M&As, Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) suggested that researchers should not only focus on preacquisition decision-making but should also address the importance of postacquisition integration processes. Risberg

(2003) observed that extant research focused little attention on the perspectives of acquired organizations related to cross-border M&A integrations. Risberg found representations of the managers rather than the whole organization even though researchers discussed employee reactions as well. Haspeslagh and Jemison argued that key differences between acquisition success and failure should be understood in the management of processes by which acquired workers are integrated. Scholars might need to conduct studies on acquisitions from leaders and employees' perspectives to reflect voices not only from an acquiring organization but also from an acquired target (Risberg, 2003). Studying both the acquirers and the target's perspectives might be necessary because the leaders of the acquiring firms can disrupt the acquired firm's cultures and capabilities during the integration process, leading to failure in achieving the objectives of the acquisition (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

Maintaining the cultures of an acquired target might be essential for an integration leader to minimize conflicts between the workers from both organizations during the integration phase and to create synergy and new value with the acquired firm (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). In their study of connective leadership and mediation effects on integration conflicts between the acquirer and acquired, Yan et al. (2016) showed that connective leadership could positively mediate employee goal commitment during the M&A integration phase. To reduce conflicts between the acquiring organization and the acquired target, connective leaders could employ a wide range of behaviors and find similarities and common interests for the acquirer and target (Yan et al., 2016). The leader might be able to motivate personnel and gain management's

commitment by conducting sociocultural integration successfully (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). For managers to integrate acquired workers into the acquiring organization, the managers should consider cultural distances of the acquired workers to predict worker stress and negative sentiments about the merger and the cooperation (Risberg, 2003) because cultural clashes could create difficulties in integration and hinder expected outcomes (Risberg, 2003).

  Criticism of the acquisition integration approach model. Some researchers argued that Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) model has limitations. Angwin and Meadows (2015) noted that Haspeslagh and Jemison focused solely on value capturing acquisitions and did not analyze the acquisitions that were not driven by a value-creation strategy. For instance, an organization might purchase a company in a different country wishing to benefit from exchange rate differentials (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015), enter a new country to gain its market share (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015), announce an M&A in the stock market (Sharma, 2016), and obtain tax advantages (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Haspeslagh and Jemison might have developed the acquisition integration model from a partial set of acquisition strategies that lacked other potential integration objectives (Angwin & Meadows, 2015). Cultural differences might cause a negative impact on postacquisition integration if the leaders implement an acquisition internationally (De Luque, Lee, Miska, & Stahl, 2017). In addition to taking organizational cultural differences into account, the integration managers may need to handle friction resulting from differences in national cultures (Hirsch, 2015).

Some researchers criticized Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach model by stating there were no examples used in the research (Angwin & Meadows, 2015). Although the postacquisition integration phase was widely recognized as a vital process in M&As, Haspeslagh and Jemison's model appeared to be a pure concept that was insufficiently supported by empirical evidence (Angwin & Meadows, 2015). The integration challenges examined in Haspeslagh and Jemison's study (as cited in Risberg, 2003) focused on corporate cultural differences. Although acquirers of foreign companies should also pay close attention to national cultures in addition to corporate culture fit, Haspeslagh and Jemison's model (as cited in Bansal, 2015) should provide fundamental principles of human and task integration mechanisms.

Hofstede's five dimensions of national cultures theory. To identify the cases of cross-border M&As implemented between culturally distant countries, I used Hofstede's (2001) indices of five dimensions of national cultures. Hofstede developed national cultural indices in 1980 based on four dimensions: (a) power distance (PD), which describes how societies handle inequality and how strongly they accept status differences (Stoermer et al., 2016) related to different solutions and decisions regarding human inequality (Hofstede, 2015); (b) uncertainty avoidance (UA), or society's reaction to unpredictable situations and tolerance for ambiguity (C. J. Chang et al., 2016; Hofstede, 2015; Stoermer et al., 2016); (c) individualism/collectivism (IC), or the degree to which individuals prefer taking after themselves or show high group orientations (Hofstede, 2015; Stoermer et al., 2016); and (d) masculinity versus femininity (MF), which is a society's preference for male-attributed traits such as assertiveness and materialism or

female-attributed traits such as altruism and modesty (Hofstede, 2015; Stoermer et al., 2016). Hofstede later added the (e) long-/short-term orientation (LTO) dimension in 2001, which refers to the culture's propensity to adopt a pragmatic long-term view toward social and business relationships (Stoermer et al., 2016; Touburg, 2016).

Researchers often attribute multicultural management problems to national cultures or cultural differences among employees (Hofstede, 2015). Managers should motivate newly acquired workers to acculturate themselves with new philosophies, policies, and organizational and national cultures from the acquiring firm (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). In a cross-border M&A, two organizations in different countries merge and operate toward the same organizational goals (Sharma, 2016). Employees from acquiring and acquired organizations need to understand respective national cultures to align themselves with new strategies that the leader of the acquiring firm might plan (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

Studying communication styles that appeared on Fortune 500 corporations' Facebook pages, Lo, Waters, and Christensen (2017) found statistical differences regarding Hofstede's cultural dimensions, particularly when examining the individual elements of the five dimensions. PD and MF dimensions were most represented by the country-specific communications where corporation headquarters were located, followed by IC, UA, and LTO (Lo et al., 2017). Although each of the Fortune 500 corporations examined in Lo et al.'s study had their headquarters in a different culture, each corporation was a global entity that set up subsidiaries spread throughout many different cultures. Lo et al.'s study may be valuable in recognizing the influence of national

cultures of the countries of origin of multinationals regarding the communication styles and could be applicable to a study of effects of national cultures in communications of an acquiring firm in a cross-border M&A.

Influence of PD on cultural integration. Hofstede (as cited in Tanaka & Kleiner, 2015) defined PD as the level of willingness to accept unequal distribution of power in organizations. People in high PD cultures might accept inequality in power distribution and be prone to obeying powerful people whereas people in low PD cultures might not (Curtis, Conover, Lucianetti, & Battista, 2016; Hofstede, 2015). People possessing higher power could exercise authority and might coerce the people with lower power, even if an anticipated result might be a conflict with the interest of people with low power (Y. Chang, Hsu, Shiau, & Tsai, 2015). A leader with strong, aggressive characters could control the people in high PD cultures because the people in high PD cultures would accept and follow their leader's behavior and directions (Hofstede, 2001, 2011). In contrast, a leader who practiced authority to manage employees might not be successful in establishing a positive relationship with employees in a low PD culture (Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016). People in a low PD culture might not appreciate inequality in power relations with the leader (Hosfstede, 2001, 2011).

Hofstede (2011) summarized the major characteristics related to PD. The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with low PD cultures:

1. Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to the criteria of good and evil.

2. Older people are neither respected nor feared.

3. Hierarchy means inequality of roles established for convenience.

4. Subordinates expect to be consulted.

5. Corruption is rare, scandals end political careers, and income distribution in society is rather even.

6. Religions stress equality of believers.

PD appeared to be lower in Germanic and English-speaking Western countries (Hofstede, 2015). Some examples of low PD countries are the United States (40), United Kingdom (35), Austria (11), Denmark (18), and New Zealand (22) (Hofstede, 2001; Purwanto, 2018). If a mix of high PD and low PD cultures existed in the workplace, the different perceptions toward authority could influence success in human resource management in the organization (Purwanto, 2018). It might be more difficult for a leader in a high PD culture to manage workers in low PD culture (Purwanto, 2018). When a managerial expatriate in a high PD culture was sent to a low PD environment, the manager's authority might be challenged in a more liberal and equal society in the low PD culture because the manager might be accustomed to using executive powers in decision-making whereas workers would not tolerate highly centralized power (Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with high PD cultures:

1. Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil, its legitimacy is irrelevant.

2. Older people are both respected and feared.

3. Hierarchy means existential inequality.

4. Subordinates expect to be told what to do.

5. Autocratic governments based on co-optation and changed by revolution.

6. Corruption frequent, scandals are covered up.

7. Income distribution in society very uneven.

8. Religions with a hierarchy of priests.

Some examples of high PD countries are China (80), Malaysia (104), Mexico (81), and Philippines (94), and PD appeared to be higher in the East European, Latin, Asian and African countries (Hofstede, 2011). The power distance has moderating effects on job satisfaction in management (Purwanto, 2018). In high PD cultures, managers were likely to have large managerial discretion whereas each individual was not supposed to make organizational decisions without the manager's input (Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016). Individuals in high PD cultures might be motivated to get a better position within an organization (Purwanto, 2018).

Influence of UA on cultural integration. UA refers to the extent to which people in a culture feel uncomfortable with uncertain or unstructured situations (C. J. Chang et al., 2016; Hofstede, 2001, 2015). The motivating force in high UA cultures could be *fear*, though not of specific others and generalized anxiety in the face of anyone or anything unknown (Hofstede, 2015). In a high UA country, uncertainty is also linked to potential status loss for acting in strange ways because such action may release anxieties in others (Hofstede, 2015). People in high UA cultures might feel threatened by ambiguous or

uncertain situations and would think that *different is dangerous* and tended to avoid

unstructured situations (Curtis et al., 2016). Conversely, people in low UA cultures might

feel more comfortable in ambiguous or unstructured situations and were tolerant to risky,

unfamiliar conditions (C. J. Chang et al., 2016). Uncertainty tolerance might be seen as

looser attitudes characterized by saving effort when nothing was the matter and by *goal-directedness*, not process-based, when results were needed (Hofstede, 2015).

According to Hofstede (2011), the following items are some business-related

characteristics associated with low UA cultures:

1. The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes.

2. Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety.

3. Higher scores on subjective health and well-being.

4. Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas what is different is curious.

5. Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos.

6. Teachers may say *I don't know*.

7. Changing jobs no problem.

8. Dislike of rules.

9. In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent toward authorities.

10. In religion, philosophy and science (i.e., relativism and empiricism).

Countries with low UA cultures include some English speaking, Nordic, and

Asian countries such as the United States (40), United Kingdom (35), Denmark (23) and

Singapore (8), according to Hofstede (2001). A manager who had a predisposition for a

low UA could more tolerate anxieties of facing unforeseen future events and would be

more inclined to start newprojects even if the projects might be assessed as high risk because people from low UA cultures were more comfortable in ambiguous situations and had high risk tolerance under unfamiliar conditions (C. J. Chang et al., 2016). People in low UA cultures might be innovative in technology development due to their general tendency to be able to tolerate uncertain scenarios and accept losing jobs in case the project was not successful (Curtis et al., 2016). Companies in low UA cultures may also be more open in financial disclosures as well (Khlif, 2016).

Characteristics of high UA cultures are as follows:

1. The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought.

2. Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism.

3. Lower scores on subjective health and well-being.

4. Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous.

5. Need for clarity and structure.

6. Teachers supposed to have all the answers.

7. Staying in jobs even if disliked.

8. Emotional need for rules even if not obeyed.

9. In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent toward authorities.

10. In religion, philosophy and science (i.e., belief in ultimate truths and grand theories).

Countries rated with high UA scores tend to prevail in East and Central European countries, Latin countries, Japan, and some German-speaking countries. Some countries

with high UA cultures include Greece (112), Belgium (94), and Japan (92) (Hofstede, 2011). Managers in high UA cultures might be less willing to initiate a project than managers in low culture countries and would not be inclined to change their on-going projects once started because they were likely to feel threatened if results of the project in the future were not certain (C. J. Chang et al., 2016). Managers in high UA cultures might be uncomfortable with information disclosures to protect their positions and, thus, might appear less transparent in the workplace (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017).

Influence of IC on cultural integration. People in individualistic cultures would be likely to act in their own self-interest, whereas people in collectivistic cultures tended to encourage loyalty to the groups or organizations (Curtis et al., 2016). In an individualistic society, people were the units worthy of status and could accept existence of heroes within networks of friends, media stars, sportspeople, politicians or deities (Hofstede, 2015). In collectivistic cultures, groups such as families, countries, or religious communities, and there was likely to be one inclusive reference group, the extended family, clan, or people, overwhelming the others (Hofstede, 2015). Age and gender could also be important factors in a collectivistic culture because these factors could influence one's position within a group (Hofstede, 2015).

To investigate phenomena induced by different IC levels among diverse workers, Blecking (2015) conducted a case study of cultural integration of immigrants into host countries by examining Polish migrants to the mining industry areas of Ruhr, Germany, from the 1870s. Aiming to understand immigrants' behaviors during the integration process whether the immigrants had a cultural background different from that of the host

country, Blecking found that a sport played a vital role in forming a *we culture*, one of the most conspicuous aspects of collectivistic cultures (as cited in Hofstede, 2001), and in bridging between different nationalities and concluded that the sport as a mediator for cultural integration could provide an important hint to manage diverse work teams consisted of different IC levels. Blecking included only Polish and German nationals in the study, who possessed football-loving cultures in common.The fact that the difference in IC levels between Polish (60) and Germans (67) was seven (Hofstede, 2001) might not represent as suitable examples to investigate an integration process of different IC-level countries (Curtis et al., 2016).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with low IC, collectivistic cultures:

1. People are born into extended families or clans that protect them in exchange for loyalty.
2. *We* –consciousness.
3. Stress on belonging.
4. Harmony should always be maintained.
5. Others classified as in-group or out-group.
6. Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group; transgression of norms leads to shame feelings.
7. Languages in which the word *I* is avoided.
8. Purpose of education is learning how to do.
9. Relationship prevails over the task.

In collectivist societies, people belong to 'in groups' that cares for insiders in exchange for loyalty Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). People in societies with collectivistic orientation tend to emphasize responsibility to insiders as opposed to those external to the firm, thus, firms in collectivitic cultures are expected to disclose less information to outsiders (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). In contrast to individualistic cultures, the collectivistic culture would moderate the relationship between reputation and knowledge-sharing intentions (Y. Chang et al., 2015). In collectivistic cultures, interdependence would not imply that people do not always make decisions independently, although the influence of group members on the decisions might be stronger than in individualistic cultures (de Mooij, 2015). In collectivistic cultures, the relationship between the employee and the employer was perceived in moral terms, and the workers generally preferred job training, satisfactory workplace conditions, and good benefits (Park, 2016).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with high IC, individualistic cultures:

1. Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only.

2. *I* – consciousness.

3. Right of privacy.

4. Speaking one's mind is healthy.

5. Others classified as individuals.

6. Personal opinion expected: one person one vote.

7. Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings.

8. Languages in which the word *I* is indispensable.

9. Purpose of education is learning how to learn.

10. Task prevails over the relationship.

Individualism appeared to prevail in developed countries in the Western hemisphere while collectivism is predominant in less developed and Eastern countries (Hofstede, 2015). The fact that IC scores of the United States and China were 91 and 20 respectively (Hofstede, 1983) could indicate that the United States would be one of the most individualistic cultures in the world as opposed to China that could represent one of the most collectivistic cultures (Y. Chang et al., 2015). In individualistic societies, people focused generally on themselves (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). According to Y. Chang et al. (2015), the individualistic cultures were found to moderate the relationship between rewards and knowledge-sharing intentions in the United States. Countries that score high on individualism exhibited high esteem for privacy, high respect for personal decision-making, and low dependence on the organization for fulfilling leisure time, high demand for improving skills, and high interest in receiving benefits, which tended to affect the working environment for diverse workers (Park, 2016). Individualistic cultures also showed less hierarchy in human relationships, but the majority of of the people in an individualistic culture tended to move in the same direction (Beugelsdijk, Kostova, & Roth, 2017).

Influence of MF on cultural integration. Hofstede (1983) revealed that the difference in MF levels between the people from two countries could indicate whether the people from one country might be more assertive and competitive or, vice versa, more

modest and caring than the people from other countries. The assertiveness would be related to masculine cultures, and the modest, caring values would be more associated with feminine ones (Hofstede, 2011). Males were more likely to hold masculine values, and females hold more feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2011), but the men in feminine countries had the similar modest, caring values as the women (Hofstede, 1983, 2011). Females in positions of power in both masculine and feminine societies often showed more masculine values than their male nationals (Hofstede, 1983, 2001, 2015). In contrast to the feminine countries, women were somewhat more assertive and competitive in masculine countries though were not as much as the men (Hofstede, 2011). Thus, Hofstede (1983, 2001) suggested there would be more gaps in values between men and women in masculine countries.

Differences in MF levels might also serve as an indicator of people's preference for either power-oriented or status-oriented social relations and was about voluntary status-accord to others based on their performance in competitive settings (Hofstede, 2015). Exploring people in countries with different MF cultures, the researcher might find people in interaction tended to seek status either by winning competitive sequences or by aligning themselves with powerful *winners* such as presidential candidates, deities, or sports heroes (Hofstede, 2015). People in a low MF or feminine culture might not feel comfortable with overt power moves and status displays because of the mentality that might arise envy of winners rather than admiration for them (Hofstede, 2015).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with low MF or feminine cultures:

1. Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders.

2. Men and women should be modest and caring.

3. Balance between family and work sympathy for the weak.

4. Both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings.

5. Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight.

6. Many women in elected political positions.

7. Religion focuses on fellow human beings.

8. Matter-of-fact attitudes about sexuality (i.e., sex is a way of relating).

Some low MF, or feminine, cultures were Norway (8) and Sweden (5), according to Hofstede (2001). In feminine societies, the focus would be on people and a more supportive climate might be prevalent (Yildiz & Vural, 2019). Sharing of information, the promotion of collaboration, a warm, non-conflictive climate, and socio-emotional support help employees to cope with the uncertainty related to new ideas (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017). Workers in feminine cultures were oriented to the process and consensus and were generally modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Yildiz & Vural, 2019). Workers in feminine cultures might be more open in attitude regarding financial disclosures (Khlif, 2016).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with high MF or masculine cultures:

1. Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders.

2. Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious.

3. Work prevails over family admiration for the strong.

4. Fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings.

5. Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back, girls shouldn't fight.

6. Fathers decide on family size.

7. Few women in elected political positions.

8. Religion focuses on god or gods.

9. *Moralistic attitudes about sexuality (i.e., sex is a way of performing).*

Masculinity is high in Japan (95), Hungary (88), in German-speaking countries, and some Latin countries (Hofstede, 2015). In a masculine culture, people emphasized work goals, and people tended to show assertive attitude and confidence when facing a confrontation or challenge (Y. Chang et al., 2015; Hofstede, 2001). Masculine societies were driven by competition, achievement, and success, and highly masculine countries share dominant values such as clearly distinct gender roles, competitiveness and a great emphasis on material success and economic growth. (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Yildiz & Vural, 2019). High degree of masculinity in one country might be more subject to low tax compliance and, thus, high tax evasion (Khlif, 2016).

Influence of LTO on cultural integration. LTO refers to the time dimension of decisions for one person (Khlif, 2016). People in high LTO cultures might prefer building relationships with other stakeholders when developing joint business to preserve strong ties with them in the future (Khlif, 2016). In contrast to LTO, short-term orientation was about taking status conferral in the here and now seriously (Hofstede, 2001). One would expect to confer and establish status to the full regardless of what might happen later in the future because not achieving the expected outcome immediately would be a great

status loss (Hofstede, 2015). Long-term orientation, as opposed to short-term orientation, was a culture to take a long-term view of life while others go for a traditional short-term outlook (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with low LTO or short-term oriented cultures:

1. Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now.

2. Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same.

3. There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil.

4. Traditions are sacrosanct.

5. Family life guided by imperatives supposed to be proud of one's country service to others is an important goal.

6. Social spending and consumption.

7. Students attribute success and failure to luck slow or no economic growth of poor countries.

Countries with low LTO were: Norway (20), Philippines (19), the United States (29), and the United Kingdom (25) (Hofstede, 2001). Low LTO cultures, or high STO cultures, depicted a cultural model in which virtues were related to present and past traditions, and saving face was fostered (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Stoermer et al., 2016). People in low LTO culture might be unwilling to accept new systems or innovations. Low LTO cultures tended to have a distinct need for cognitive consistency and expected to avoid integrating contradictory or novel opinions. Low LTO cultures generally clung to traditions and long-established value systems, which might cause

adverse effects on an inclusion climate, were not future-oriented and might not engage in the inclusion of minorities to provide the prospective benefits of diversity (Stoermer et al., 2016).

The following items are some business-related characteristics associated with high LTO cultures:

1. Most important events in life will occur in the future.

2. A good person adapts to the circumstances.

3. What is good and evil depends upon the circumstances.

4. Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances.

5. Family life guided by shared tasks.

6. Trying to learn from other countries.

7. Thrift and perseverance are important goals.

8. Large savings quote, funds available for investment.

9. Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort.

10. Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity.

Countries that have high LTO are China (118), Taiwan (87), and Japan (80) (Hofstede, 2001). Cultures characterized as high LTO usually had higher innovation capacities and encouraged workers to practice long-term thinking (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017). In contrast with the STO cultures' traditional short-term outlook, high LTO cultures took a long-term view of life (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). High LTO executives might be more inclined to decide and act in a sustainable way (Sternad & Kennelly, 2017). Although there was a general human tendency to undervalue future

outcomes, some managers in high LTO cultures resisted this tendency and attached a higher value to future outcomes and focus more on long-term over short-term goals (Sternad & Kennelly, 2017).

Controversies on Hofstede's theory. Although Hofstede's (2001) national cultural theory provided significant insights into fundamental human characteristics by country and might serve as a lens to analyze various national cultures based on numeric indices, scholars often questioned the generalizability or validity, as well as the predictive power of the theory. McSweeney, Brown, and Iliopoulou (2016) argued that Hofstede had constructed neither predictive power nor predictive capability successfully in the generalizations he developed to illustrate each cultural dimension. Hofstede's indices might be the broad overviews of the world's regions as a whole, and researchers might not be able to merely take Hofstede's generalizations as definitions for individuals' personalities (Tanaka & Kleiner, 2015). Improper use of dimensions of national culture could confuse the variety of definitions of values and cultures in international marketing (de Mooij, 2015). Although global business leaders might benefit from applying Hofstede's national cultural dimensions theory in multicultural management practices, practitioners and researchers might misinterpret phenomena and discredit useful means of research for international marketing (de Mooij, 2015).

Some scholars argued that, when reifying various cultures, Hofstede (2001) might have assumed people were cultural dopes, ignored the influence of non-cultural factors, did not account for changes, arbitrarily used the nation-state as the preferred locus of culture, and had an in-built Western bias (Touburg, 2016). Hofstede initially studied IBM

employees in the 1970s (Touburg, 2016). When Hofstede drafted the first questionnaire for selected IBM employees back in the late 1960s, Hofstede deemed the respondents to the questionnaire as representatives of an entire country and treated an event at one point of time as representative of all time (McSweeney et al., 2016). Stoermer et al. (2016) also criticized Hofstede's analysis of national cultures by noting that Hofstede based his research on a survey solely from one company with potential bias from the Western perspectives.

Touburg (2016) alternatively proposed a "national habitus" (p. 87) model to describe how dispositions could develop on a national level and how the dispositions had changed under the influence of other non-national social forces. Touburg's extant studies criticizing Hofstede's national cultural theory involved few field work and might lack in empirical supports to demonstrate how the national habits model could be more reliable or generalizable than Hofstede's national cultural dimensions theory. de Mooij's (2015) argument that researchers often misused the idea of Hofstede's dimensions was also developed from comparisons of concepts and literature reviews only. McSweeney et al. (2016) also derived critiques and contested as a result of their critical thinking against the theory with few real-world examples or data analyses or applications.

Some researchers tested the generalizability of Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultures theory by applying the theoretical concepts to some real-world phenomena. Saleem, Larimo, Ummik, and Kuusik (2015) investigated advertising in Estonia to investigate whether Hofstede's theory could explain the different patterns in the use of appeals in advertising. Garcia, Mendez, Ellis, and Gautney (2014) also

conducted a study of cultural differences between the United States and China by comparing the contents of the websites of the U.S. and Chinese companies. Both Saleem et al. and Garcia et al. found mixed or contradictory results against Hofstede's analysis.

Through the analysis of advertising, Saleem et al. (2015) found the advertising in Estonia reflected the paradoxical values related to low PD and MF, but the researchers also found culturally corresponding values related to high UA and IC dimensions. Garcia et al. (2014) also discovered some patterns inconsistent with Hofstede's cultural analysis. For example, although the United States marked relatively low LTO scores among the countries, some U.S. companies' websites displayed contents comprised of a mixture of long- and short-term oriented characteristics (Garcia et al., 2014). Results generated by both researchers indicated that cultural values alone might not always be the primary determinants to provide researchers with predicting power to prognosticate what type of the cultures might be reflected in the advertising or websites in advance.

Styles of leadership relevant to cultural integration. Zhu, Xia, and Makino (2015) found a significant relationship between leader support and employees' reduced role stressors, family functioning, and emotional exhaustion in cross-border M&As. Some researchers noted that the top management and supervisor support had more positive effects on employees' work attitudes than co-worker support (Hildisch et al., 2015). In this section, I reviewed some literature in relation to two leadership conceptual models that might be closely related in the area of cross-cultural management.

Perlmutter's (1969) EPG model – ethno-, geo-,* and *poly-centric. In a cross-border M&A, different mindsets of a leader toward acquired foreign workers could

impact on postacquisition performance and relationships between the headquarters and the foreign subsidiary (Kostova, Marano, & Tallman, 2016). Perlmutter (1969) introduced three distinctive multicultural management approaches: ethnocentric, polycentric and geocentric (as cited in Lakshman, Lakshman, & Estay, 2017). Perlmutter described ethnocentric as *home-country oriented*, polycentric as *host-country oriented*, and geocentric as *world-oriented* (French, 2016). The global market was a mixture of different cultures with different ethics and values (Garcia et al., 2014). Leaders of multinationals having acquired overseas companies should study advantages and disadvantages of supervising acquired workers of the foreign subsidiaries in the same way they did in the headquarters and address relationship issues between the headquarters and the subsidiaries (Lakshman et al., 2017).

In a cross-border M&A, a leader of an acquiring firm might behave either geocentric or polycentric rather than ethnocentric approach if the leader recognized the value of cultural intelligence to integrate diverse employees successfully after the merger (Garcia et al., 2014). An integration leader with a polycentric view would acknowledge that the target might be unique and have an abundant talent pool or might have implemented specific training programs to grow local staff in the past, which might be valuable to the newly merged firm (Lakshman et al., 2017). In a geocentric view, the leader might consider appointing managers for the newly established firm from any locations or countries of origin so that the best people could engage in handling the firm's challenges (Lakshman et al., 2017). The ethnocentric approach would be self-centered (Garcia et al., 2014), and the leaders practicing an ethnocentric style would be unlikely to

adjust in the host country environment (Sonesh & DeNisi, 2016). Few acquired workers of an internationally merged organization might engage in socialization behaviors toward the foreign leader if the integration leader from an acquiring firm behaved with an ethnocentric mindset (Sonesh & DeNisi, 2016).

Leadership styles for cross-cultural management. Leaders of multicultural work teams could provoke either a positive or negative influence on team performances (Browne, Dreitlein, Ha, Manzoni, & Mere, 2016) and should be transformational to help improve both the organization performance and the employee well-being (Caldwell, 2015). Some critical elements for an integration leader to manage diverse workers might involve passion, transformational global leadership, and global leaders' transformative mission, and abilities to resolve conflicts (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015). Transformational leaders could broaden follower interests and motivate employees to grow beyond their self-interest for the good of the team (Browne et al., 2016) and could create a culture where employees developed skills and values by thriving their purposes and passions that might arouse the curiosity and imagination required to deliver solutions (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015). If a transformational leader discovered a relationship conflict in a multicultural work environment, the leader would be willing to guide the team members through personalized care and intellectual stimulation to build a friendly team atmosphere (J. Chen, Liu, Wang, Wang, & Zheng, 2017).

Global team leaders should pay attention to human resources and communications management because the team members and resources were spread across the globe (Browne et al., 2016). Browne et al. (2016) found some success factors for conducting

effective global communications: (a) establishing regular communication among team members sensitive to their time zones, (b) ensuring team members to be able to use collaboration technology effectively, (c) providing a fully detailed project plan and reports of the current project schedule at regular intervals, (d) ensuring the team members to feel a sense of supports emotionally with necessary resources to perform optimally, and (e) fostering leadership and trust among the team members. Success factors relating to an effective global human resources management would be to (a) provide training to close any knowledge gaps related to project technology or skills needed to meet objectives, (b) provide opportunities for team members to learn about each other's cultural and personal attributes in a safe and open environment, (c) encourage team members to avoid premature biased assumptions, (d) acknowledge cultural and language differences in a positive light, (e) choose team members based on competencies, and (f) conducting due diligence about local laws and regulations pertaining to human capital (Browne et al., 2016).

Although Browne et al. (2016) made an important contribution to the field of global team management, Browne et al. based their research on secondary sources to support views on leadership skills, qualities, and competencies related to project management. The information was derived from project management practice texts and publications to determine effective communications practices for global project teams (Browne et al., 2016). Further research might be necessary by conducting case studies or other modes of data collection for enhanced credibility.

Connective leadership might be one of the most important skills that a leader of a diverse work team used to improve employee goal commitment during an integration stage following a cross-border M&A deal (Yan et al., 2016). Connective leaders could use diverse and complex leadership behaviors to reduce dysfunctional conflicts in mergers through collaboration and could reconcile the relationship between the acquirers and acquired workers (Yan et al., 2016). The positive relationships between workers in the workplace might be necessary for the leader to manage employee motivations(Jedin & Saad, 2016). Leaders might be able to further mediate conflicts in tasks and processes by creating pleasant relationships among the workers because the workers might proactively synthesize different opinions and ideas about work tasks and improve decision quality (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016).

Benefits and Challenges of Cross-Border M&As

Once successfully integrated, the cross-border acquisition may be one of the most efficient growing strategies for an organization to expand into the global market (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Many business owners and researchers ignored challenges of today's intensified internationalization and cultural assimilation of an ethnically diverse workforce involving various conflicts in the workplace, such as task, process, and relationship conflicts that might cause poor post-M&A performance (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016). Rottig (2017) noted that, although organizational cultural differences might be subject to creating conflicts and could negatively affect acquisition performance, there were no significant relationships between national cultural differences and acquisition performance. The business leader should consider preserving acquired

workers' national cultures as long as the leader could manage cross-cultural integrations without generating conflicts in the workplace associated with national cultural differences between the acquirer and the target (Risberg, 2003). In this section, I analyzed some benefits and challenges of cross-cultural management in relation to cross-border M&As.

Benefits and motives of cross-border M&As. Some business leaders might ask what unique advantages the leader would gain from cross-border M&As compared to domestic M&As. Cross-border M&As accounted for over 80% of the world's FDI (Sharma, 2016). Some researchers conducted intensive literature reviews to answer the question, *What drives cross-border M&As as opposed to domestic M&As?* One of the most common answers was the fact that cross-border M&As would be a cheaper and a quicker means to gain access to foreign markets (Sharma, 2016).

M. Hu and Ngo (2015) explored various motives for business leaders to conduct cross-border M&As and the factors that might affect the returns of the acquirers. The researchers found some fundamental motives to implement cross-border M&As: (a) entry to the international market, (b) risk diversification, (c) overcoming adverse government policy, (d) enhancing productivity, (e) increasing market power, and (f) market valuation. Motivations for cross-border M&A might be different from country to country. Bany-Ariffin, Hisham, and McGowan (2016) noted that the benefits of cross-border M&As should arise from acquirer's greater ability to exploit strategic advantages of targets' host countries, such as the abundance of natural resources, tax structure, government regulations, technologies, trade agreements, correlations between countries' economic cycles and even monopolistic market power. Motives to conduct cross-border M&As

should also include value and competitive advantage creation, improvement in efficiency, market leadership, innovations, marketing and strategic motives, and synergistic gains (Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). However, a large majority of past research based on either document reviews or Likert-type scale questionnaire and might have left some areas that other researcher could explore negative aspects of the cross-border M&As through field works.

Positive spillovers. Positive spillover effects might become a valuable impact on the innovation performance of a newly established firm after a cross-border M&A (Muqiang et al., 2017). Some companies might acquire other companies in different countries to increase productivity and technological spillover effects (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Scholars found that companies in a country with low technological backgrounds tended to aim at achieving reverse spillover effects to enhance technological capabilities from acquirers in the countries with advanced technologies (Lan, Yang, & Zhu, 2015). Lan et al. (2015) stated Chinese firms were likely to create value by acquiring target firms in developed countries. Acquirers in the emerging market having a strong absorptive capacities might be able to enhance innovation performance through acquiring foreign technologies, combining with localized knowledge, and developing unique products aimed at selling to both home and global customers (Wu, Wang, Hong, Piperopoulos, & Zhuo, 2016).

By acquiring firms in developed countries, leaders of multinationals in developing countries could foster technology transfer, technological spillovers, and flows of knowledge and best organizational practices from targets (UNCTAD, 2016). An acquired

target firm might also gain spillovers from the acquirer and would be more likely to improve efficiency when the targets received better technology support from foreign acquirers (Liang, 2017). Effects of spillovers and knowledge transfer might be more significant when the recipient had a high absorptive capacity (Liang, 2017). Absorptive capacity was an essential factor that an organization would need to possess so that the organization could identify and assimilate relevant knowledge (Arnold, Benford, Canada, & Sutton, 2015), and a lack of absorptive capacity might lead to an inability to adapt to changing work environment and effectively apply strategic flexibility (Arnold et al., 2015).

Knowledge transfer. Business leaders might seek opportunities for transferring knowledge from cross-border M&As activities (Ranucci & Souder, 2015). Knowledge transfer was addressed as part of the knowledge management process (Lepik & Krigul, 2016). Nuno et al. (2015) identified a trend that business leaders were gradually shifting their M&A objectives from financial-focused strategies to knowledge-based approaches from the organizational learning perspectives in recent years. Business leaders evolved evaluation metrics for M&A outcomes from assessing post-M&A performance to seeking an understanding of what might drive synergy creation through sharing knowledge during the integration process (Nuno et al., 2015).

There was a growing interest among business leaders regarding the effect of knowledge transfer between the acquirer and the target because the knowledge transfer could occur only during the postacquisition integration phase (Ai & Tan, 2017). Ahammad et al. (2016) investigated the factors that might impact on knowledge transfer

and the effects on cross-border acquisition performance. Knowledge transfer and employee retention were some of the positive factors to improve cross-border acquisition performance (Ahammad et al., 2016). The effective learning from foreign targets for acquiring companies might become detrimental to performance, if the acquiring firm had a low level of absorptive capacity (Ai & Tan, 2017). Because enhancing the firm's competitive position in the market should be one of the most compelling objectives to conduct cross-border M&As, knowledge transfer between the acquiring and the acquired firms should lead to the creation of sustainable competitive advantages in the global market (Ahammad et al., 2016; Ai & Tan, 2017).

Business leaders might also need to realize the value of cross-cultural tacit knowledge transfer as a success factor for cross-border M&As, which could emerge during the integration period as well (Nishinaka, Umemoto, & Kohda, 2015). The knowledge management would be challenging when a firm undertook projects in cross-cultural settings where high-context cultures were involved (Nishinaka et al., 2015). Nishinaka et al. emphasized the needs for business leaders to develop capabilities to manage tacit knowledge transfers before they start managing acquired workers in high-context cultures.

Competitive advantages and innovation in the industry. Cross-border M&As could be a significant strategy to develop competitive advantages in the global market through innovations by gaining valuable technologies and capabilities that targets have attained (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). According to Azar and Drogendijk (2016), the cultural distance between the home and the host market might be

a positive factor for an acquiring firm to adopt innovations the target firm developed in its market. The larger the cultural distance, the higher the degree of accepting innovations developed in the host-country would be (Azar & Drogendijk, 2016). Business leaders would wish to continue adopting innovations in response to uncertainties resulting from a cultural distance to a foreign market, which could also positively impact the firm's export performance (Azar & Drogendijk, 2016). Korzilius, Bücker, and Beerlage (2017) noted when different cultures existed in a workplace, the diversity of the workforce could provide resourcefulness and unique perspectives comparing with a workplace with a single culture. An individual's experience could become more fertile when the individual had access to external sources of knowledge for innovation and a diverse colleague network (Bogers, Foss, & Lyngsie, 2018).

Business leaders might not be able to achieve innovations during the early stage of postacquisition integration and might result in a negative performance in the short term (Ma, Zhu, & Cai, 2016). The cross-cultural organizational differences could also negatively influence knowledge transfers, particularly in research and development units (Ghauri & Rosendo-Rios, 2016). Ma et al. (2016) implied a well-organized workplace after culturally integrated diverse workers might significantly contribute to the outcome of postacquisition performance. Moreover, leaders of acquiring organizations often attempted to create a competitive advantage by seeking global talent from acquired targets (Luo, 2016). Business leaders should understand how acquired talents could adapt to a global mindset and to headquarters' organizational cultures (Luo, 2016).

International market power. Gaining market power was another classic motivation for an MNE to carry out cross-border M&As (Bany-Ariffin et al., 2016; M. Hu & Ngo, 2015; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). An MNE might plan to operate overseas to gain access to a new market by taking over a target's' market share in its country and to hold control of the market (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Many leaders of MNEs might choose a cross-border M&A as an entry to a foreign market as opposed to greenfield investment if the leaders aimed to quickly adapt to the local environment of the host country (Boateng, Du, Wang, Wang, & Ahammad, 2017). The leaders of MNEs might prefer acquisition when the organization had high bargaining power, knew the target market conditions, and locally accepted products and brands (Boateng et al., 2017). Leaders of MNEs might also favor cross-border M&As if they focused on short-term growth in the target market or synergy creations through increased operational efficiency and market power (Bany-Ariffin et al., 2016; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015).

Shareholder's profit and costs of cross-border M&As. M&A would not only be profitable in maximizing profits but would also be effective in enhancing shareholder values because the earnings per share and dividend per share might follow an upward trend in the post-merger period (Harvey, 2015). Leaders of acquiring firms would evaluate the intangible values of the price paid for acquisitions. The cost to acquire a target could reach 40% to 50% above the calculated amount of the current value (Mazzariol & Thomas, 2016). However, the leader should recognize the intangible and emotional aspects of the merger could influence the final price the acquiring firm would pay (Mazzariol & Thomas, 2016).

Business leaders might generate a loss in the organization's stock values if the leaders failed to foresee institutional or regulation changes in the target market. Reddy, Xie, and Huang (2016) found that the government officials' erratic nature and ruling political party intervention tended to have a damaging effect on success of cross-border M&A deals. If the government has a strong control of the industry in a host country, an acquiring firm might struggle with higher bid value of a listed target firm and the cash payment as a result of the government interventions (Reddy et al., 2016). Leaders of acquirers in the United States often engage in earnings management behaviors in stock-based foreign acquisitions (Baik, Cho, Choi, & Kang, 2015). Bidders often strengthened earnings management when targets existed in countries with higher institutional differences, such as countries that had less freedom of the press, political instability, corruption, and less government effectiveness (Baik et al., 2015). Regarding cross-border M&As between developed and developing countries, the acquired firm's shareholders in emerging economies were likely to earn positive returns, whereas the acquirer of the target in the emerging economies would not in the short period (Yuce, 2016).

Synergy creations. Leaders of acquiring firms often lacked strategic rationales and had high expectations to achieve unrealistic synergies (Sinkovics et al., 2015). Although realization of synergies might be a critical objective of a cross-border M&A, business leaders could fail to create synergies during the integration process and could not disseminate available know-how in the merged firms throughout the postmerger phase (Osarenkhoe & Hyder, 2015). Cross-border acquisitions were more intricate than domestic ones, particularly regarding the postacquisition integration processes (Sinkovics

et al., 2015). Osarenkhoe and Hyder (2015) advocated some critical factors leading to integration success would include a leadership style that emphasized hands-on management, visionary thinking, an involvement of entire staff, and open and honest communications.

Fiorentino and Garzella (2015) also identified three critical pitfalls the business leaders often faced when planning an M&A and building synergies. The pitfalls that leaders might fall and fail to create synergies were a propensity to overestimate synergy potential, the underestimation of difficulties in synergy realization, and lack of attention to the realization of synergies (Fiorentino & Garzella, 2015). Sinkovics et al. (2015) identified some success factors for synergy creation and enhancements in overall M&A performance: (a) the acquirer and target firms work closely together to improve marketing development by sharing and exchanging marketing resources, thus enhancing the marketing integration process; (b) both the acquirer and the target firm successfully diagnosed and selected several of their best marketing practices they employed in both countries to expedite strategic goals; and (c) acquiring firms should take more time to understand and build up social relationships with their target firms before any significant progress can be made toward firm combination.

Challenges of postacquisition cross-border multicultural integration. Prior researchers observed challenges for cross-border acquisition from two different perspectives: *cultural distance* and *institutional distance*. Some researchers linked the hurdles involving governments' administrative, regulatory, cognitive, and normative institutions to institutional distances between the acquirer and the target's markets (Baik

& Park, 2015; Cezar & Escobar, 2015). Researchers using cultural distance lenses would often examine barriers in human interactions in relation to different national cultures, traits, languages, business practices, religions, human behaviors, mentalities, or beliefs between the two countries belonging to the acquirer and the target as the challenges of cross-border M&As (Baik et al., 2015; Bebenroth & Hemmert, 2015). Both variables such as national culture and institutional structure were critical factors that could affect a financial behavior of the firms after completing cross-border M&As (Baik et al., 2015). Moreover, based on *McKinsey's 7S model*, not only national cultures but also organizational cultures could significantly affect the *style* of an organization (Dyer, Godfrey, Jensen, & Bryce, 2016).

Although a large number of firms increasingly engaged in cross-border M&As because the business owners could obtain a wide range of opportunities through cross-border M&As, there was a common understanding among business leaders that integration issues would be decisive and critical to their outcome (Bauer et al., 2015). The estimated failure rates of M&As were between 40% and 60%, although some studies showed the rates as high as 70% to 90% (Cui et al., 2016; Zaks, 2016). The average failure rates of M&As had not changed over time (Bauer et al., 2015). To achieve the initial goal of M&A and synergies, post-M&A integration would be a necessary process although the integration might be a complex, hard to predict in detail, and hardly plannable process (Bauer et al., 2015; Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991).

Some researchers often blamed cultural differences for problems in multicultural organizations (Hofstede, 2015). De Luque et al. (2017) found 94% of the researchers of

extant literature on cross-cultural strategic management overly emphasized the barriers induced by cultural differences, such as difficulties, obstacles, and conflicts. Seventy-two percent of the executives testified that little effort was traditionally focused on cultures during the postmerger integration period (Hirsch, 2015). Although it was relatively minor, some researchers poised various favorable dynamics and outcomes that stemmed from national cultural differences (De Luque et al., 2017). Cross-border M&As could be more successful if business leaders prioritized cultural factors early in the integration processes and focused on transparent dialogues about cultures between acquirers and targets (Hirsch, 2015).

Some researchers emphasized the importance of understanding human mentality and behaviors of acquired workers. In a workplace, each employee has unique values, symbols, statements, rules, education systems, political governance, family, and friends that affect the development of the individual (Sprajc & Podbregar, 2016). Moilanen (2016) studied how human emotions might affect the alignment of a management of an organization and control system after a cross-border acquisition. The workers of the acquiring firm tended to lead the operation of a newly created organization and identify change processes for consolidations (Moilanen, 2016). Although acquiring firm workers would be more rational in making decisions, the acquired workers would exhibit rather emotional behaviors (Moilanen, 2016). To function effectively as an organization, the acquiring firm workers should deal with soft issues such as culture and communications (Moilanen, 2016; Sprajc & Podbregar, 2016).

In addition to the issues of human emotions, leaders of acquiring firms often face challenges related to different business processes practiced in targets' host countries (Y. Chen, Werle, & Moser, 2016). Y. Chen et al. (2016) reiterated the importance of relationship building associated with high LTO cultures after the researchers investigated the success factors of cross-border postacquisition integration between two cases that a Chinese company acquired a European company and a European company acquired a Chinese company. China was a high LTO and high PD culture and had a unique decision process that most Europeans did not practice (Y. Chen et al., 2016). Furthermore, acquiring business leaders might find it rather challenging to align organizational cultures or business practices with those of the targets in emerging economies if an acquiring firm from a developed country already established brand image and specific corporate cultures associated with the brand (Caiazza, 2016). To explore more cross-border M&A success stories in a broad range of industries, Andriuskevicius and Ciegis (2017) recommended a more holistic analysis involving extensive case studies and questionnaire.

Some scholars focused on the importance of understanding the workers' mentality in connection with national cultures to motivate the workers during the postacquisition integration. Bertoldi, Giachino, Bernard, and Prudenza (2015) investigated the processes of cross-border M&As by examining a merger of Fiat and Chrysler. Cross-border M&A might be the most popular method of FDI (Mayer-Foulkes, 2015), so that numerous automotive manufacturers in the world might consider because of its potentially valuable synergies and knowledge transfers between the acquirer and the target as a result of integrations (Ahammad et al., 2016; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). Acquirers often aimed at

achieving synergies through acquisitions, such as cost reductions, economies of scale, or technology transfers, although there are only a few cross-border M&As successful in creating expected values and synergies (Bertoldi et al., 2015). A cross-border postacquisition integration would be difficult if an acquiring firm ignored the differences in mentality and cultures among diverse workers and how to motivate them (Bebenroth & Hemmert, 2015; Bertoldi et al., 2015).

Conflicts in multicultural diverse team work. Researchers often recommended that business leaders carefully manage cultural diversity in practice after completing cross-border M&As when the desired outcome was creative thinking and innovation in the global business development (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015). Leader's cultural intelligence might be an important predictor of conflict management styles (Gonçalves et al., 2016). For multicultural management, Korovyakovskaya and Chong (2016) addressed three types of conflicts among the diverse workers: task, process, and relationship. Task conflict could emerge from differences in judgment or perspective and focused on judgmental differences about how to achieve common objectives and disagreements among team members regarding the team tasks that team members would share and collaborate (Appelhoff, Mauer, Collewaert, & Brettel, 2016; Medina, 2016). Process conflict referred to disagreements among team members on the way how they should achieve the tasks and tended to cause a consistent, negative relationship on group outcomes (Medina, 2016). Finally, the relationship conflict was dysfunction related to emotional and personal incompatibilities or disputes that might be subject to anger, frustration, suspicion, distrust, and hostility among team members (Medina, 2016). Task,

process, and relationship conflicts could also be a predictor of potential miscommunications in culturally diverse work teams (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015).

From an empirical study of conflicts in the multicultural workforce, researchers found that task conflicts were positively related to perceived group performance in culturally diverse work teams, whereas process conflicts were negatively related (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016). The presence of task conflict might be helpful in enhancing team performance if the workers better understood task issues in the team (Appelhoff et al., 2016)., Relationship conflicts, by contrast, could arise from disharmony between the team members who display feelings of anger, hostility, frustration, and distrust among team members (Medina, 2016). Process conflicts might also lead to decreasing individuals' effectiveness at connecting ideas from disparate cultures (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015).

Task and process conflicts. Task conflict could emerge from disagreements among team members regarding the team tasks the members shared and collaborated (Medina, 2016). Bansal (2015) stated human integrations and task integration were separate subjects for acquiring firms. The organizations where the leaders place higher preference on human integration tended to secure highly committed employees (Bansal, 2015). If a leader prioritized task integration and ignored human integration, employees would develop negative emotions with anger and insecurity in their newly merged organization (Bansal, 2015).

Task conflict could enhance the team's appropriate management of process conflicts (Shaukat, Yousaf, & Sanders, 2017). Task conflicts could also mediate the relationships between connective leaders and employee goal commitment (Yan et al., 2016). Cross-border M&A integration leaders should pay more attention to managing relationship conflicts rather than task-related conflicts to lessen tensions among the workers and to achieve creating a harmony in culturally diverse workforce to improve team performance (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016).

Task conflicts might be helpful in enhancing team performance and firm innovativeness (Camelo-Ordaz, García-Cruz, & Sousa-Ginel, 2015). Group harmony could improve innovative performance of the team by reducing task conflict and neutralizing any negative effect of task conflict (C. C. Chen, Ünal, Leung, & Xin, 2016). Workers' job engagement could be helpful in mediating between task conflict and performance (Jungst & Blumberg, 2016). Moreover, task conflict among top management team might be helpful to improve the performance of the firms (J. Chen et al., 2017).

Extant research demonstrated that process conflict had dysfunctional consequences on team performance (Parayitam & Papenhausen, 2016). In an internationally merged organization where workers from different cultures colocated with diverse beliefs and different preferences for strategic goals, leaders might face challenges in coordinating opinions during the decision-making process, which would further propagate the seeds of relationship conflict within a team (N. Hu, Chen, Gu, Huang, & Liu, 2017). Disagreements in the decision-making process might deter behavior to seek

agreement and could hamper team effectiveness (Parayitam & Papenhausen, 2016).

Furthermore, process conflict concerning the resources and role allocations could

increase relationship conflicts (Seo & Takashima, 2017). The more the process conflicts,

the less convenient for the members to agree on decisions, which willeventually lead to

failure in worker commitment (Parayitam & Papenhausen, 2016).

   Relationship conflicts. Relationship conflict could create animosity, distract team

members, and hamper the decision-making process, causing the team members to feel

unwilling to collaborate (Medina, 2016)**.** Relationship conflict might be a pervasive

problem of culturally diverse organizations and would often affect employees' job

satisfaction and enthusiasm to cooperate with other members of the tems (Ayoko, 2016;

Hjerto & Kuvaas, 2017). The relationship conflict might be a full mediator between

political climate and employee performance associated with job burnout and turnover

intentions (Shaukat et al., 2017).

   Relationship conflict could also mediate the effects of leader support and the

employee goal commitment as well (Yan et al., 2016). Leaders of multicultural

organizations should recognize that supervisor support could significantly reduce worker

stress and decrease emotional exhaustion to work with coworkers (Zhu et al., 2015).

Supervisor support would be an important element in mediating relationship conflicts

because there were significant relationships between supervisor support and reduced role

stressors, family functioning, and emotional exhaustion (Torresl, Alcántara, Rudolph, &

Viruell, 2016).

Cultural diversity, distance, and foreignness were typical causes that would negatively impact on creating value for a multicultural organization because of potential conflicts between the workers (De Luque et al., 2017). Cultural diversity might, however, also be helpful in generating innovations and synergies (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015) if the leader could engage in hands-on management, visionary thinking, the involvement of the entire staff, and open and honest communications (Osarenkhoe & Hyder, 2015). The relationship engagement was positively associated with an M&A performance (Jedin & Saad, 2016). Leaders might be able to motivate the staff to perform their tasks at maximum levels by maintaining favorable relationships with workers (Jedin & Saad, 2016).

Institutional distance focused analyses. When executing a business diversification, the business leaders would not only face cultural challenges but might also encounter hurdles related to institutional distances between the countries (Reddy et al., 2016). With an increased institutional distance, the firm might incur more *adaptation costs*, the costs of adapting the firm to the legal systems, political and governmental framework, conditions of access to credit and regulations in the host country (Cezar & Escobar, 2015). Institutional distances tended to impede a firm's decision to invest in a foreign country and would reduce the volume of investment (Cezar & Escobar, 2015). Investors might look for countries that offer a stable and dynamic macroeconomic framework, simple investment rules, and tax holidays (Reddy, 2016). Fewer investments from international funds were associated with low levels of country transparency because foreign investors might hesitate to invest in corrupt countries (Liu, Lu, & Ma, 2015).

Firms in developed economies might be able to adapt more easily to institutional distances than the firms in developing economies (Cezar & Escobar, 2015). Bebenroth and Hemmert (2015) found that an acquired firm would experience negative effects of managerial distance on return on assets (ROA) after the acquisition. When an acquirer originated in emerging market, the target tended to deliver a higher ROA and lower asset growth than the firms acquired by the firms in developed countries (Bebenroth & Hemmert, 2015).

MNEs might be able to reduce the costs in developing high-tech products by outsourcing research and development (R&D) activities to firms where costs of operations were low regarding labors, taxes, energy, or real estates (Reddy, 2016). Regarding the issues related to labors in target countries, Alimov (2015) explored the impacts of country-level employment protection regulations on foreign firms' cross-border M&A decisions and operations. Countries with relatively tight employment regulations would be more attractive to foreign acquirers in the countries having relatively flexible labor regulations when acquirers discovered targets at bargain prices, such as the sectors with relatively high productivity and skill (Alimov, 2015). Business leaders might choose to delay decisions to invest or even failed in investment if leaders encounter weak financial infrastructure of the host country and erratic nature of government officials who had strong intervention power (Reddy, 2016). A newly elected government that aimed at attracting a higher inflow of investments from other developed and emerging markets might often ease investment rules and might offer tax holidays (Reddy, 2016).

Application of National Cultural Knowledge to Postmerger Integration Following

Cross-Border M&As

Firms of all levels including small-, medium-, and large-size firms have been

increasingly implementing cross-border M&As recently because the firms could gain a

wide range of opportunities from cross-border M&As (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). There was a

common understanding that integration issues were decisive and critical to the outcome

of the M&As (Bauer et al., 2015). Despite increased efforts to study and the

disillusioning results reported, the failure rates of cross-border M&As have been

estimated as 70% to 90% (Cui et al., 2016; Zaks, 2016) that have not been changed over

time. Bauer et al. (2015) noted the worker integration would be a necessary process to

achieve initial goals of a cross-border M&A. Business leaders should plan strategies on

how to integrate acquired workers following the acquisition (Haspeslagh & Jemison,

1991).

Differences in national cultures between workers could cause significant impacts

on communications in the workplace, which might potentially generate a challenge for

the leader to manage diverse work teams (Caiazza, 2016). Some business leaders would

attempt to build the firm's orientation toward a brand image already established in the

acquirer's country of origin (Heinberg, Ozkaya, & Taube, 2016). Leaders might wish to

create a model of organizational culture which contained various individuals' national

cultures (Caiazza, 2016). In their study of corporate communications and its association

with organizational cultures in Australia, Austria, Germany, Indonesia, and Switzerland,

Hoffmann et al. (2015) found there were no significant correlations between the

organizational cultures and the corporate communications priorities. The nation variables

and the institutional settings related to national cultures would be more conspicuous when

explaining the differences in corporate communications (Hoffmann et al., 2015).

Using an example of a Swedish company's acquisition of a Korean company,

Hofstede (2015) illustrated one of the most unfortunate phenomena associated with an

abandoned system which the Korean firm had adopted before the acquisition. The

relatively flat structure and the performance-based promotion scheme introduced by the

Swedes might be attributed to national cultural differences regarding PD and IC

(Hofstede, 2015). In addition, a gap in LTO held for the abolition by the short-term

oriented Swedes of an in-house career development policy which the collectivistic, long-

term oriented Korean workers might prefer (Hofstede, 2015). As a result, Koreans argued

that social cohesion in the organization weakened and complained that Korean workers

lost pride in the company and worked only to make money (Hofstede, 2015).

Tusar, Znidarsic, and Miglic (2016) tested Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of

national cultural theory to check if the theory depicted the cultural distances accurately

between two different national cultures by examining Slovenian expatriates in Korea and

Korean expatriates working in Slovenia. Organizations operating international businesses

should establish subsidiaries in the host countries to build positive relationships with

local buyers and suppliers (Tusar et al., 2016). There were significant differences in

national cultures between Koreans and Slovenians in working environment and

innovations, such as the fear of expressing disagreement toward superiors, commitment

to work, preference of challenges, tendency to avoid conflicts and innovations (Tusar et

al., 2016). Tusar et al. confirmed working with people in different cultures would be subject to a certain amount of adaptation to the different cultures for the leaders.

Application of national cultural knowledge to integration challenges related to PD. According to Stoermer et al. (2016), people who belonged to a privileged group in a high PD culture might insist on the status quo and exclusive advantages and were likely to substantiate support on discrimination of low status groups because of the strong preference to maintain a social hierarchy. To foster the establishment of the harmoniously integrated work environment, it might be ideal that both acquirer and target had low PD cultures in common because the effects of discrimination based upon status might be less pronounced in low PD cultures and the need for equality might provide a favorable environment for increasing diversity and inclusion management practices (Stoermer et al., 2016). If an organization in a low PD country entered a high PD country, the organization would consider a possibility that the workers or managers of high PD country might cause unexpected ethical issues (Okpara, 2014). High PD cultures were negatively related to immoral values, rules, self-interests, and personal attributes (Okpara, 2014). People in a high PD culture might act more on behalf of supervisors rather than the social norm (Hofstede, 1983, 2011).

Some researchers tested the relationship between the level of PD and organization's team collaboration, innovation, current, and future team performance. Rao and Pearce (2016), conceptually deconstructed PD, and scales developed that reliably and validly differentiated between the societal level values and workplace practices. Employees in high PD cultures were more likely to identify themselves with the

organization whose cultural environments provided high PD (Park, 2016). Business

leaders in high PD cultures tended to apply authority and coerce other people in lower PD

cultures, even if the result might conflict with the interest of the organization's

stakeholders in the low PD cultures (Y. Chang et al., 2015). Conversely, people in low

PD culture would exhibit better team collaboration, innovation, and performance and the

trust in fellow team members regardless of their subordinates' societal PD cultural values

(Rao & Pearce, 2016).

Application of national cultural knowledge to integration challenges related

to UA. Hofstede's concept of UA might be helpful in predicting miscommunications

between the members of a multicultural organization because the concept of UA might

provide hints to reduce uncertainties and enhance communication practices (Sinkovics et

al., 2015). Miscommunication might lead to task and process conflicts in culturally

diverse work groups at peer and supervisor levels (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015).

Miscommunication and mistrust among diverse stakeholders could inhibit the effective

flow and exchange of information and knowledge across the organization (M. Hu & Ngo,

2017**).** Managers should take active steps to prevent miscommunication in culturally

diverse workgroups when supervising the multicultural workforces (Korovyakovskaya &

Chong, 2015).

Business leaders in high UA cultures might feel endangered by indefinite

situations (Hofstede, 2011) and tended to avoid dealing with organizations in a low UA

culture (Harrell, 2016). Conversely, people in a low UA culture would display a weak

relationship between knowledge self-efficacy and knowledge sharing intentions (Y.

Chang et al., 2015). According to Garcia et al. (2014), uncertainties in the daily communication between the workers might not be a severe problem for organizations in low UA cultures when collaborating. The Chinese and the U.S. people having similar levels of UA were more likely to be able to deal with uncertainty and could accept changes or conflicts allowing the team to practice business differently from existing rules (Garcia et al., 2014). Comparing the verbal and written communication skills between the German and the U.S. business students who also represented similar levels of UA cultures, Luck and Swartz (2016) found German students learned that small mistakes could be overcome in an international negotiation and gained in confidence, and the U.S. students realized that limiting the use of idioms or humor might be necessary to avoid miscommunications.

Application of national cultural differences to integration challenges related to IC. Business leaders who supervised acquired workers following cross-border M&As should adjust management policies concerning the different levels of IC of the team memberrs (Y. Chang et al., 2015). In general, the Western cultures were more individualistic than the Eastern cultures (Garcia et al., 2014; Hofstede, 1983, 2011). The Chinese people, for example, had low IC or a collectivistic culture and tended to share knowledge by way of reputations (Y. Chang et al., 2015). People in the United States had a high IC level or an individualistic culture and were not necessarily motivated by rewards to share knowledge (Y. Chang et al., 2015).

Trust and communication skills were critical factors to foster effective team collaboration and performance of virtually connected diverse team members (Tran, Oh,

& Choi, 2016). When a leader from an individualistic culture managed a work team consisted of people from collective cultures, the team performance might be low if a level of trust among teammates were low (Tran et al., 2016). When managing a work team comprised of people with individualistic cultures, a leader could expect a smooth initiation of new team projects as opposed to managing a team in a collectivistic culture (Tran et al., 2016). People in a collectivistic culture might avoid questioning in authority, leading to the implementation of poor suggestions without a question (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015).

Application of national cultural differences to integration challenges related to MF. High levels of masculinity were associated with low disclosure environments, competitive, admiration for strong, and aggressive manipulations (Hofstede, 2011; Khlif, 2016). Feminine cultures were more likely to create cooperative workplaces that might be more comfortable for less competent workers with a sense of equality among workers (Hofstede, 2011). Quintana-García and Benavides-Velasco (2016) found a negative and significant relationship between gender diversity in executive management and successful initial public offerings. The gender diversity in top management teams would be beneficial to preintegration performance but not to postintegration performance following cross-border M&As, and leaders from the acquirer could overcome the negative effects of gender diversity in postintegration performance (Parola, Ellis, & Golden, 2015).

Application of national cultural differences to integration challenges related to LTO. There were positive associations between the difference in LTO levels of the

host and home countries (Peng & Beamish, 2014). People in high LTO cultures might possess *a dynamic, future-oriented mentality* (Peng & Beamish, 2014, p. 424). When a business leader in a high LTO culture managed a workforce in a low LTO culture, the quality of the jobs would be poorer than expected because of the tendency to finish jobs when they were done enough in low LTO cultures whereas the manager in high LTO culture country expected the employees to work until the jobs were complete (Mantalay & Chakpitak, 2015). When a business leader from a low LTO culture supervised workers in a high LTO culture, the leader might perceive the workers were wasting a considerable amount of time and costs without making profits in the short-term but might recognize that the firm would gain more values in the long run (Peng & Beamish, 2014).

Peng and Beamish (2014) based their study only on Japan and could have a limitation in a generalizability, even though Japan was one of the highest LTO cultures in the world comparable to China, Korea, and Taiwan (see Hofstede, 2001). Observing from a broader perspective, Rohlfer and Zhang (2016) investigated how the complexity of cultural issues could pressurize the managers to change paradigms in international business management. The rising pressure for paradigm changes took place through the integration of the West-East dichotomy (Rohlfer & Zhang, 2016). In comparison with the Western firms, some firms in high LTO cultures in the Eastern hemisphere historically gained long-term value from the cross-border M&As particularly from the targets in the developed countries (Lan et al., 2015).

Need for cultural consideration for integration and leader's attitudes. For previously separate organizations in different countries to merge and work together

toward the same goals, Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) stated the leader of the merged

firm should focus on motivating multicultural workforce to align with strategies to create

value. Organizations existed in an increasingly dynamic and changing environment with

rapid technological advancement (Harrell, 2016). Highly developed economies were

taking advantage of low wage labors in other countries making cross-cultural

management an important skill for leaders of multinationals to operate businesses

(Harrell, 2016).

Although some researchers recognized postacquisition integration as a critical

stage of an M&A process, some researchers often conducted purely conceptual study

with less empirical support making the study less generalizable and insufficient in

applying to real-world business (Angwin & Meadows, 2015). Angwin and Meadows

(2015) criticized Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) for not having provided a practical

example in the study. Cross-cultural management was a serious field for multinational

organizations, but the researchers often neglected to address cross-cultural management

issues sufficiently, diminished, and trivialized (Jemielniak, 2016).

Postacquisition cultural change should be a dyadic process, whereby the leader

would try to align acquired workers with the acquiring firm's espoused or practiced

values, depending on which one prevails in the acquiring firm (Teerikangas & Irrmann,

2016). Managing cultural diversity should be an important aspect for an organization

because it involved harmonizing different values, beliefs, creeds and customs, and, in

essence, human identity (Lozano & Escrich, 2017). There has been an imbalance in the

reflection of the reality of cross-cultural contact in international business that hindered

understanding the processes and conditions to help organizations leverage the benefits of cultural differences in a wide range of contexts (Stahl & Tung, 2015).

Canhilal et al. (2015) identified some success factors for expatriates such as the cross-border M&A integration leaders to manage acquired workers in the host countries: cross-cultural competencies, skills to motivate workers, emotional competencies, social relational skills, knowedge of contextual and cultural differences, and organizational recruitment and selection practices. Integration leaders might face various challenges in host countries, such as the emotional difficulties connected to uncertainties, anxieties, culture shock, and insolation (Kassar, Rouhana, & Lythreatis, 2015). Kassar et al. (2015) suggested that the cross-cultural training would be imperative for a multicultural integration leader to take before starting an international assignment in the host country.

Some researchers emphasized that business leaders of acquiring firms in cross-border M&As should consider retaining some executives from acquired targets, who might have vital expertise about workers of the targets. Zhu et al. (2015) stated that providing targets with *autonomy* might be sensible in the ICT industry where *autonomy* was more important in value creation. Directors holding more directorships in other firms, good reputations, strong executive experience, and rich insights of the target firm were significant assets to achieve postacquisition integration of the acquired workers(Xie et al., 2016). Leaders of acquiring organizations should examine some key behavioral characteristics of the former executives of the targets, such as satisfactory, selfish, or star-performing (Bhimani, Ncube, & Sivabalan, 2015).

Transition

Section 1 was an introduction to the issues and challenges in the cultural integrations after conducting the cross-border M&As. The section included a review of the cross-border M&A activities of the multinationals around the world and explained how the cultural intelligence might be significant for the leaders of the acquiring firms to create desired values as a result of the cross-border acquisition when integrating acquired workers into the merged organization. This section also included a conceptual framework introducing the ideas of successful cultural integration grounded on Haspeslagh and Jemison's (1991) acquisition integration approach model and Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultures theory. Moreover, I presented a review of the literature associated with cultural distances and various challenges to implementing cross-border M&As.

In Section 2, I present a detailed explanation of the purpose of the study, the role of the researcher, and participant selection. I elaborate on the research method, research design, population and sampling, and ethical concerns. In Section 3, I present the findings, application to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for actions and for further research, reflections, and conclusions.

Section 2: The Project

During integrations, stakeholders need to consider how the cultural distance between the acquirer and the target and how the two parties' attitudes toward handling cultural differences may affect the success of a cross-border M&A and the new organization's future growth (Caiazza & Volpe, 2015). I adopted a qualitative research method because the qualitative approach allowed participants to describe their experiences (see Venkatesh et al., 2016). I grounded my research using Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultural theory to select interview participants who were the leaders of internationally merged organizations or organizations operating cross-border businesses in which culturally distant, diverse employees were working together. The results obtained through the interviews and data analysis may contribute to improving business practitioners' understanding of the challenges and solutions related to multicultural integrations with diverse workforces after cross-border M&As.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As. The targeted population comprised leaders of ICT companies in North America, Europe, and the Asia-Pacific region that had acquired overseas counterparts and kept operating with the acquired foreign targets as part of the mergers for more than 5 years. The implications for positive social change included the potential to promote spillovers of skills, productivities, and knowledge between the societies where acquirers and targets of internationally merged firms belong (see Liang, 2017), which might contribute to

enhancing both societies' economy and quality of life. Improving individuals'

understanding of the importance of acknowledging different national cultures might also

be useful in mitigating potential unemployment rates as a result of reduced withdrawal

behaviors such as absenteeism or resignations (Stoermer et al., 2016).

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, my role involved developing interview questions,

identifying the target population and sample, selecting participants, organizing the

interview protocol, and conducting interviews (see Gaus, 2017; Yin, 2018). For a cross-

national multiple case study, cultural and linguistic differences place greater importance

on the researcher and the ability to interpret value and opinion through the lens of cultural

understanding (Martinus & Hedgcock, 2015). I was the primary instrument to collect data

from selected participants by conducting semistructured interviews with open-ended

questions. The rich nature of the data gathered through open-ended interviews could

provide a broader view and culturally unique opinions regarding the participants'

societies (Martinus & Hedgcock, 2015). Data collection methods included semistructured

interviews, policy document analysis, and participant observation (see Gaus, 2017) as

well as nonparticipant observation of company websites, social network services (i.e.,

Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.), and internal emails if consent was provided from the

organizations (see Madikizela-Madiya, 2017).

My experience as a multilateral trade commissioner with foreign diplomatic

offices of Canadian and Norwegian governments offering consulting services to ICT

industries in Canada, China, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan provided me with unique insights

into global business development activities in the North American, East Asian, and European ICT markets. I have worked for more than 19 years with these governments with responsibilities for fostering trades and FDIs among countries in the ICT sector and have been involved in establishing memoranda of understanding, business alliances, and cross-border M&As between organizations from different countries. I have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of cross-cultural intelligence as a foundation for deriving the benefits from globalizing organizations.

I complied with *The Belmont Report* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1979) regarding the ethical principles guiding participants' involvment in this study. *The Belmont Report* identified the principles as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (O'Connor, 2013). Encouraging clarity and completeness in conversation without influencing the participants' answers to questions helps researchers achieve the purpose of their study (Yin, 2018). Martinus and Hedgcock (2015) posited that the ethics review process is central to research validity by protecting participants from the unethical actions of researchers.

Due to my professional experience in multilateral trade promotion, I might have had biases related to some cultures of participants from the organizations I accessed. To ensure objectivity and to mitigate biases from influencing my perception, understanding, analysis, and interpretation of the collected data, I followed an interview protocol and constructed interview questions with careful consideration of research objectives (see Appendices A and B). I ensured that the identity of participants was protected at all times

through compliance with confidentiality measures and through obtaining informed consent from participants (see Madikizela-Madiya, 2017).

Participants

Qualitative researchers seek to identify participants who can share in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon under scrutiny to increase the chances of gaining useful data to answer the research questions (Annansingh & Howell, 2016). The research question in the current qualitative multiple case study was the following: What strategies do leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers after cross-border M&As? To answer this research question, I recruited participants from multinational corporations headquartered in North America, Europe, or Asia who were working as or who had ever worked as expatriates in countries other than their countries of origin with an assignment to integrate acquired workers after cross-border M&As. The participants were assumed to be working in different time zones around the world.

I planned to select participants based on three criteria that designated them as successful cross-cultural integration managers: (a) the leader has supervised a multicultural work team for more than 5 years since the organization closed its cross-border M&A deal or started international business operations under joint venture or partnership; (b) the organization the participant belonged to has recorded positive returns on investment (ROI) since the organization closed its M&A deal or started international business operations under joint venture or partnership; and (c) the organizations involved in the cross-border M&As, international partnerships, or joint ventures originated from countries that were culturally distant based on Hofstede's (2001) national cultural index.

Yin (2018) recommended a purposeful sampling technique to select participants who would be qualified to address the study's concept. The reason to check whether the leader had conducted a multicultural team for more than 5 years was based on the idea that there is no evidence of the superiority of faster integration over slow integration because the integration process is complicated and is not predictable or plannable in detail (see Bauer et al., 2015).

I further restricted my selection of participants to leaders who are expatriates assigned from acquiring organizations living in the host countries where their acquired organizations or partner organizations were located and who directly supervised local workers in the host countries and other expatriates from the countries of origin. Expatriates in the host countries might hold more experience in cross-cultural adjustment and be facing complex challenges to work with foreign employees with different national cultures on a daily basis than the leaders based in headquarters (Canhilal et al., 2015). Using global database systems that contained data on combinations of enterprises traded in public markets, such as the Thomson Reuters Eikon, CrunchBase, and PitchBook database (see Andriuskevicius & Ciegis, 2017; Shetty & Sundaram, 2019), I identified potential organizations where I could recruit interview participants who met the selection criteria for this study. I used emails, messengers, or phone calls to reach out to gatekeepers of the identified organizations or existing professional networks connected via LinkedIn or Facebook that may have had business contacts with identified organizations, to request help for facilitating access to participants. I contacted them to

discuss the need for their participation in the study via emails or letters that contained relevant information about the study and the informed consent form.

The researcher needs to establish a working relationship with prospective participants through email and telephone communications (Saunders et al., 2015). Emails and telephone calls provided a means to clarify and confirm responses with the participants in the study. The recipients were able to indicate their permission to participate in the study by signing the informed consent forms. Depending on the process and the method of accessing and acquiring signed informed consent forms, requests for interviews might present pressures for participants to accept invitations and cooperate in the research (Probst, 2016). The research design, personal relationships with participants, and participants' potential misunderstandings of Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimension concepts might be of concern in the research (Wallace & Sheldon, 2015). Pompeii (2015) suggested that member checking might enhance the credibility of the research. After completing all planned interviews, I sent participants an executive summary highlighting the findings, recommendations, and conclusions of the study via email as a means of conducting member checking.

Research Method and Design

Research Method

There are three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Venkatesh et al., 2016). For this study, I used the qualitative method to explore the management challenges of integration of internationally acquired workers into the home-country workers following the cross-border M&As by conducting multiple

semistructured, in-depth interviews using open-ended questions. Qualitative researchers use open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional questions to seek, discover, and investigate a process or to describe experiences (Venkatesh et al., 2016) and are often concerned about people and their social reality (Annansingh & Howell, 2016). In a semistructured interview, the researcher prepares a list of questions or interview guide depending on the purpose of data collection to direct the interview on a path consistent with the purpose of the research (Abro, Khushid, & Aamir 2015).

In contrast to interviewing participants, quantitative researchers collect data using closed-ended, descriptive, comparative, and specific questionnaires to test hypotheses (Abro et al., 2015; Saunders et al., 2015; Venkatesh et al., 2016). Although quantitative approaches may be effective for validating theories by using statistical measures, a quantitative method may not be useful if the researcher does not intend to study relationships between variables but rather aims to explore human experiences and knowledge developed through the experience (Annansingh & Howell, 2016). A qualitative interview methodology might be more useful for gathering rich data to analyze the best business practices (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Some researchers choose to conduct mixed-methods studies to develop novel theoretical perspectives by combining the strengths of quantitative and qualitative methods (Venkatesh et al., 2016). Researchers use mixed methods to promote greater understanding of findings because quantitative data could empirically demonstrate the soundness of the hypotheses the researcher developed, and the researcher can explain the results by using the qualitative method (Annansingh & Howell, 2016). Gobo (2016)

noted, however, that there may be inconsistencies between the quantitative and qualitative findings because each method has a performative intent, which could conflict with the other. Combining both methods might also require a remarkable investment of time and resources to complete the study (Gobo, 2016).

To explain the challenges related to multicultural management and to explore strategies of cross-border M&As integrations, I would not be testing hypotheses, which was part of a quantitative study or the quantitative aspect of a mixed-methods study. The qualitative method was more appropriate to conduct this study because I investigated human behaviors influenced by national cultures to explore strategies that leaders of internationally merged organizations used to handle conflicts and cultural clashes among diverse employees with different national cultures as a result of ineffective integrations following cross-border M&As. Given the limitations of quantitative and mixed methods, I concluded that a qualitative approach would be the best for this study because of the need to capture participants' cross-cultural worker integration experiences. With the qualitative method, I aimed to understand the meanings that participants ascribed to phenomena because the qualitative method provides opportunities for the researcher to establish trust with participants and access meanings and in-depth understanding (see Saunders et al., 2015).

Research Design

Researchers using a case study design should construct a meticulous design before data collection to enable pattern identification during data analysis (Yazan, 2015). I considered the multiple case study design appropriate for this study because the design

would enable me to collect data from multiple sources to capture the case under study in its complexity and entirety (see Yazan, 2015). Case study methodology is also used to simplify complex issues and objects, and researchers can contribute to findings from other researchers (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

Annansingh and Howell (2016) noted that a single case study design could be appropriate for small and medium enterprises. However, I concluded that it would not be suitable for studying challenges related to cross-border acquisitions and integration hurdles. Action research combines research and practical action in which the researcher joins with participants to improve practice and build theory (Nielsen, 2016). I did not plan to participate in organizations' postacquisition integration processes; therefore, the action research design was not suitable. Ethnographic research was not appropriate either because the design is used to examine the shared beliefs and behaviors of a cultural group in a natural setting and is known for lengthy timelines to complete a study as well as multiple data collection methods used (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). The narrative inquiry design was not suitable because this design involves asking the participant to "tell his or her story" (Morse, 2015, p. 1218) in response to a general question without interruption in an unstructured manner.

Fusch and Ness (2015) suggested that one should choose the sample size that the researcher could reach data saturation. Qualitative researchers use the concept of theoretical saturation in designing qualitative study to find a cut-off point to decide whether the researcher has enough data to derive a set of research descriptors to base conclusions (Boddy, 2016; Rowlands, Waddell, & McKenna, 2015). Determination of

sample size was contextual and dependent upon the scientific paradigm under which the researcher investigates the phenomenon in question (Boddy, 2016). The researcher achieves data saturation when one has enough information to replicate the study and observes no new information or themes in the data from additional interviews or cases (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). To enhance the generalizability and transferability of the study assuring data saturation, I continued interviewing until no new data emerged.

Population and Sampling

The goal of this study was to interview business leaders who belonged to the selected organizations and had implemented cross-border acquisitions, international business partnerships, or joint ventures and integrated the local foreign employees into the participants' organization workers in the ICT sector in North America. A total of 1,176 organizations in the world's ICT sector including electrical and electronic equipment producers and ICT services conducted cross-border M&As spending roughly $50 billion during 2015 (UNCTAD, 2016). Sixty percent to 80% of the deals ultimately failed (Jedin & Saad, 2016; Zaks, 2016), and 40% to 60% of acquirers divested their acquired targets to other competitors (Cui et al., 2016; UNCTAD, 2016). Jedin and Saad (2016) noted that nearly 50% to 70% of M&As failed to create value for the acquiring firms' shareholders. The cross-border M&As have been increased at a rate of 14.6% annually in the United States (Mayer-Foulkes, 2015); hence, there is a growing concern that the U.S. ICT companies are losing without building competitive advantages through cross-border M&A activities.

To select organizations and participants of the study, I established three criteria: (a) the organization the participant belongs to has kept recording positive ROIs since the organization initially closed its M&A deal or started international business operations under joint venture or partnership, (b) the leader has supervised a multicultural team for more than 5 years to date since the organization initially closed its M&A deal or started international business operations under joint venture or partnership, and (c) the organizations involved in the cross-border M&As, international partnerships, or the joint ventures originated from the countries that were culturally distant based on Hofstede's (2001) national cultural indices. Additional criteria for the organization included other commercial success based on particular objectives of the cross-border acquisition such as the gaining access to foreign market and increase in the market share, obtaining technologies from acquired targets to develop competitive advantages, or creating synergies through spillovers for enhanced productivities as a result of the cross-cultural M&As. Many business leaders try to compete for market shares in the international market (Harvey, 2015). Global business leaders expect to expand, diversify, and gain opportunities to enter new markets through cross-border M&As and seek more purchasing power in the target market (Bany-Ariffin et al., 2016). Due to limited size and growth potential of the domestic market, an organization might wish to access new market abroad. Acquiring an established company in the country of interest could augment the firm's values and profits (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Expanding the market share of the acquired organization in the host country could be a significant criterion to select participants in this study.

Positive spillovers were a valuable impact on the innovation performance of a firm created after a cross-border M&A (Muqiang et al., 2017). Spillovers from targets could be one of the most typical motivations for an acquirer to consider cross-border M&As (Liang, 2017). The acquirer could synergize as a result of spillovers from the target (M. Hu & Ngo, 2015). Positive profit growth due to improved product quality and the operational productivity after implementing cross-border acquisitions might be an additional criterion to judge whether the company was successful in the cross-border postacquisition integration.

I employed purposeful and snowball sampling to identify leaders of organizations that have acquired targets in other countries and integrated acquired workers successfully. Unlike random sampling method, which might be more suitable for generalizable findings, a qualitative researcher would use a purposeful sampling method to discover, understand, and gain insights into specific cases that one could learn a great deal about the issues of importance to the purpose of the inquiry (Cibangu et al., 2017). Sampling strategies for qualitative methods would be less explicit and often less evident (Palinkas et al., 2015). Among various techniques used in purposeful sampling, I used criterion-i sampling method to identify and access individuals. Researchers would use criterion-i sampling method by assuming that candidates would meet the criteria of the study and possess knowledge and experience with the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Once the researcher conducted an interview, the researcher could use snowball method to find other participants by asking the interviewee to reroute the invitation to

business contacts who held the experience and the backgrounds that should meet the criteria of the study (Annink, 2017; Bagley, Abubaker, & Sawyerr, 2018; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Some researchers cautioned that the snowball method might cause bias in the sample because respondents were likely to identify people who were similar to themselves (Saunders et al., 2016). The snowball method still allowed the researcher to enhance the variation in the sample by locating additional prospects not revealed in other sources and was an established sampling methodology in social research (Annink, 2017; Bagley et al., 2018).

I selected cases of cross-border M&As comprised of various pairs of acquirers and targets that exhibited great cultural distances based on Hofstede's (2001) national cultural dimensions theory. For each of the 5 dimensions, including PD, UA, IC, MF, and LTO, acquirers which appeared to be distant from targets' cutures were chosen for interviews. Collecting data from multiple participants until no new data were obtained might provide detailed, generalized information (Boddy, 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015) to achieve a theoretical saturation where further replicable intelligence can be found by adding more cases (Boddy, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sato, 2016).

Ethical Research

In this study, I complied with ethical research guidelines and standards outlined in the Walden IRB informed consent form which I distributed to each participant of the study. Informed consent was an integral process to conduct this study that involved human subjects, including informing the potential participant of the procedures how the researcher intended to obtain data and enabled the participant to decide to participate in

the study voluntarily, potential risks, benefits, confidentiality, and alternatives to the

research, and then obtaining documentation of permission to proceed (Ferreira, Ferreira,

& Buttell, 2015). I sent the informed consent form to each participant by email with an

outline of the study and clarification of the planned use of the information obtained from

the participant. Participants also had a right to withdraw from the study at any time (see

Nelson, 2016), and the researcher provided the contact information before conducting the

interview.

The participant could contact me via email to inform of one's decision to

withdraw from the study before the completion of the member checking process. If a

participant decided to withdraw, I would have erased all collected data associated with

the withdrawn participant and interviewed additional participants until data saturation

was achieved. The informed consent form also contained a clause that there were no

incentives offered to the participant for participating in this study. Offering gifts or

souvenirs to participants might lead participants to provide false information in return for

the monetary gains and might also be considered an offense or insulting depending on the

local culture or norm of the country where the participant resided (Kasim & Al-Gahuri,

2015). For the participant to participate in the study, I asked the participant to explicitly

agree to the interview by replying the email with a clause *I consent*.

The researcher safeguards their participants from any harm during the research

process, and thus the identity of individuals needs to be protected at all times through

compliance with confidentiality measures (Madikizela-Madiya, 2017). Under the

informed consent, although the researcher knew the identity of the participants and could

link them back to their responses, the researcher must protect their privacy by using codes rather than names to link subjects back to their responses (Ferreira et al., 2015). To maintain confidentiality, I assigned alphanumeric codes to all participants and companies of the study and protected data and documents by storing all files in a single locked filing cabinet. For electronic data, I stored all files in a password-protected folder on a computer to which I only had access, and then I would destroy all files 5 years after the date of the approval of this study. Walden University's IRB approval number for this study is 05-16-19-0666517 and the approval expires on May 15, 2020.

Martinus and Hedgcock (2015) suggested that the interview process and validity of research findings were complicated when the researcher dealt with multiple nations with different cultures and business practices. To gain access to professional elites who are exclusive members of a specific organization, the researcher may have to rely on a local 'inside' contact (Martinus & Hedgcock, 2015). The researcher should develop rapport and establish trust with the gatekeepers of organizations in other countries to gain access to organizational members (Saunders et al., 2015). To build trust with gatekeepers, I paid attention to adhere to confidentiality. The consent forms the participants signed included a confidentiality assurance, voluntary permission to participate in the study, and the option to leave the study at any time. I would share with the participants a summary of the findings once the study is published. Sharing the findings back with the community would be important because participants might feel abused, disillusioned, or offended after collaborated in the study if only the researcher could control the study (Kasim & Al-Gahuri, 2015).

Data Collection Instruments

The researcher was the key instrument to observe participants in the qualitative data collection process (Nelson, 2016). I employed qualitative interviews as the primary data collection method and served as the primary instrument to collect data due to the nature of this study. For deep understanding of the work environment and the participants' experience, researchers usually apply a set of data instruments to collect data, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis (Gaus, 2017). The researcher could collect both contextual and experiential data through interviews, observations, and document analyses in the same study (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017).

The following research question was the basis for the interview questions: *What strategies do leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers after cross-border M&As?* Using open-ended questions (see Appendix A), I conducted a qualitative exploratory multiple case study through semistructured in-depth interviews in person and via video call with multiple business leaders of ICT companies in various countries who had integrated diverse workforces after cross-border post-M&As. Skype was utilized to achieve interviews with participants who were not available to conduct face-to-face interviews for geographical reasons that the researcher might need to invest tremendous time and costs for travel to accomplish data collections. Telephone and Skype were reliable, sound data collection instruments and would be sufficient for an exploratory study (see Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). I also audio recorded the responses as the second data collection instrument.

The qualitative researcher uses open-ended questions because unstructured questions would be useful to discover aspects of a phenomenon that might not be captured by close-ended questions (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). Researchers could collect data during semistructured interviews in which participants were encouraged to speak freely (VanScoy & Evenstad, 2015). Open-ended questions also provided interviewees with the freedom to construct their own meaning of the phenomena forged through discussions and interactions with other individuals within the organization (Annansingh & Howell, 2016). I used open-ended questions in a semistructured interview format (see Appendix A) to gather insights into the participant's experience..

Data gathering is influenced by the researcher's communication skills, training for a specific case study, and the development of a protocol for the interview (Yazan, 2015). To achieve reliability and validity for the study, I have crafted a data gathering protocol by creating a standardized procedure of the data collection processes because the protocol allowed to determine the aim of the interview and anticipate the problems that might arise during the data collection process (see Larrinaga, 2017). With an interview protocol, the researcher could check with the original purpose of the interview at any time and reduce threats and create rapport with participants (Yin, 2018). I used interview protocols (see Appendix B) to maintain consistency and enhance the rigor of the study during the data collection process.

Researchers should not rely on the participants' perceptions and their responses as true evidence in supporting the study findings but should combine multiple secondary instruments to strengthen the validity of the data (Gaus, 2017). I used participant

observation and organizational documents about the strategies to structure organizations as the secondary sources for a triangulation. I employed member checking in addition to obtaining secondary data for triangulation (see Morse, 2015).

Member checking refers to providing the participant with a summary of the researcher's interpretations of the participant's responses during interviews to obtain additional information (Abuaziz, 2018; Morse, 2015). With the member checking, researchers could also gain confirmations, increase credence in the interpretation, and demonstrate the commonality of an assertion (Yazan, 2015). Failing to reach data saturation would create a negative impact on the validity of the results of this study (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Using more than one data collection instrument, the researcher might be able to enhance the reliability of a case study because there is no one-size-fits-all method to achieve data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Data Collection Technique

I selected a qualitative multiple case study design for this study and collected data either in person or via video call. Most researchers conduct one of three types of interviews: unstructured, structured, and semistructured (Abro, Khurshid, & Aamir, 2015). In an unstructured interview, the researcher may encourage participants to speak on their terms and to analyze the results accordingly (Cairney & St Denny, 2015). Unstructured interviews may be subject to the bias of the interviewer than the other two types of interviews and may influence on the interpretation of the data collection (Abro et al., 2015).

Some researchers use structured or semistructured interviews to collect data from each respondent, and the researcher prepares the list of questions or interview guide so that the researcher can direct the interview on a path consistent with the purpose of the research (Abro et al., 2015). I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions (see Appendix A) for the participants to answer. I explored strategies that the leaders of ICT companies used to integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As. In semistructured interviews, the researcher can conduct a free-flowing style of interview without the concerns of moving too far from the desired topic (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

The researcher may face challenges in finding the time and the venue to conduct a face-to-face interview (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). In addition to face-to-face interviews, researchers can carry out qualitative interviews using the telephone or the video call (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015; Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). De Felice and Janesick (2015) noted that Skype enabled the researcher to virtually conduct interviews similar to a face-to-face meeting by using various functions such as video, audio, chat, and numerous add-ons for recording and editing capabilities. To facilitate transferability of account, Cavalcanti (2017) suggested that a qualitative researcher collect and record as much data as possible from different collection modes, identify the types of data collected, and examine the detailed processes of data collection. I utilized different modes to collect and record data depending on the participant's availability, skills to use digital devices, and other experiences.

I developed interview schedules concerning the time and process required to access participants, conducted interviews, and analyzed the data (see Appendix C). During the interview, the participant might spend time to reflect on the questions to provide thoughtful answers, and the researcher needed to interpret data before asking follow-up questions (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). If the interview participants were experienced and comfortable using the virtual communications as opposed to face-to-face mode, Farooq and de Villiers (2017) suggested that the researcher should consider conducting virtual interviews.

Through verbal interviews such as face-to-face, Skype, or telephone interviews, participants were likely to share more stories, potentially including additional data than doing via email, even though these additional data may not always be relevant to the interview questions (see Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Data collected online via text such as email or chat may be more succinct than data collected verbally (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). Marshall and Rossman (2016) advised that the researcher should question whether the data collected from the text-based discussions were as rich as in-person interviews or what intuitive inferences might be lost when the data were gathered without actually seeing, sensing, or interacting directly with the participant. Skype had some powerful tools for completing the interviews, including the audio, video, and chat capabilities (De Felice & Janesick, 2015). Bowden and Galindo-Gonzalez suggested that the researcher should establish rapport with participants, ask appropriate questions, listen actively to participants, and close the interview appropriately.

During the verbal interview, I reiterated the purpose of the study as necessary and audio recorded the conversation using Audacity (Version 2.1.3), a computer application which works with Macintosh computer to record sounds through a built-in input device. I also proposed exchanging emails at the later time to follow up the data I gathered from the participants' responses in the first interviews. At the end of each interview, I asked whether the participant had further information he or she could to share. Morse (2015) suggested that participants should be invited to the member checking to ensure accuracy and improve the validity of the study. I sent a summary of my interpretations to the participants for review and comments once the initial analysis was completed,.

In addition to in-depth interviews, I also expanded data collected from the interview with company data or archival documents such as corporate magazines, newsletters, websites, and SNS pages. Analyzing documents was a useful technique for the researcher to perform triangulation (Yin, 2018). Internal organizational documents of multinationals were difficult to obtain due to confidentiality, but these documents might often provide additional insights relating to the successful management of a multicultural workforce because these documents could provide an additional layer of data that were likely to help build an understanding of the phenomena under investigation (Farooq & de Villiers, 2017). Combining multiple sources of evidence or different methods to gather evidence could enhance the validity of the data and credibility of the results of the study (Larrinaga, 2017). I investigated company documents, such as business magazines, home pages, and SNS sites.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative researchers might audio record data during the interview to assist in capturing and editing data electronically (Bowden & Galindo-Gonzalez, 2015). I used NVivo, a computer-assisted qualitative statistical program, Microsoft Excel, a spreadsheet application, and Audacity, a program which works with Macintosh computers to record sounds through a built-in input device, to manage and organize data to edit and analyzed raw data. Using NVivo, I transcribed the interview data and analyzed themes and codes. The use of NVivo provided clear, concise, and well-formatted data useful to document coding procedures into a logical output (see Nelson, 2016).

Almarri and Abuhijleh (2017) noted that the researcher could use NVivo software to identifythemes by analyzing non-numerical, unstructured data and categorizing them. Through thematic analysis, the researcher could also detect recurring codes related to the research topic and could store data according to various criteria, such as context, theme, and time, and could be retrieved, searched, grouped, modeled, and classified (Almarri & Abuhijleh, 2017). After completing the interviews and document reviews, the data were organized and stored in NVivo. I placed all information and data in a primary folder titled *Walden Research Data*.

To maintain confidentiality and to protect participants' data, I assigned alphanumeric codes to all participants and companies of the study and protected data and documents by storing all files in a single locked filing cabinet. For electronic data, I stored all files in a password-protected folder on a computer, to which I only had access., I would destroy all raw files 5 years after the publication of this study.

Data Analysis

In this qualitative multiple case study, I used triangulation with various data sources. The researcher perform triangulation by using different types of data, views, concepts, or theories to ensure the results are trustworthy and reliable to enhance validity, reliability, and accuracy of the study results (Annansingh & Howell, 2016; Morse, 2015). There are four types of triangulation: investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, data source triangulation, and methodological triangulation (Gaus, 2017). I used methodological triangulation. The researcher can study a single phenomenon for more in-depth analysis by using multiple data collection methods through methodological triangulation (Annansingh & Howell, 2016; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher could improve the reliability of the data analysis by developing themes from multiple lines of evidence, including field notes and complementary sources of information from participant observation, interview responses, and organizational document reviews (Larrinaga, 2017). Morse (2015) stated that the results should theoretically be reliable if the researcher obtained the same results after conducting two methods to study the phenomenon,. With multiple approaches to a single phenomenon, methodological triangulation could help the researcher validate findings and explain or eliminate some unessential information (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

As part of the methodological triangulation, I performed member checking and reviewed company documents to gain necessary confirmation to increase confidence in interpretation and demonstrate the commonality of statements (see Pompeii, 2015; Yazan, 2015). Member checking is a process where the researcher provides the

participants with interpretations of their responses to confirm or correct the data and to obtain additional information (Morse, 2015). Once I completed an initial analysis, I emailed my interpretations to each participant for review and commentary to assure that the results were accurate and reflecting their experiences. Combining methodological triangulation and member checking, I aimed to ensure the data and analysis were comprehensive and thorough exploration of the phenomenon under study.

Yin (2018) suggested that a qualitative researcher should step through five phases to analyze the data: (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding the data collected from multiple participants to generate empirically based findings (Yazan, 2015). Through the five steps, the researcher may discover patterns, insights, or concepts by manipulating or juxtaposing the data collected from different participants when analyzing data (Yin, 2018). The researcher may use coding as the primary analytic technique (Almarri & Abuhijleh, 2017). Annansingh and Howell (2016) advised the researcher should include names, significant issues, or categories found in the interview scripts that might be pertinent to the research question. The process of coding into categories could help distinguish specific patterns from each participant's experiences and would be the first step in processes of conceptualization, synthesis, and abstraction (Morse, 2015). I transcribed the audio recordings of each interview and stored data in computer productivity tools such as Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel. Using computer software was useful to identify and analyze common themes that have emerged during the interview process (see De Felice & Janesick, 2015; Nelson, 2016).

I also used a qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) to assist in coding and discovering themes. NVivo was a QDAS that researchers used to deposit electronically collected data for easier coding and identification of themes according to various criteria such as context, theme, and time (Almarri & Abuhijleh, 2017; Martinus & Hedgcock, 2015; Nelson, 2016). Farooq and de Villiers (2017) suggested that the analysis of the data should include checking for the commonalities between participant statements and the conceptual framework grounded in the study. After completing coding and theme identifications, I reviewed the collected data through the lens of the conceptual framework to analyze the themes to find similarities, commonalities, and patterns arising from the collected data. Similarities, differences, commonalities, and patterns in identified themes were helpful in a more diverse analytical scrutiny of the study (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

Reliability and Validity

The reliability and validity are criteria used to judge the soundness of a qualitative study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In qualitative studies, the researcher should assess the reliability and validity of the results and conclusion because the researcher is likely to encounter various conditions that may influence the progress of a case study and may exist outside the researcher's control making it challenging for the researcher to advance the study as designed (Larrinaga, 2017). Abro et al. (2015) suggested the triangulation using multiple methodologies and data sources could make research findings more valid and reliable. In this section, I illustrated how I established the reliability and validity of the study.

Reliability

A qualitative researcher can associate the reliability of the research with the notion of replicability or the consistency of research findings (Gaus, 2017). Yin (2018) stated that the goal to enhance the reliability was to minimize the errors and biases in a study. The study might be reliable if the researcher could obtain the same results when conducting the research using the same procedure (Sato, 2016). Larrinaga (2017) suggested that maintaining the chain of evidence of the findings could enable other researchers to reconstruct the case and make the research more reliable. The researcher can support the findings to improve its reliability by conducting triangulations or examining a single phenomenon by investigating multiple data sources to attain data saturation (Abro et al., 2015; Fusch & Ness, 2015). The researcher may be able to confirm that the data collected is not due to specific circumstances or chance (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

I used triangulation to explore the replicability of the study findings and to enhance the reliability of the study. The researcher could employ data source triangulation by using a variety of data sources to determine whether the case the researcher investigated might be consistent at all times (Annansingh & Howell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 2015). The researcher could explore different levels and perspectives of the same phenomenon through triangulation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). By comparing the data with different types of evidence on the same issue, the researcher may be able to assess the trustworthiness of the findings and analyses of the data collected (Annansingh & Howell, 2016).

Marshall and Rossman (2016) and Pompeii (2015) recommended other methods to ensure the credibility and dependability of the study, such as member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking refers to the sharing of data and interpretations with interview participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 2015). Peer debriefing refers to the discussion of emergent findings with critical friends or knowledgeable research colleagues to obtain reactions to the coding, case summaries, analytic memos written during data analysis, and next-to-final drafts (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I employed member checking and peer debriefing methodologies to ensure that my interpretations and analyses of the data collected were accurate and reliable.

Validity

Credibility. Credibility refers to the extent to which the results of qualitative research are credible and believable (Venkatesh et al., 2016). The credibility of research results might become low when the researcher ignored conflicting findings (Sato, 2016). Qualitative researchers may be able to maximize the credibility by engaging in the study for a prolonged period, sharing data and interpretations with participants through member checking, triangulating through collecting data from multiple sources, and discussing emergent findings with other researchers to ensure that analyses are accurate (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Venkatesh et al. (2016) suggested that during the interview the researcher might help improve data credibility by asking every question in the prescribed order per the interview protocol. I maintained the credibility of the study by member checking, triangulation, peer debriefing, and the interview protocol.

Confirmability. Confirmability is parallel to objectivity (Gaus, 2017), for which the researcher should demonstrate by confirming the analyses of the data and findings by other people or other studies through member checking and peer debriefing (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Morse, 2015). The validity of a qualitative study can be achieved by using a triangulation (Gaus, 2017). I used triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing to maintain the objectivity of the study. Pompeii (2015) illustrated that the evaluation of the objectivity of research should involve reflection on the research, the researcher's interpretations, an assessment of the quality of the data, and how the researcher's personal biases might influence the assessment. The researcher might be able to enhance the confirmability by addressing other criteria in concert, such as credibility, transferability, and dependability (Pompeii, 2015).

Transferability. Transferability is parallel to generalizability and refers to the degree to which the study's findings are useful to explain other similar situations or phenomena with similar research questions or questions of practice (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Venkatesh et al., 2016). The transferability of qualitative findings to other populations is one of the main weaknesses of case studies (Larrinaga, 2017; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Venkatesh et al. (2016) suggested that the researcher should pay attention to data collection strategies such as the longitudinal study to enable other researchers to apply findings to their studies. Cavalcanti (2017) recommended prolonged engagement, persistent observation, or collecting as much data as possible to enhance the transferability of the study. The researcher should also avoid including a one-time phenomenon which may hamper the validity and transferability of the study results

(Fusch & Ness, 2015). I adhered to the research design and interviewed business leaders who had managed diverse workforces of the internationally merged organizations successfully for more than 5 years since the mergers initially took place or started international business operations under joint venture or partnership to enhance transferability. I used Hofstede's (2001) national cultural indices to find organizations that have acquired foreign workers whose countries of origin were culturally distant from the acquirers' countries of origin.

Data saturation. I ensured data saturation within the interview responses, participant observation, and document analysis. Data saturation refers to the point at which the researcher has enough information to replicate the study and observes no new information or themes in the data from additional interviews or cases (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Sato, 2016). Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions during in-depth interviews and member checking to reach data saturation (Boddy, 2016). Teerikangas and Irrmann (2016) suggested that the researcher should perform a cross-case analysis when the researcher judged that little further insight could be gained from further data gathering. I used methodological triangulation of the data such as in-depth semistructured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis of publicly available data sources such as company websites, SNS pages, and media articles, and performed a cross-case analysis to find out similarities and differences between each identified theme in the dataset.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I elaborated the research procedures I planned to conduct for the study regarding the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, and ethical considerations, data collection techniques, data analysis procedures, and methods for maintaining reliability and validity. Section 2 also included an explanation of why a qualitative, multiple case study was more suitable than other methods and designs to explore business strategies that successful business leaders adopted to manage and integrate multicultural workforce after implementing cross-border M&As that national cultural differences between the acquirers and targets often hindered business owners from managing diverse work environment. Section 2 concluded the proposal section. Upon passing the oral defense and obtaining IRB approval, I proceeded to Section 3 with data collection and analysis. Section 3 encompassed the findings and results of this research, application to professional practice, implications for social change, and suggestions for action, potential future studies, reflections, and conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore strategies the leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers following cross-border M&As using the knowledge of different national cultures. Participants in the study were eight integration managers who had experience in integrating a culturally diverse workforce acquired from a high context culture into the acquiring workforce of a low context, home-country culture after closing the the deals of a cross-border M&A. I analyzed interview responses from the eight integration managers who represented seven acquiring firms in the United States, Canada, France, and Norway to answer the research question. I conducted methodological triangulation by examining publicly available company documents, including company websites, SNS pages, and media articles.

Three major themes emerged from the data analysis that revealed the postacquisition cultural integration challenges induced by differences in national cultures and strategies that the participants used to resolve the challenges. In the first theme, participants identified differences in transparency levels between diverse workers as a barrier to building a collaborative environment in the workplace where workers could share information and exchange open conversations to create value. The second theme involved complexities in aligning the acquired workers' business practices and working styles with those of the acquiring firm workers, and the third theme revealed decision-making challenges and solutions related to different communication styles between the high context and low context cultures. Participants highlighted cross-cultural education

for both acquired and acquiring firm workers and relationship building as the most important considerations to ensure creation of new value after cross-border M&As. This section includes the presentation of the findings, applications to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for action and further research, and reflections on the study.

Presentation of the Findings

The overarching research question was the following: What strategies do leaders of ICT companies use to integrate diverse workers after cross-border M&As? I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions to generate the necessary narrative data to perform thematic analysis based on five-phase thematic analysis as outlined by Yin (2018). Yin suggested that a qualitative researcher should follow five phases when analyzing data. The five steps are (a) compiling, (b) disassembling, (c) reassembling, (d) interpreting, and (e) concluding the data collected from multiple participants to generate empirical findings (Roberts & Brown, 2019). The researcher should follow these five steps to discover patterns, insights, or concepts by manipulating or juxtaposing the data collected from different interviewees (Yin, 2018).

Eight business executives representing ICT companies in the United States, Canada, France, and Norway participated in the study. Participants had experience in integrating a diverse workforce created after implementing international acquisitions of foreign targets mostly in Asian countries. Each integration manager was coded as IM1 through IM8. Table 2 is a summary of the demographic information of the eight participants, and Table 3 shows national cultural distances between the acquirers and

their acquisition targets based on Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultural

indices.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Title in company	Industry	Acquirer's location	Target's locations
IM1	Senior executive	Simulation software	Canada	India, Malaysia, and Singapore
IM2	Advisor to chief executive officer (CEO) & chief operation officer (COO)	Semiconductor	United States	Japan
IM3	President and founder	Digital media	Norway	Poland and United Kingdom
IM4	Senior vice president	Semiconductor	United States	Japan
IM5	Department director	Electronic commerce	United States	Japan
IM6	Division chief	Internet technology	United States	Japan
IM7	Country manager	Computer services	France	United Kingdom and United States
IM8	Vice president	Mobile application	Canada	China and Japan

Table 3

National Cultural Indices of Acquirers and Targets

Country	Region	PD	UA	IC	MF	LTO
China	Asia	80	30	20	66	87
India	Asia	77	40	48	56	51
Japan	Asia	54	92	46	95	88
Malaysia	Asia	100	36	26	50	41
Singapore	Asia	74	8	20	48	72
Poland	Europe	68	93	60	64	38
France	Europe	68	86	71	43	63
Norway	Europe	31	50	69	8	35
United Kingdom	Europe	35	35	89	66	51
Canada	North America	39	48	80	52	36
United States	North America	40	46	91	62	26

Participants responded to 10 open-ended interview questions, as well as follow-up probes used during each interview to elicit further detail and insight. Using NVivo 12, I coded each interview transcript and created a total of 53 codes for observed integration challenges and strategic solutions during the thematic analysis. Based on Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national cultural theory, I clustered the codes by nature of the answers, relationships, patterns, similarities, and commonalities. Three themes emerged after clustering the codes: workplace transparencies, business practices and working

styles, and communication styles. Under each theme, codes were grouped into two to four

subthemes based on the nature of the issues and similarities, as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4

Thematic Hierarchy of Challenges and Strategies for Cultural Integrations

Themes	Subthemes	Codes	Related dimensions
Theme 1: Workplace transparencies	Challenges in sharing information and updating work status	(a) Open vs. closed, (b) Work status, (c) Cultural education/training program, (d)Team performance, (e) Cultural nuances, (f) Pride, (g) Communication tools, (h) Alpha employee, (i) relationship building, (j) Tacit conversation,	PD, MF, IC,
	Interpersonal rivalry	(a) Assertiveness, (b) Intraorganization worker exchange, (c) Liaison, Alpha employee, (d) Upfront conversation, (d) Harsh remarks, (e) Trust	PD, MF
	Background criticism against foreign managers	(a) Mixed emotions, (b) Cross-functional team, (c) Liaison, (d) Alpha employee	MF, IC
Theme 2: Business practices and working styles	Differences in business plan cycles	(a) Long-term view, (b) Quarterly based financial report, (c) Cultural education/training program, (d) Data-driven decision method, (e) Flexibilities in long-term plans	LTO
	Task-oriented versus process-oriented	(a) Task conflicts vs. process conflicts, (b) Efficiency, (c) Training program, (d) Group consensus, (e) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), (f) Spillovers, (g) Knowledge transfer,	LTO, IC, PD
	Acknowledging differences	(a) Ethics, (b) DNA-level differences, (c) Physically work together, (d) Mental filter, (e) Work as a group approach	PD, IC,
	Relationship building with acquired workers	(a) Rapport, (b) Time consuming, (c) Humility,	LTO
Theme 3: Communication styles	Keen awareness of hierarchies	(a) Hierarchy, (b) Slow decisions, (c) Miscommunications, (d) Acculturation speed, (e) Silence during meetings, (f) Open conversation, (g) Cultural education for both managers and subordinates, (h) worker exchange, mentoring,	PD, UA
	Detail level of information and decision-making speed	(a) Accuracies, (b) Trust/distrust, (c) Delayed decisions, (e) Repetitive questions, (f) Education program, (g) Individual meeting.	UA, PD

Challenges and Strategies of Cultural Integration Related to National Cultures

Participants addressed what they observed as disagreements or conflicts related to different national cultures among the diverse workforce composed of acquirer acquired workers after cross-border M&As. Three distinct patterns emerged after analyzing the responses from each participant concerning the acquired workers' behaviors that appeared to have created multiple barriers for IMs to conduct their cultural integrations: workplace transparencies, business practices and working styles, and communications styles. When the cross-border acquisition deal was closed in 2011, the then chief executive officer of IM2's organization told the media that he was excited to "welcome the [target's] employees" to the acquirer "family" and expected to "create immediate value for customers, partners, and investors." IM2 mentioned, however, "it rarely happened that the outcomes [of the acquired workers' performance] exceeded the expectations." Jedin and Saad (2016) found that more than 50% of the cross-border M&As were unsuccessful in meeting stakeholders' expectations to create value because of the national cultural differences that could have created conflicts in multicultural management.

The first theme was related to the different levels of transparency in the workplace between the workers of acquiring and acquired firms with eight out of eight (100%) participants reporting that lack of transparency in acquired workers' behaviors, such as less open conversations and the general tendency to become reactive in discussions with managers and share less information with colleagues, as one of the most common challenges that negatively affected integration efforts. IM5 reported a unique

behavior of the acquired workers in high PD and high MF cultures: "on the one hand, they [acquired workers] respect the foreign CEO, but on the other hand, they also have a feeling of contempt." IM4 also mentioned "the U.S. employees from the acquirer often expressed a sense of closeness in the acquired Japanese worker's behavior." Less transparent characters were often observed in high PD, high MF, or low IC cultures where people tend to accept inequality in power distribution, be assertive in human interactions, and avoid expressing personal opinions in a group (Hofstede, 2011; Khlif, 2016; Maranga & Sampayo, 2015).

The second theme involved different business practices and work styles that eight (100%) participants reported in response to the questions related to MF, IC, and LTO as substantial issues for getting firm workers to collaborate with acquired workers in joint projects or doing business as a team. IM3 mentioned an expected challenge that an acquired worker from a high PD culture showed an overly proud attitude regarding his ranking in the office by saying "the [acquired] U.K. executive was surprised to share a workspace and sit together with other colleagues because of his [higher] rank." The U.K. executive asked IM3 to distinguish him from others by providing a private office. IM8 noticed a strong awareness of gender roles among the acquired workers in the high MF and noted "the male workers in Japan were not as deferential to her [female manager] as I would expect them to be." Workers in high MF countries assume inequality in gender roles, and the workers in high PD countries usually accept inequality in power distribution among the workers (Hofstede, 2015).

The third theme was different communication styles of high context culture workers, which eight (100%) participants noted in connection with PD and UA as obstacles to deal with acquired workers in day-to-day activities. IM4 said "subordinates in Japan may be accustomed to direct or prescriptive orders and directions on how to do the things," whereas "the U.S.-based manager may want to give some freedom to the employees to think about how they wish to accomplish the tasks." When communicating with acquired Japanese workers, IM5 shared his experience that he had to "communicate everything by email" every time IM5 needed to instruct the acquired workers what to do. Japan is a high UA and relatively high PD country as opposed to the United States, where people are relatively low in UA and PD levels (Hofstede, 2011). Although the workers in the United States might be tolerant in ambiguous or unstructured environments (C. J. Chang et al., 2016), Japanese workers might feel threatened by ambiguous or uncertain communications (Curtis et al., 2016).

Eight out of eight (100%) participants shared strategies or measurements used to improve the worker relationships by implementing cultural understanding education for both acquired and acquiring firm workers that involved various levels of personnel within their organizations. IM4 said "through cross-functional discussions, members could create an atmosphere conducive for knowledge transfer, and we forced the members to continue working in a cross-functional team." Cross-cultural training might be helpful for individuals functioning in positions of international business to avoid potential harm to the organization (Taylor & Zhou, 2019). IM4 stated that "both managers [from the acquirer] and the subordinates [from the target] should be educated on some cultural

nuances." IM6 mentioned in association with integrating acquired Japanese workers to the U.S. workers from the acquirer that "I tried to adjust the American side more so just because I felt that having the team will work together as opposed to against each other would help foster team growth." Cross-cultural training would be more effective if it were given to both the acquirer and the acquired foreign target (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Lawson & Shepherd, 2019). To reduce the risk of cultural clash and integration failure, educating the merged workers with high cross-cultural intelligence might be imperative for a multicultural organization to consider implementing in the early stage of postacquisition integration (Kaleramna, Saharan, & Singh, 2019).

Theme 1: Workplace Transparencies

Participants discussed the challenges related to worker transparency concerning the behaviors as to (a) information sharing, (b) interpersonal competitions and rivalries, and (c) criticism by gossip as some common phenomena they observed associated with PD, MF, and IC differences. Eight out of eight (100%) participants reported workplace transparency issues as a major challenge to integrate workers. Four participants (50%) commented that some acquired workers in a high MF culture like Japan tended to display relatively closed attitudes toward sharing information with colleagues and managers. Although American workers "were very communicative and very open," according to IM7, IM4 noted his observation of the acquired Japanese workers who appeared to be "hesitant in sharing information." IM5 commented that the information was sometimes viewed as "power" or "weapon" in Japan, which was a "challenge for Americans." Information sharing is an essential aspect of workplace transparency that is imperative for

workers to be open to exchanging feedback between each other and aligning with the same goals of the organization (Haesevoets et al., 2019). Challenges in encouraging workers to share information might become a major barrier for IMs to conduct worker integration because information sharing is considered an important resource that can help realize synergies and accelerate innovation (Y. Chang et al., 2015).

Four (50%) participants described hidden rivalries potentially existing among colleagues that often hindered harmonious cooperation between them. According to the IM4, while workers in the United States were "competitive about winning against competitors in business," the workers in Japan were "more aggressive in taking pride in winning and demonstrating they were the best players in the industry." The existence of rivalry between individuals and the notion that winning in competition is important would be more pronounced in high MF cultures where people were more assertive (Hofstede, 2011). The leader might be required to moderate interpersonal rivalry between the workers when integrating acquired workers in high MF cultures into an acquiring organization in a low MF culture because the rivalry could discourage information sharing and the creation of synergies and value (Y. Chang et al., 2015).

Two (25%) participants expressed difficulty in dealing with criticisms or gossips against managers made in the backgrounds by acquired Japanese workers in low IC cultures and perceived a sense of closedness in their attitudes toward foreign managers and workers from acquiring firms. IM5 said "you need to play hard with Japanese employees because you're never gonna be their friends, you're never going to be their equal, or you're never going to be part of their tribe." IM4 commented "we often had

challenges in understanding what direction the acquired Japanese workers wished to move." Openness would be an underpinning of workplace transparency and a key to enhanced team performance and collaborative climate (Shum, Gatling, Book, & Bai, 2019). IM4's company value statement noted "we draw out the best in each other, recognizing that diversity of backgrounds and experience are key strengths. We all win when we support each other." Integration leaders also need to consider achieving workplace transparency by acknowledging and following acquired workers' unique traits, because forcing the acquired workers on transparency without understanding their values may cause worker stress (Haesevoets et al., 2019), which may lead to poor team performance (Shaukat et al., 2017).

Sharing information and updating work status. Six participants (75%) responded regarding the challenges associated with different behaviors concerning the information sharing between acquired workers and acquiring firm workers. IM4 mentioned "many U.S. workers appear to be more open and transparent about sharing information, whereas the acquired Japanese workers tend to display relatively closed behaviors toward information sharing." IM4's company value statement noted "we share information and encourage different views in an open and honest environment." Workers in high MF or masculine, high PD, or collectivistic cultures may display more closed attitudes toward disclosing information and less team collaboration because of the high levels of assertiveness and tendency to encourage competitions between the members inside the same team or the cultural group and those outside (Hofstede, 2011; Khlif, 2016; Maali & Al-Attar, 2017; Rao & Pearce, 2016). IM4's concern about less

information sharing attitude of the acquired workers was reasonable. Workers could create a nonconflictive environment and cope with uncertainties related to new ideas by sharing information (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017).

When supervising the workers collaborating on a project that involved various staff across functional boundaries in the organization, IM4 observed closed attitudes in acquired workers in high context culture workers in Japan into the acquirer's workforce in a relatively low context culture in the United States. IM4 described,

> The U.S. employees from the acquirer who joined a team in the target in Japan reported on a sense of closeness in the acquired Japanese worker's behavior. The U.S. workers had challenges in understanding which directions the acquired Japanese workers wished to move, whether or not they had any specific business ideas in mind, whether they were making progress in the projects, or whether they were just not interested in sharing information to solve the problems better. If other team members asked for work related information from acquired Japanese workers, they tended to be hesitant in disclosing information to colleagues and did not communicate openly with them.

Four (50%) participants associated the value of cultural education with their successful management of less transparent acquired workers in high PD cultures. IM1 said "I sent some groups of engineers and managers from Montreal and let them sit together with workers in our subsidiaries in Asia for conducting a training program there." IM1's company profile on its SNS pages noted that its business success was the "result of the diverse ideas" brought up by employees. An IM would be able to achieve a cross-border

acquisition successfully if the IM could foster cultural educations as part of the integration process (Hirsch, 2015). According to IM4's company SNS pages, IM4's organization supported the creation of "affinity network groups" within the organization that provided "education on how to work alongside one another." IM4 shared a successful strategy he used in cross-cultural training and said,

> We assigned some U.S. based managers from the acquiring company and the acquired employees from the target in Japan to relocate to the reciprocal countries and join work teams. These foreign members became seeding staff who helped the teammates to get used to different cultures and practices in the reciprocal organization.

> IM5 said "the information is viewed as a power in Japan, and the one who has the information is seen as the most powerful person. People in Japan use information as a weapon. So, I think that is a challenge for Americans." IM7 responded regarding less transparent behavior perceived in management in a high PD culture when IM7's company in France initially closed the deal of a cross-border acquisition of an American company. IM7 said,

> I thought the team members in the United States were very communicative and open. However, at the time our CEO based in France first announced [about the M&A deal], there was a very minimal explanation as to why and what it would mean going forward so that American workers seemed anxious about their own life.

Workers in low PD cultures, such as the United States, exhibit better team collaborations and trust in fellow team members regardless of their social status (Rao & Pearce, 2016). Japan and France are higher in PD levels than the United States and are also more collectivistic (Hofstede, 1983, 2001). High PD workers show characteristics to emphasize responsibility to insiders as opposed to external people, which may make the Japanese and French workers tend to disclose less information to outsiders (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017).

IM1 said,

To educate the acquired workers in high PD cultures in Malaysia, Singapore, and India regarding how they could work together to achieve similar software development projects, I showed other teams at the headquarters had completed in the North American market.

IM1 shared his experience of successful attempts to reconcile tensions among acquired workers in high PD cultures in Asia over better positions within the group companies by providing a series of training programs to the acquired workers in Asia to disseminate some essential collaboration cultures practiced in the headquarters using some case studies. An organization must train people with high cross-cultural intelligence to meet the increasing demand for international talent and to reduce the risk of cross-border business failure (Kaleramna et al., 2019).

IM4 also commented on the closedness demonstrated by the acquired Japanese employees, which the participant observed as their pride in accomplishing work assignments without assistance. IM4 noted that "the Japanese workers might want to be

the best so that they won't need help from others," whereas the workers in the United States "do not necessarily take pride in demonstrating to be the best, although they prefer winning against competitors." IM4 and IM5 commented that the U.S. employees did not hesitate to ask for help when they needed or if they faced uncertainties on assigned projects. IM4 said,

> We provided training programs for the acquired workers from the target in Japan. Through the training of the use of such various tools we had, each Japanese employee might have started feeling as if they were suggested to accomplish the jobs by him or herself as opposed to asking for help. The U.S. supervisors need to make the acquired Japanese workers understand that they could work with others on projects and could find colleagues to help.

> Cooperation and caring values were associated more with feminine cultures (Hofstede, 2011), which focused on a supportive climate by sharing information and promoting collaborations (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017). IM5 said,

> You need to create the rulebook. But at the same time, you have to be cognizant of who they are. And I would say just create a good reward system that rewards individuals for their achievement. I think that's probably one of the best ways you could do it and then get all the Japanese lieutenants under you behind you and have them [alpha employees] work directly with other Japanese employees and make them do all the long term drinking all the relationship building all the hard kind of for things is. You have to be the hero not if you're a hero you have to be almost like a super executive that's going to lead them to a better future. [Let the

Japanese understand he] can't do it all by himself. He needed people to help him get his jobs done right.

IM3 dealt with software engineers from Poland, who often impressed IM3 that they expected to receive more specific, detailed instructions when working on projects with acquiring firm workers in Norway but did not ask what they did not understand explicitly. IM3 found the Polish workers' inclination "not to ask for detailed instructions frankly" challenging because "the Norwegians usually asked what they needed to know openly and frankly." IM3 mentioned to Polish workers "we [Norwegian workers] were not as detailed as you [Polish workers] might assume" and clearly advised the Polish workers to "ask questions" more frankly. Miscommunications might lead to task and process conflicts between culturally different workers (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015).

IM3 reported "it is important to explain that we [Norwegian and Polish workers] are actually different [from each other] and think in the different ways." IM3 emphasized that an IM working with acquired workers from high PD and high UA cultures needed to explain cultural differences clearly so that they could better collaborate with their colleagues from the countries of origin of the organizations. IM3 commented "it is not to say that either culture is right or wrong, but I think two parties should understand each other correctly to grow the organization together." To supervise the multicultural workforce, the integration leader's various efforts and proactive arrangements in encouraging employees to exchange views may be necessary (Teerikangas & Irrmann, 2016).

IM2 identified that workers and the manager in a high PD culture sometimes

agreed on the outputs or outcomes in the day-to-day interactions in an implicit manner,

which might make them less transparent about processes. IM2 commented that the

implicit agreement between the workers and managers was often problematic. IM2 said

"it rarely happens that the outcomes exceed expectations." Korovyakovskaya and Chong

(2016) suggested that the multicultural IMs should take actions to improve workplace

transparency if they recognized the presence of less transparent atmosphere between the

acquired managers and workers. Less transparent culutres in an internationally merged

organization could cause relationship conflicts between workers from the acquirer and

the target (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016). IM2 also said,

> Starting with understanding and respecting the differences in behaviors, then
>
> gradually through on-the-job training within the hybrid working groups, we
>
> educated and trained Japanese workers to transform their mindset [overly
>
> concerned with hierarchy] and working manner to more Americanized [less
>
> hierarchical] manner.

Interpersonal rivalry problems. Less transparent behaviors may be one of the

most typical characteristics of the workers in high MF cultures because the worker in a

high MF might feel awkward with confessing one's situation frankly to protect own

position (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). Four (50%) IMs observed that the workers appeared

to be more inclined to compete against each other in the workplace and become proud in

proving their aggressiveness in high MF or high PD cultures and noted the importance of

leaders' support in mediating relationship conflicts between the acquiring firm workers

and the acquired workers. IM1 described,

> Every time we had a meeting with group leaders of subsidiaries in Malaysia,
>
> Singapore, and India, I observed that they frequently looked at each other and
>
> tried to convince [the other] that one had better knowledge and skills to handle
>
> projects.

IM4 noted that great pride or ambitious dispositions observed in the acquired

workers in a high MF culture in Japan. IM4 said "people in Japan generally showed a

strong tendency that they wanted to be the best in many aspects whatever they would try

to achieve, especially in delivering the highest of qualities for the products or services."

Comparing with the workers in Japan where the MF level was higher than the United

States, IM4 recognized that the U.S. workers were "not necessarily competitive in taking

pride and in demonstrating they were the best" even though "they were usually

competitive against their competitors in business." IM4's company core values statement

also mentioned "we value people who demonstrate a positive, *can-do* attitude while

collaborating to win." Workers in masculine societies showed a strong inclination on

competition, achievement, and success in the activities they were engaged

(Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017) because earnings, recognition, or advancement

were important for both males and females (Yildiz & Vural, 2019). When an organization

in a feminine culture acquired an organization in a masculine culture, the supervisors

needed to develop strategies to reduce worker stress or emotional exhaustion associated

with relationship conflicts between the acquired and acquiring firm workers' different levels of aggressiveness (Torresl, Alcántara, Rudolph, & Viruell, 2016).

To make changes in the acquired workers' assertive attitudes, IM4 conducted an intraorganization worker exchange program to train some employees from the acquired organizations to become liaisons between the acquirer and the target to bridge communications gaps in between. IM4 explained,

Some employees from the target in Japan were invited to join some teams in the acquirer in the United States to understand better how the acquiring organization was operating. These employees from both organizations became liaisons between the acquirer and the target to bridge communications gaps in between. Similarly, we also identified some important individuals, not executives, from the target in Japan who could adapt more to the acquirer's decision-making style and the operating style. We brought these key individuals to the acquirer and integrated into some work teams at the acquirer for one to two years to reinforce some of the characteristics and attributes useful to work with employees at the acquirer in the United States.

To align the rest of the workers in the acquired target, IM4 provided the successfully trained liaisons with more authoritative powers. IM4 stated,

After spending a couple of years, these Japanese key individuals were moved back to the target side and promoted as supervisors with more responsibilities and more critical roles than before. These key individuals could also distribute the

> lessons they learned and the relationships they built during their terms at the
>
> acquirer throughout the target.

The workers in a high PD culture were more willing to follow the leaders who possessed more power (Y. Chang et al., 2015).

One (12.5%) participant talked about potential rivalry made by the acquired workers in a masculine culture against the manager of the acquiring firm. IM8 said "to some degree, they [acquired workers in Japan] often went off from my directions and suggested a different idea in product designs and seemed to be trying to control the whole project." Many of the companies had objectives to collaborate and create synergies when they conducted cross-border acquisitions as mentioned in IM8's corporate website noting "we started investment and collaborations for expansion of our business into North America and Asian Countries, focusing on Japan first." IM3's corporate website also expressed its strong interest in learning "from international partners." One of the advantages of conducting cross-border acquisitions was to gain access to an international market through the target (Bany-Ariffin et al., 2016; M. Hu & Ngo, 2015; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). Acquired workers' knowledge of the local market could also enhance the firm's competitive position in the market and could lead to the creation of sustainable competitive advantages to survive in the global market (Ahammad et al., 2016; Ai & Tan, 2017). If acquired workers had an assertive, masculine culture, the integration managers in a less masculine culture might need to develop effective strategies to maintain rapport with acquired workers because relationship engagement was positively associated with an M&A performance in motivating the staff (Jedin & Saad, 2016).

To solve issues connected to the acquired Japanese workers' overconcerned attitudes toward hierarchy, hidden interpersonal rivalries, and less transparent attitudes, IM5 shared experience of assigning an employee from the acquired target who could liaise between the manager, acquirer's workers, and the acquired workers. IM5 noted "the liaison or 'alpha employee' was an open-minded, genuine person accustomed to low PD cultures and admired by most of the rest of the employees in the target." When IM5 wanted to show dissatisfaction with the acquired workers' performance, IM5 could convey negative feedback to the liaison who customized the message for the acquired workers to accept naturally to reduce the chances of reacting negatively by becoming more closed or further increasing the level of awareness of hierarchy. Because the people in high PD cultures would be prone to obey and follow influential people (Curtis et al., 2016), assigning a liaison was an effective way to align less transparent workers who were overly concerned with hierarchies to the acquirer in a low PD culture.

IM5 emphasized the point that honest conversations maintained trust with acquired workers in high UA and collectivistic cultures. A leadership style that involves open and honest communications would be one of the most critical factors leading to integration successes (Osarenkhoe & Hyder, 2015). IM5 noted that showing honest feelings that the integration manager believed to be seen from the acquired workers' perspective was helpful. IM5 said "you [an integration manager] had to become humble, and if you say to your acquired workers that you understand and feel the pain that the acquired worker might be feeling, that might be helpful." IM5 added "sometimes, it was necessary to keep pace with acquired workers and criticize together about the poor

leaders [of the acquirer]." IM5 noted the "humility and honest posture" of the integration

manager "could often reconcile potential criticisms or cold gossips among the acquired

workers in a high UA culture." Trust with people in a different culture evolves over time

through repeated interactions because relationships can mature with interaction

frequency, duration, and the diversity of challenges that partners encounter and face

together (Zaks, 2016). IM5's managers appeared to be in accordance with the

organization's value statement, which noted "we'll celebrate differences and the ways it

can change how we work and lead to bigger wins" and "we'll invite diverse perspectives

and make sure we take on challenges in an honest, open and respectful manner.

To develop trust with the acquired workers, IM8 noted giving harsh remarks to

the workers was necessary when the performance of the acquired workers was not

satisfactory. IM8 said "I communicated [with acquired workers] basically by saying that

this is not what I want. You are not making what I want!" Tran et al. (2016) noted when a

leader from an individualistic culture managed a work team in a collectivistic culture, the

team performance might be low if a level of trust among teammates was low. In a

collectivistic culture, honest and upfront conversations would be important because

workers might avoid questioning directly in authority and often led to poor performance

(Maranga & Sampayo, 2015).

IM8 talked about potential rivalry made by the acquired workers in a masculine

culture against the manager of the acquiring firm. IM8 said "to some degree, they

(acquired workers in Japan) often went off from my directions and suggested a different

idea in product designs and seemed to be trying to control the whole project." One of the

advantages of conducting cross-border acquisitions was to gain access to an international market through the target (Bany-Ariffin et al., 2016; M. Hu & Ngo, 2015; Tripathi & Lamba, 2015). Acquired workers' knowledge of the local market could also enhance the firm's competitive position in the market and could lead to the creation of sustainable competitive advantages to survive in the global market (Ahammad et al., 2016; Ai & Tan, 2017). IM8 appeared to have experienced a challenge that the acquired foreign workers behaved against the intention found on his company's profile, which noted "passion is to invest, create, collaborate, and educate worldwide, embracing the natural environment and cultures of many lands." If workers had an assertive, masculine culture, the integration managers in a less masculine culture might need to develop effective strategies to maintain rapport with acquired workers because relationship engagement was positively associated with an M&A performance in motivating the staff (Jedin & Saad, 2016).

One (12.5%) participant showed appreciation of assertiveness and the tendency of creating an interpersonal rivalry displayed by acquired workers in a masculine culture. IM6 expressed "[acquired] Japanese workers were masculine, and they were very competitive. But it worked for me as a manager because I was also competitive and wanted to take down competitors in a business environment." A news article written on IM6's organization revealed the company's high competitiveness in the job acceptance rate, showing that the company received "over 3 million applications and hired 7000 employees" during 2016, which resulted in "an acceptance rate of 0.2 %." The competitiveness was related to masculine cultures (Hofstede, 2011), where workers

emphasized the work goals and confident attitudes when facing a confrontation or a

challenge (Chang et al., 2015). Conflicts in tasks among team members might be helpful

in fostering team performance if the workers better understood task issues in the team

(Appelhoff et al., 2016). As IM6 practiced, leaders could support the high MF culture

workers' propensity for the interpersonal rivalry to enhance worker performance.

Background criticism against foreign managers. During the interviews, two

(25%) participants repeatedly mentioned that acquired workers in a high context culture

sometimes displayed *mixed emotions* and *closed attitudes* toward managers or the

colleagues who had joined from the acquiring organization. In a highly collectivistic

culture, workers might disclose less information to outsiders because they tended to

prioritize relationships with insiders (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). IM5 said,

> Acquired workers in a low IC [collectivistic] culture showed respect to the
>
> manager and workers came from the acquiring organization when they met in a
>
> face-to-face setting. But when the manager was not present, they seemed to have
>
> criticized the manager and the colleagues of the acquirer for not knowing
>
> adequately about the culture of the host country sometimes harshly.

IM4 talked about frustration with his acquired workers in a collectivistic culture

regarding the difficulty in understanding their minds, ideas, issues, or the directions they

might wish to move, which IM4 and other acquiring firm workers perceived as closeness.

IM4 commented on some successful outcomes from the adoption of cross-

functional teams involving various employees and managers at different levels from both

the acquirer in an individualistic culture and the target in a collective culture to foster

collaborations. IM4's company value statement showed "we treat each other with dignity and respect." Workers of the acquiring and acquired organizations would both need to understand respective national cultures to align themselves with new organizational strategies (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). IM4 mandated the employees to participate in a cross-functional team to boost sharing knowledge and information while IM4 was integrating the acquired Japanese executives and employees. IM4 said,

> We often forced our employees to join cross-functional team meetings between the members of the acquirer in the United States and the target in Japan. We required the members of the cross-functional team to practice some level of openness by assigning them to accomplish tasks on a cross-functional basis so that they could not avoid sharing information across the borders and boundaries between different teams and organizations. By letting the members from different sections at different levels work in a cross-functional team, we spurred knowledge transfer by encouraging the workers to share information proactively.

IM4 reported that, by assembling the members from different sections at different levels to participate in a cross-functional team, IM4 was successful in creating an atmosphere in the organization that promoted team collaborations. IM4 said "members created an atmosphere conducive to transfer knowledge through cross-functional discussions, and we obliged the members to continue working in a cross-functional team until they became comfortable to interact with each other in an open environment." More than 70% of ICT companies used cross-functional teams as an effective means to organize work and execute international projects (Fostering collaboration, 2019).

IM1 also supported the idea of implementing a cross-functional team to help diverse workers create a collaborative work environment. IM1 said "managers, group leaders, technicians, and all other levels cooperated in integration efforts [through cross-functional teams]. Members of both acquiring and acquired sides worked together and understood each party's work process and what we were expecting to achieve together." Cross-functional collaborations could generate a positive effect on the work processes and procedures in an organization that has a culture to foster the creation of innovations in products and services (Locander, Weinberg, & Locander, 2018).

IM5 shared the experience of how he solved the issues connected to acquired workers' less transparent behaviors linked to overconcerned attitudes with hierarchy and hidden interpersonal rivalries by assigning an employee from the acquired target, who could liaise between the manager, acquirer's workers, and the acquired workers. IM5 noted "the liaison or an 'alpha employee' to convey negative feedback to the acquired workers so that they could accept the feedback without displaying negative reactions by becoming more closed or further increasing the level of awareness of hierarchy. The people in high PD cultures were prone to obey and follow influential people (Curtis et al., 2016). Assigning a liaison was an effective way for IM5 to manage less transparent workers in a low PD culture. Table 5 shows the frequency of the participants' responses related to worker transparency challenges.

Table 5

Workplace Transparencies (Frequency)

Participant	Interview questions	References
IM1	1, 2, 8	6
IM2	1, 2	6
IM3	2, 11, 3	2
IM4	1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8	13
IM5	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9	21
IM6	5, 6	3
IM7	7	1
IM8	7	1

Theme 2: Business Practices and Working Styles

Leaders of acquiring firms often face challenges stemmed from different business processes practiced in the targets' host countries as well as from different mentality (Y. Chen et al., 2016). All (100.0%) participants recognized challenges related to different business practices and other work styles between the workers of acquired and acquiring firms in connection with national cultural dimensions, MF, IC, and LTO. Conflicts in tasks, processes, and relationships would be significant predictors of potential miscommunications in a culturally diverse workplace (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015). The differences in cultures and business practices could have both positive and negative impacts on international business collaborations, and if an integration manager did not recognize the target's tendencies, it could lead to tense situations (Taylor & Zhou, 2019).

Differences in business plan cycles. Long-term and short-term orientation could cause troubles if operating with the opposite partner without understanding the characters

(Taylor & Zhou, 2019). Six (75.0%) participants stated that acquired workers' different views of business plan cycles were problematic in managing a joint project that involved acquirers' headquarters and executives and employees from targets. IM4 mentioned that "the U.S. based workers often expressed frustrations with acquired Japanese workers who had a long-term oriented mind" because "the U.S. based workers executed strategies and sought results in a much shorter cycle than the Japanese workers would." Some managers and employees in high LTO cultures ascribed a high value to future outcomes and focused more on long-term goals rather than short-term results as opposed to the people in low LTO or short-term oriented cultures (Sternad & Kennelly, 2017). IM4 mentioned,

> We found that Japanese firms typically plan strategies on a 5 to 10-year term. By contrast, the businesspeople in the United States usually review their business activities on a quarterly basis because they are generally obliged to report on financials to their shareholders every quarter. When the Japanese workers from the target brought business proposals, the U.S. management turned down because the return cycle estimated on the proposal would not be short enough.

IM4's comment appeared to be aligned with one of the slogans found on its company value statement, which stated "we are accountable for delivering our commitments on time with highest quality. . . we work intelligently, with a sense of urgency." The managers and shareholders in the United States would focus on how their current actions and decisions would result in a relatively quick payoff for the business (Taylor & Zhou, 2019).

IM2 also pointed out the quarterly based financial report required for a U.S. public company as one of the most significant challenges to work with acquired workers in long-term oriented Japanese workers. IM2 mentioned,

> My observation was the difference in time base or time scale of business. A U.S. public company is rather required to focus on short-term goals because of the quarterly based financial performance reporting. Therefore, the U.S. workers had more sensitivity to such a timeline than acquired workers in Japan.

Both IM2 and IM4 reported that, to convince the value of acquisition to the shareholders, the acquirer in the United States needed to set plans and goals that all teams from product development to manufacturing could meet the timelines. If workers from the target were unable to adapt this, the entire organization could encounter a challenge to operate. Postacquisition integration required well-planned strategies to reduce risk and creating value to shareholder wealth (Hu & Ngo., 2015) because acquirers could fail in producing significant returns if consolidation strategies after the acquisitions were unsuccessful (Reddy et al., 2016).

IM3 also admitted that most Norwegian organizations had a short-term oriented business mind because "[management in Norway] were expected to report to shareholders every month or every week with better results than they reported in the previous term." Conversely, business people in high LTO cultures, such as China, Japan, or Korea, tended to emphasize on higher growth rates and developing innovation capacities by encouraging workers to invest time in achieving long-term success in the future as opposed to the workers in low LTO cultures such as the countries in North

America or Europe (Andrijauskienė, & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Damic, Stulec, & Naletina, 2019; Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). IM6 stated,

> As a software company [in the United States], we are participating in a competitive market where things moved very quickly so that the workers needed to make progress consistently. The acquired workers from the Japanese team seemed to hardly realize the fact the U.S. team members were not only focusing on the short-term results but were also thinking about investing time in the long-term goals.

> Regardless of what might happen later in the future, some managers in a low LTO culture might think that not achieving the expected outcome immediately would be a great status loss (Hofstede, 2015). Managers in the United States were more likely to engage in the short-term tactics of positive earnings management and the restriction of R&D expenses (Miller & Xu, 2019).

Five (62.5%) participants showed support on the needs of an integration manager to include a training program to educate on the acquirer's business practices, particularly when the target was located in a high LTO culture. IM4 said "by letting the acquired workers understand the reality and removing the cultural nuances, not just telling the concepts, we practically educated them." In a high LTO culture, business people would pay more attention to the status in the future, and business decisions were inclined to adopt long-term programs (Stoermer et al., 2016). IMs in a low MF and low LTO cultures might struggle with educating the acquired workers in high LTO cultures during the integration phases and creating an open environment that could foster information

sharing, transparent attitudes, faster decisions, and establishing goals on a short-term basis.

IM6 had frequent meetings with the Japanese team and explained that the U.S. team was not only focusing on the short-term strategies but also looking at the whole picture of the project when making decisions. Agreements in the decision-making process could inspire behavior to seek agreement but could hamper team effectiveness (Parayitam & Papenhausen, 2016). IM6 said "to get them to understand, I allowed the Japanese teams to take part in the overall business planning to help a long-term strategy." Workers in a high LTO culture might appreciate learning from other cultures because their characteristics encouraged to have a long-term view and higher innovation capacities allowing to adopt new methods or systems (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017).

To respond to the general needs for reporting financial status on the quarterly basis of a U.S. public company, IM2 commented "this was a 100% educational issue. We had the acquired Japanese workers engaged in timeline-based operations." Regarding the problem of acquired workers' ignorance of the quarterly based reporting requirement for U.S. public companies, IM4 took a data-driven communication with acquired management to highlight the ROI that the acquirer was expected to achieve over certain periods and convince the shareholders. IM4 said,

> We used various data to show the importance of meeting timelines to the acquired employees from the target so that they could focus on rational decision-making by taking out any emotions. So, communications with the acquired Japanese employees involved helping them to understand the rationales behind the projects.

Reviewing its company's value statement revealed that IM4's approach appeared to be aligned with the organization's motto, signifying the preference on addressing "issues objectively" by "using facts and constructive feedback in a work atmosphere." Kantarelis (2018) stated that decision-making based on rationals could allow management to learn how to select more valuable alternatives and to define and evaluate criteria of the projects to work better.

IM7 and IM8 shared some skepticisms about managers in low LTO cultures regarding their long-term business visions. IM7 showed skepticism "whether they [managers in high LTO cultures] could achieve their goals if the market conditions changed over time." IM8 commented that the management and the workers in Canada often reacted by questioning how the organization could attain a long-term strategy proposed by the acquired workers in Japan. IM8 said,

> It is quite common that [workers in a high LTO culture] talk about business strategies targeted over the 5 to 10 years from now in Japan. A long-term strategy might be more acceptable if the strategy could fully make sense and understandable to us.

Managers in LTO cultures often endorsed business strategies and new ideas, even if they were contradictory to already established value systems because they accepted short-term losses for long-term potential gains (Hofstede, 2011). By contrast, the managers in low LTO cultures usually avoided adopting contradictory or novel opinions (Hofstede, 2011) and might cause adverse effects on the processes and decision-making associated with value assumptions (Stoermer et al., 2016).

IM7 noted that acquired workers in a high LTO culture needed to "break down the long-term business plan and set short- or medium-term goals within the plan." IM8 also commented "even if you have a long-term plan, it will be subject to changes depending on what might happen in the future with the market, technologies, or consumer preferences." People needed to be open to those changes because, IM8 said, "such changes are inevitable" while executing a long-term plan." Workers in high LOT cultures were likely to accept new ideas or innovative thinking in work processes and methodologies as long as they can apply the long-term vision in the overall business plan (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Hofstede, 2011).

Task-oriented versus process-oriented. Seven (87.5%) participants discussed different focuses between the acquired and the acquiring firm workers regarding how tasks should be done or how many tasks to be achieved. If a leader prioritized task integration and ignored worker integration, employees might develop negative emotions with anger and insecurity in their newly merged organization (Bansal, 2015). In a collectivistic culture, workers would cherish human relationships over tasks (Hofstede, 2001).

Regarding the acquired Japanese workers in a collectivistic and high LTO cultures, IM4 commented "workers in Japan appeared to be more task-oriented" where as "the workers in an individualistic culture in the United States were process-oriented." A business leader in a low LTO culture might perceive the workers in a high LTO culture wasting a considerable amount of time on completing tasks and costs without making much progress in a short period but might recognize the firm would gain more values in

the long run (Peng & Beamish, 2014). IM4 noticed that a Japanese employee typically created a list of tasks when working on a project and focused on the tasks through the list to be evaluated based on how long the worker stayed in the office and engaged in items shown on the list each day. IM4 discovered some Japanese employees working late in the office rather than going home. IM4 asserted that acquired Japanese workers rarely expressed concerns on how efficiently or productively they could achieve their jobs.

In contrast to the Japanese workers, IM4 noted that "their [U.S. workers'] performance was not measured based on how much time the employees would spend on tasks." IM4 said "the U.S. workers are more concerned with how quickly and effectively they can handle the tasks. When they finished their work, the U.S. workers would either go home or start working on the next project." IM2 commented on the difference in the way how tasks were assigned between the United States and Japan. IM2 said,

> The Japanese workers seemed accustomed to working on pieces of multiple tasks without questioning what the tasks would be until all pieces of tasks handled by other colleagues were put together, whereas the U.S. workers preferred to take on tasks that were individually assigned to attain one outcome separately.

Disagreements among team members on the way how tasks should be achieved could cause consistent, negative impacts on team performance (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016; Medina, 2016).

As a way of mediating the acquiring firm workers' negative perceptions against the acquired workers' task-oriented behavior, IM4 conducted a training program for

acquired workers by sending some managers from the acquirer to the target's site. IM4 said,

> We sent some supervisors from the acquirer in the United States to the target site to conduct a training program to find out how to help our teams with acquired Japanese workers to become more efficient and how we could communicate and deliver at the pace we expected. The program covered some topics on how the Japanese workers might be able to utilize better the available systems, tools, and other existed functions that could help them improve productivity and accelerate the pace they worked. One element of the cultural change was to focus on effectiveness and efficiency (speed) in completing assignments rather than on the quantity of work performed. Through the training of use of such various tools we had, each Japanese employee might have started feeling as if they were suggested to accomplish the jobs by him or herself as opposed to asking for help. The U.S. supervisors needed to make the acquired Japanese workers understand that they could work with others on projects and could find colleagues for help.

Conflicts in processes or member relationships could lead to decreasing individuals' effectiveness at connecting ideas from disparate cultures (Maranga & Sampayo, 2015) and might trigger potential miscommunications in culturally diverse work teams (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015). To achieve unity among a diverse workforce and to improve team performance, IMs would should strive to manage potential conflicts in work processes to lessen stresses among the workers (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2016; Medina, 2016).

Regarding potential conflicts related to how workers should handle the tasks, IM8 reported a challenge that the acquired workers in a collectivistic culture in Japan spent a long time to seek group consensus before working on the tasks. IM8 said "they [the Japanese workers] always ask many questions over and over again, and I guess that is because they also wanted us [the Canadian manager] to have a consensus on everything, even about the sunrise today." IM8 explained that the long decision-making behavior of the Japanese workers was problematic because it usually caused delays in the work schedule. Slow decision-making is one of the primary causes of delays in projects (Parvaneh, Akbar, & Majid, 2018).

In an individualistic culture, workers exhibited high respect for individuals and preference for making personal decisions (Park, 2016), while people might not always make decisions independently because the influence of group members on the decisions might be stronger in a collectivistic culture than in an individualistic culture (de Mooij, 2015). To accelerate the pace of work and complete the tasks on time, IM8 needed to intervene in communications with acquired workers on behalf of the acquiring firm workers. IM8 said "I took an individualistic approach and instructed the Japanese workers to make own individual decisions about what they think would be the best without even consulting back with me [the management]." Leaders could diminish the challenges that would hamper postintegration performance by creating unified views and increasing the speed of decisions through facilitating worker communications to gain group consensus (Parola et al., 2015).

IM1 described a challenge he faced when supervising the acquired Asian workers and the acquiring workers in Canada and said "Asian workers usually achieved higher KPIs (key performance indicators) on tasks that they were good at handling than the workers in Canada did." Workers in India, Malaysia, or Singapore have relatively high PD levels where people were motivated to perform well and seek higher positions to gain authoritative power (Hofstede, 2011). IM1 said,

> They [Asian workers] seemed to have a common tendency to outperform competitors or other colleagues in the same organizations by focusing and working hard only on the tasks they could manage more proficiently to accomplish better results. However, they did not work hard on other tasks with the same level of diligence in general.

In the Canadian culture, IM1 said "the workers took on every task if it was part of the job and sometimes achieved lower KPIs where they were not necessarily good at" and that workers frequently displayed feelings of anger, frustrations, and distrust about each other's work processes as a result. People in high PD cultures would accept inequality in power balance regardless of whether it might be legitimate or not (Hofstede, 2011).

One (12.5%) participant pointed out some positive aspects about working with employees in collectivistic cultures. IM6 observed that the Japanese work team often displayed eagerness to help the teams in the United States to achieve goals. IM6 said "the biggest pain and frustration I found was the Japanese team was always willing to help out with the North American team in any way shape and form to help us meet our team goals." IM6 recognized that the U.S. workers appeared rather harsh to the Japanese teams

and showed less willingness to help when Japanese workers needed help to complete tasks. IM6 said "when the Japanese team needed help to meet our team goals, the North American team was forceful like pulling teeth just because they wanted to make it but wanted to [let them] do it by themselves." To integrate diverse workers from individualistic and collectivistic cultures, leaders should consider both positive and negative aspects of either culture.

Acknowledging the difference. Six (75%) participants noted that compromising with the gaps in national cultures between the acquired and acquiring firm workers was inevitable and a critical posture that an integration manager would need to exhibit to the acquired workers, particularly in high PD and high IC cultures. Maintaining the culture of the target would be an essential factor for an integration leader to minimize conflicts with the workers from both organizations (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991). Integrating managers should recognize the cultural distances of the acquired workers and to predict worker stress and negative sentiments about the merger and the cooperation (Risberg, 2003).

Regarding relatively balanced power distributions across different age groups in Japan, IM8 introduced communication manners and ethics that worked well in the past years in Canada to the acquired workers in higher PD culture in Japan. IM8 said,

I understood and recognized the different cultures among the acquired workers in Japan and worked with them. At the same time, I did not throw out something that had worked successfully for more than 30 years just because there was an entirely different way that people would prefer to work.

Although pursuing group harmony could cause slow decisions of the team and lead to work delays (de Mooij, 2015), group harmony was also necessary to enhance the innovative performance of the diverse work teams (C. C. Chen et al., 2016). To integrate diverse workers from individualistic and collectivistic cultures, leaders needed to consider both positive and negative aspects of either culture.

IM2 commented in connection with acquired workers' task-oriented manner, which was often subject to conflict with acquiring firm workers' process-oriented work style. IM2 directed acquiring firm team members to "accept the differences to rather avoid reducing acquired worker's productivity." IM2 said,

> Making changes in Japanese workers' behavior was not easy at all. My observation was that it was a DNA-level issue. My observation was that we always needed arbiters to compromise the differences to maximize the outcome of the hybrid team rather than we tried to force them to transform.

As IM2 mentioned, IM2's company value statement noted "recognizing that diversity of backgrounds and experience are key strengths." Providing acquired workers with some degrees of autonomy would be vital for motivating the workers and creating value (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Zhu et al. (2015).

To let the multicultural work team members recognize the differences in each other's national cultures, IM3 directed them to work together in the same office. IM3 said,

> I encouraged his employees from different countries, including India, Poland, Turkey, Belarus, and so on, that they work together physically so that they could

know each other well. Once people knew each other, they could become more

collaborative in the workplace.

IM3 suggested the workers that they apply *mental filtering* technique so that they

could lessen any potential relationship conflicts that might be triggered by emotional and

personal incompatibilities or disputes, anger, frustration, suspicion, distrust, or hostility

among team members through interactions with workers who might have different levels

of PD. IM3 said "when an executive from a high PD culture spoke something that

sounded like boasting, I advised the workers to try to ignore any phrases or words from

the talk and grasp only the essential words." Motivating the multicultural workers would

be difficult if differences in worker mentality and cultures among the workers were not

recognized (Bebenroth & Hemmert, 2015; Bertoldi et al., 2015). The mental filter method

might be a useful skill to lessen potential relationship conflicts because the relationship

conflicts could be triggered by various emotional and personal feelings against each other

among the team (Medina, 2016).

IM6 also encouraged the workers to work in groups rather than to work in an

individual, isolated style typically seen in low IC cultures. Collectivistic workers

preferred belonging to groups because the group members would care for each member

in exchange for loyalty (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). IM6 commented on some rationales to

appreciate the group style as opposed to an independent style and said,

I tried to adjust the American workers of the acquired firm in a highly

individualistic culture rather than the acquired Japanese workers because I

personally felt that having workers as a team and work together as opposed to

against each other would help foster team growth as opposed to individually for

me as a manager. I got rid of individual goals or individual rewards, such as the

employee of the week or employee of the month. Instead, I set team goals. If

teams met their overall team goals for both the Japanese and the American team

hitting their targets at the same time, all teams were rewarded with special

bonuses. This helped to get the American team [individualistic culture] on board

to work more as a group instead of trying to hit personal numbers and personal

quota.

IM6's observation might be reasonable. The collective team performance could

improve if the team members had high levels of trust each other and low levels of team

faultlines and heterogeneity (Mach & Baruch, 2015).

IM7 also appreciated the tendency to work in groups that workers in a

collectivistic culture typically exhibited. IM7 commented on how an integration manager

could support the workers in an individualistic culture to work in groups as a team and

help each other to outperform individual goals. IM7 said "individuals who had similar

concerns or behavioral patterns in a certain way could relatively easy to form a team and

have frequent meetings together." People in collectivistic cultures would perceive the

relationship between the employer and the employee in moral terms and preferred

satisfactory workplace conditions rather than individual interests (Park, 2016). A

manager supervising a combined workforce consisted of both collectivistic and

individualistic cultures might find it more adequate to manage by teamwork approach

that could play a vital role in forming a *we*-culture to which both individualistic and collectivistic workers might be able to adjust (Blecking, 2015).

 Relationship conflicts. Five (62.5%) participants raised the issues of complexity in maintaining interpersonal relationships between acquired and acquiring firm workers in association with different MF and LTO levels of the workers. IM7 shared his perception that the acquired workers in the high LTO culture focused on building relationships with executives from the acquiring firm and said "I guessed they did not want to be left behind because the executives from the acquirer would almost decide their future." IM5 noted on a challenge in building relationships between different cultures, and mentioned "when discussing the local business culture, the first thing that Japanese workers usually talked about was the importance of practicing their relationship building habit. But this is really not easy for an American executive to perform. It takes time." IM2 also mentioned,

> I observed a great tendency that Japanese workers seemed to be treating the U.S. workers higher in the organizational hierarchy. It seemed that the Japanese workers spent about one year until they could start interacting frankly with the U.S. colleagues. U.S. workers expected the Japanese workers to speak to each other in equal stance from the beginning.

While short-term oriented managers would seek quick profits or business results and would pay less attention to the importance of creating relationships with them (Taylor & Zhou, 2019), workers in high LTO cultures were likely to prefer building relationships with other stakeholders before starting to collaborate on joint projects

(Khlif, 2016; Taylor & Zhou, 2019). By creating a rapport beforehand, the stakeholders in high LTO cultures tried to avoid potential relationship conflicts such as the dysfunction relating to emotional and personal incompatibilities or disputes that might be subject to anger, frustration, suspicion, distrust, and hostility among team members (Medina, 2016). It might be necessary for the leader in a low LTO culture to modify mindset to focus on building positive relationships with acquired workers to manage employee motivations in the workplace (Jedin & Saad, 2016).

Some IMs noted that they needed to invest considerable time in building relationships with acquired workers. IM5 argued that there was a challenge for a manager from a low LTO and feminine culture in building relationships with the workers in a high LTO and masculine culture in the same way as the workers in a high LTO and masculine culture would naturally develop relationship with each other. IM5 commented "after spending a tremendous effort in building a relationship with acquired workers in Japan, they made me rather become aware of a strong sense of separation from them." IMs would need to be prepared to take plenty of time to understand and build up social relationships with workers of their target firms in the high LTO cultures (Sinkovics et al., 2015).

IM5 noted the importance of humility when initiating relationships with acquired workers in a high LTO culture. To obtain trust from workers in a high LTO culture, IM5 emphasized the necessity of developing relationships with acquired workers. IM5 said,

> You have to be willing almost to give up yourself and your family to spend much
>
> time with local workers to develop relationships [after work]. You may be able to

do it temporarily as part of your international assignment. It is like playing the

role of an ordinary local worker in the host country as if you were fake local

personnel.

For cross-border acquisitions of targets in high LTO cultures, relationship

building with acquired workers was helpful because it positively associated with a

postmerger performance and could motivate staff to perform their tasks at maximum

levels (Y. Chen et al., 2016; Jedin & Saad, 2016).

IM3 reported that it took 3 years to shake hands with a high-ranking Japanese

businessperson after IM3 first met him. Investigating the value of building relationships

with target firms and its difficulties could be one of the first steps for an integration

leader to practice because building relationships with target firms would be a necessary

process for acquirers before achieving any significant progress toward cultural

integrations (Sinkovics et al., 2015). IM3, who belonged to a low MF culture in Norway,

responded regarding a challenge in building a relationship with an acquired worker in the

high MF culture from the United Kingdom, who displayed an overly proud attitude when

interacting with lower ranking workers in the workplace. The United Kingdom scored 66

whereas Norway scored 8 on the MF level (Hofstede, 2011), and might represent the

masculine and the feminine cultures, respectively. IM3 said,

> The U.K. executive looked surprised when he first learned that he had to share a
>
> room with other lower ranking colleagues and asked me to provide him with a
>
> private room and to treat him in a more distinguished manner from others.

People in a low MF culture might not feel comfortable with overt power moves and would not value status displays (Hofstede, 2015). Conversely, workers in a masculine culture might seek status by winning in competitions or aligning themselves with powerful winners such as the president or senior executives in an organization (Hofstede, 2015), which could cause challenges in keeping favorable relationships with less senior workers in low MF cultures.

IM7 described an experience that acquired workers in a masculine culture displayed behavior that they tended to approach and develop relationships with new executives from the acquiring firm quickly to try to get new positions and often ignored IM7's supervision. Individuals in high PD cultures would be more motivated to get a better position within an organization because of the hope for obtaining power (Purwanto, 2018), which could make the human resources management challenging for integration managers in a low PD culture (Purwanto, 2018).

Highly masculine countries are often driven by shared dominant values, such as *clearly distinct gender roles* (Andrijauskienė & Dumčiuvienė, 2017; Yildiz & Vural, 2019). IM8 described a conflict between a female manager from the acquiring firm and the male subordinates from the acquired target in Japan. IM8 faced challenges when the male workers often disregarded the female manager's directions and tried to report to IM8 directly and proposed business plans on their own. Table 6 is a summary of the frequency of participant responses to different business practices and work styles.

Table 6

Business Practices and Working Styles (Frequency)

Participant	Interview questions	References
IM1	1, 2, 7, 8	9
IM2	4, 7, 9, 10	7
IM3	5, 9, 10	9
IM4	5, 6, 9	7
IM5	5, 6, 7, 10	20
IM6	5, 6, 7, 9, 10	14
IM7	5, 7, 8, 9, 10	14
IM8	5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	12

Theme 3: Communication Styles

All (100%) participants responded regarding the problems related to different

styles of communications practiced among acquired workers in high PD, high UA, and

low IC cultures. Eight (100%) participants identified barriers that might be discouraging

open communications between acquired workers in high PD cultures and acquiring firm

managers related to overly concerned organizational hierarchies. Six (75%) participants

pointed out differences in the level of detail in communications between acquired

workers in high UA cultures and acquiring firm workers. Differences in national cultures

between workers could create a significant impact on communications in the workplace

and would generate various challenges for an integration leader to manage the diverse

workforces (Caiazza, 2016). The leader of an acquiring firm could enhance the active

team collaborations and performance if the leader established trust and clear

communications among the diverse work teams (Tran et al., 2016).

Keen awareness of hierarchies. Three participants (37.5%) shared challenges related to tacit behaviors that their acquired workers in the high PD cultures displayed in workplace communications, which often caused miscommunications, delayed work progress, and slow decisions. IM6, who had managed integration of acquired Japanese workers and acquiring firm workers in the United States, was not able to directly communicate with core members of the Japanese work team except for a designated contact point person of the same level as IM6. IM6 said "I had to email the manager of the team in Japan, who then relayed the message to the Japanese workers I wanted to talk to." IM6 was extremely frustrated by the indirect email communication habit practiced at the target side and said,

> If I wanted to talk to the Japanese subordinates, essentially, I had to waste my time to email to the manager as a regular contact point of the Japanese team. Similarly, if I wanted to talk to the senior manager of the manager, I had to email to the manager to reach out to the senior manager, which seemed inefficient in our [American] culture.

To facilitate the email communications with acquired workers in Japan without stepping through a contact point, IM6 discussed with members in Japan and got a consensus in setting up an email rule between IM6 and the acquired workers, thereby IM6 and the Japanese subordinates could directly communicate through email as long as the same ranking person in the target had to be carbon copied (cc'd) at all times. IM6 said,

We made the point clear [with Japanese workers] that it was okay to communicate

well beyond your rank essentially, so I could email to communicate with the

manager [of the Japanese contact point] and likewise, the Japanese subordinates

could email me with the only caveat being that the person who is within your

same rank or status must get cc'd at all times. After this [consensus], the frictions

between our teams had dissolved with the communication because now we had

essentially a set of rules to follow in our communication.

IM6 noted "those were good strategies and gave everyone a good feeling." The

employees might perceive it as unethical if the manager coerced workers to copy

supervisors with copying as a control mechanism for transparency (Haesevoets et al.,

2019). By including the supervisors in the cc line, however, employees usually felt

trusted (Haesevoets et al., 2019).

IM2 also shared a challenge experienced when integrating acquired Japanese

workers into a U.S. acquirer. IM2 said "while the American workers expected Japanese

workers to speak to each other with equal emphasis, it took more than a year for the

Japanese workers to get used to the communication style in the United States."

Subordinates in the higher PD culture would not speak proactively when their manager

was present so that they allowed the manager to keep talking and controlling the

conversation even if an anticipated result might be a conflict with the interest of

themselves with low power (Y. Chang et al., 2015; Park et al., 2019) because it might be

an indication of their acceptance of the manager's power (Hofstede, 2001, 2011).

Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991) suggested that an integration manager should motivate

acquired workers to acculturate themselves with philosophies and policies of the

acquirer's cultures. IM2 found it challenging to acculturate the Japanese workers with

American cultures. IM2 observed that the acquired Japanese workers, including both

managers and employees, viewed "the workers of the acquirer as stronger and higher in

the hierarchy" and appeared to be willing to "accept acquirer's culture" but "hesitant to

practice upfront communication at the equal level." In a high PD culture, subordinates are

expected to be told what to do by the supervisor (Hofstede, 2011).

Regarding the keen awareness of hierarchy of the Japanese acquired workers, IM4

also observed that "less senior staff from Japan usually did not speak," when having

meetings with Japanese workers. IM4 reported "the most senior person typically spoke

during the meeting or even dominated the conversation from the Japanese side."

Referring to the situation when a group comprised of the U.S. and the Japanese

businesspeople had a joint meeting and discussed the tasks they were going to

collaborate, IM4 commented on a challenge and said,

> In a U.S. organization, when the CEO and junior employees join a meeting with
>
> people from another organization, the junior employees would also speak as much
>
> as the CEO would. The U.S. based employees may usually assume the meeting
>
> will progress as an open conversation about the assignments. However, the
>
> Japanese manager may have a different scenario in mind expecting the U.S. based
>
> employees to keep listening to the manager to understand the directions to follow.

As IM4 mentioned, IM4's company value statement noted "we address issues objectively, using facts and constructive feedback in a work atmosphere where we do not fear open discussion or questions."

Regarding the acquired managers, IM6 described the challenge as "most vice presidents or directors who came from the acquired target in Japan steeped in their cultures and tended to have few discussions with subordinates in the acquiring organization in the United States." Individuals in the United States have a greater inclination toward a desire for equal treatment and are uncomfortable with inequality in the organization or society (Curtis et al., 2016; Simmons et al., 2019). As a result, both the IM of the acquiring firm in a low PD culture and the leader from the target in a high PD culture might embarrass each other leading to less productive discussions, causing delays in decision-making or misunderstanding about the project because of the different levels of equality among the workers or the managers' authoritative powers over their subordinates (Zhang & Oczkowski, 2016).

To improve the way the executives and the workers of the acquirer in the United States and the target in Japan communicate efficiently, IM4 said "both managers and subordinates should be educated on some cultural nuances. An integration leader should help managers understand cultural differences and how to communicate effectively with their subordinates." Leaders of an acquiring organization might need to train themselves for specific periods by living in the host countries to build positive relationships with local workers and other stakeholders and adapt to local cultures (Tusar et al., 2016). The greater the cultural distance between the host and the home countries, the more effective

the cross-cultural training could be if managers of both the acquirer and the target

participated (Lawson & Shepherd, 2019). During the integration, IM6 conducted a

program through which the managers from both the acquirer and the target sides

exchanged. IM4 described,

> We assigned some U.S. based managers from the acquiring company and
>
> Japanese acquired managers from the target to relocate to the reciprocal countries
>
> and join work teams. Some employees playing critical roles in the acquirer in the
>
> United States were also relocated to Japan for a couple of years. Likewise, some
>
> employees from the target in Japan were invited to join some teams in the
>
> acquirer in the United States to understand better how the acquiring organization
>
> was operating. These foreign members could play the role of seeding staff who
>
> had been transferred from one organization into the other organization to help
>
> their teammates to get used to the different cultures and practices.

By providing the managers with practical work experiences in the reciprocal

countries, according to IM4, the managers from both organizations became "the liaisons

between the acquirer and the target to bridge communications gaps in between." The

success of joint business operations relies heavily on relationships developed between the

two organizations, which can be better maintained by liaisons who are skilled in

interacting between the two nationalities (Taylor & Zhou, 2019).

IM4 also shared knowledge of the use of informal mentors for acquired workers.

IM4 provided to newly acquired workers from Japan with appointed executives as

mentors assigned from the acquirer in the United States to answer questions the new staff

had to help the new staff understand the acquirer's decision process. Mentors could guide their mentees through struggles by sharing their knowledge and personal experiences (Turner-Moffatt, 2019). IM4 said "we needed to align the cultures of the U.S. mentors with those of the target as well. Knowing the cultures of both acquirer and the target, mentors could help bridge various cultural differences in between." IM4 told that the mentors and the new executives from the acquired firm sometimes held informal meetings to talk about personal concerns, issues, challenges, different ideas, or ways of solving problems by offline. IM4 said "in an informal meeting, the new executives and the mentors built more trust and freely discussed how things should be done in an environment where senior management was not present." Adopting a mentorship program in worker education could be beneficial not only for mentees but also for mentors and the organization so that the mentorship program could open the possibility of cross-departmental collaborations and building stronger leaders (Turner-Moffatt, 2019).

Differences in detail level of information and speed of decision-making. Five (62.5%) participants noted the challenges associated with different levels of detail of information expected to be covered in communications between the acquired workers in high UA cultures and the acquiring firm workers. Miscommunications may result in distrust among diverse stakeholders that could inhibit the adequate flow of information and exchange of knowledge across the teams in an organization (M. Hu & Ngo, 2017). IM2 observed,

Japanese workers from the target expected precise and detailed instructions on how to carry out tasks, whereas the American workers from headquarters spoke about outcomes or the milestones of the activities and left the process or methodologies how to execute the tasks to the workers.

IM4 also commented "acquired subordinates in Japan tended to expect their managers to provide clear, detailed instructions or directions when they worked on projects." Conversely, IM4 said that the managers of the acquirer in the United States "may want to give some freedom to the employees to think about how they wish to accomplish the tasks rather than to give precise instructions on how the tasks should be handled." Workers in a high PD culture expect managers to tell subordinates what to do (Hofstede, 2011) and were more likely to incorporate themselves into the hierarchies and might act more on behalf of the supervisors and prioritize in accepting and following supervisors' behaviors and directions (Park, 2016; Simmons et al., 2019).

IM8 shared the experience regarding the challenges in responding to repetitive questions from acquired workers in high UA cultures seeking detailed instructions, which frequently caused delayed decisions to start new joint projects, and said,

I was trying to take on business operations in Japan, and when I basically presented a high level presentation [of a business plan to the local workers in Japan], the Japanese workers reacted by saying that they wished more information as if they were asking me to produce a 100-page document.

Uncertainties in communications might not be a severe problem for organizations in low UA cultures (Garcia et al., 2014). However, the managers in high UA cultures

were generally unwilling to undertake a new task and demanded clarity and structure

(Hofstede, 2011) because they tended to feel threatened if the result of the task was not

certain (C. J. Chang et al., 2016).

IM4 also shared its observation that the workers in a high UA culture tended to

ask the same questions repetitively over and over again. IM4 described a typical issue

related to the acquired Japanese workers' cautiousness and habit of asking repetitive

questions connected to overly concerned attitude for clarity and said,

>Japanese partners seemed to very cautious in making any commitments or
>
>decisions regarding how to proceed with a proposed joint venture business, which
>
>often led to slow decisions. To discuss new business proposals with Japanese
>
>partners, I frequently traveled to Japan for one week to meet with stakeholders in
>
>the local market every month. Each time I had a meeting, I found that most of the
>
>discussions with the Japanese counterparts turned out to be the rehashing of the
>
>talks on the same details or questions we discussed in the previous meetings.

IM4 illustrated why the slow decision-making habit displayed by the Japanese

workers was problematic and said,

>Japanese stakeholders did not reach consensus regarding the joint venture project
>
>after spending 18 months of discussions, which led board members back in the
>
>United States to lose patience. Japanese businesspeople generally display
>
>difficulty in making decisions even if all the necessary data around the project are
>
>available to everyone in the project, including the Japanese stakeholders, so that
>
>they can always check and analyze. Executives in the United States examine the

available data and decide to move on to the next step. For a semiconductor company which is in a highly dynamic, fast-growing high tech sector, it is disastrous if it takes a longer time in making business decisions.

If businesspeople do not understand their counterpart's tendencies, it can lead to tense situations (Taylor & Zhou, 2019). Leaders in low UA cultures need to strategize how to keep moving forward with a joint project with workers from acquired organizations in high UA cultures. People in a high UA culture would feel *the difference is dangerous* and tried to avoid uncertainties (Curtis et al., 2016). Workers in high UA cultures necessitate high degrees of clarity in the information they use to assess potential risks of the projects (Hofstede, 2011).

IM4 took action to "resolve issues related to acquired Japanese workers' slow decision-making habits." IM4 explained,

> We identified some important individuals, not executives, from the target in Japan, who could adapt more to the acquirer's decision-making style and the operating style. We brought these key individuals to the acquirer and integrated into some work teams at the acquirer for one to two years to reinforce some of the characteristics and attributes useful to work with employees at the acquirer in the United States. Then, after spending a couple of years, these Japanese key individuals were moved back to the target side and promoted as supervisors with more responsibilities and more critical roles than before. These key individuals could also distribute the lessons they learned and the relationships they built during their terms at the acquirer throughout the target.

The acquirer and the target should work closely to enhance the overall M&A performance and synergy creation by learning and exchanging knowledge on processes and resources (Sinkovics et al., 2015). Intracompany worker exchange might be useful in improving cross-border acquisition performance (Ahammad et al., 2016), particularly for cross-border M&As with targets in high context cultures that are likely to encompass tacit knowledge (Nishinaka et al., 2015). The IM should consider an expatriate program for individuals functioning in essential positions of the target's international operations to become adapted to the acquirer's culture to avoid potential harm to the organization and to disseminate knowledge to target (Taylor & Zhou, 2019).

IM3 shared an experience when IM3 discovered a taciturn disposition exhibited by acquired subordinates from a high UA culture when they had a meeting with a manager. IM3 noted that the acquired Polish subordinates tended to say "Yes" to most of the questions that IM3 asked regarding whether or not the workers understood the given tasks even though they might have been unsure about some parts of the instructions. Miscommunications might lead to task and process conflicts with culturally different workers from an acquiring firm (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015). IM3 said "the worker should be aware that the Norwegian communication style might not be as detailed as Polish workers might expect," and IM3 recognized that the subordinates' reaction was probably "a polite way of answering," and resolved the potential miscommunications with the Polish worker by "asking the Polish worker to repeat what I said." To supervise the multicultural workforce, taking active steps to prevent miscommunication would be necessary (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015).

IM5 discovered one positive aspect of the acquired Japanese worker's tendency to emphasize precisions and said "once the manager provided detailed enough information, the acquired workers in high UA cultures generally completed the tasks as precisely to the instructions as possible and fast." IM5 explained "you will need to lay out everything that has to be done, and if you input all the information, they (acquired workers in Japan) executed tasks better and more thoroughly than any American might do." IM5 considered that the acquired workers in a high UA culture "might want to gain trust from the acquiring firm managers by showing how they were precise and loyal to the manager." Employees' trust in the acquired firm can be a sign of a high level of acceptance of the integration changes, firm intentions to stay in the job, and a willingness to cooperate with the acquiring firm (Ai & Tan, 2017). Trust was a critical factor for effective team collaborations and performance of the diverse work teams, and the leader should assume that the team performance might be low if a level of trust among teammates were low (Browne et al., 2016; Tran et al., 2016). Table 7 shows the frequency of participants' responses regarding challenges and strategies related to communications styles.

Table 7

Communication Styles (Frequency)

Participant	Interview questions	References
IM1	2, 8	4
IM2	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	9
IM3	1, 2, 3, 4	6
IM4	1, 2, 3, 4	9
IM5	2, 3	10
IM6	1, 2, 3	10
IM7	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7	10
IM8	1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	17

Applications to Professional Practice

This doctoral study included an exploration of core knowledge and skills necessary for business leaders to manage postacquisition diverse workforce integrations in the ICT industries in low context cultures in North America and Europe that acquired targets in high context cultures in Asia; the findings could also apply to various organizations in other industries. The findings of the study included three themes: (a) workplace transparencies, (b) business practices and working styles, and (c) communications styles. For the challenges of cultural integration, the findings indicated three kinds of national cultural differences responsible for causing difficulties for leaders of acquiring firms to integrate acquired foreign workforce, related to workplace transparencies, business practices and work styles, and communication styles. For the strategies to mitigate many of the integration challenges that the participants identified, various proactive approaches were found useful and necessary for integration managers to carry out during the postacquisition integration phase. The approaches that successful

IMs had implemented could be grouped into two major categories, including cultural understanding educational programs for newly combined diverse workforce and relationship building between the two workforces from the acquirer and the target.

While acquiring firms were rational in making decisions, workers of acquired targets exhibited rather emotional behaviors (Moilanen, 2016). Any employees possessed unique values, symbols, statements, rules, education system, political governance, national cultures, family, and friends that influenced the development of individuals (Sprajc & Podbregar, 2016). Multicultural management would be a pivotal role for the business leader responsible for postacquisition integrations because the management of the acquiring firm tended to take the lead in identifying the change process and operating the organization newly created after the completion of the cross-border acquisition (Moilanen, 2016).

For challenges related to workplace transparencies, previous researchers have noted that transparencies might result in a major cause for collaboration failure, as transparency was a foundation of workplace ethics and a key to maintaining staff relationships (Shum et al., 2019). Worker transparency involves behaviors such as sharing of information, being authentic and open, reasoning behind decisions, and being truthful (Shum et al., 2019) and is closely connected to differences in PD, UA, MF, and IC levels (Maali & Al-Attar, 2017). Effective integration management requires an understanding of behavioral differences in workplace transparencies among the workers of the host country and the home country because it could enable the identification and potential reduction in worker disharmony (Shum et al., 2019).

As for challenges connected to business practices and work styles, integration leaders are suggested to be mindful of different levels of MF, IC, and LTO between the workers of acquired and acquiring firms. Disagreements in business practices and work styles could cause conflicts in tasks, processes, and relationships among culturally diverse workforce and could even lead to tense situation (Korovyakovskaya & Chong, 2015; Taylor & Zhou, 2019). Regarding the challenges related to different communication styles, leaders are advised to pay attention to different levels of PD, UA, and IC between the acquirer and acquired workers. Tran et al. (2016) noted that a lack of trust among the workers due to miscommunication would be a substantial barrier for active team collaborations and performance in a diverse workforce.

The findings of the study also included practical approaches the IMs used to reconcile the challenges they faced during the integration stages, which consisted of cultural understanding programs and building favorable relationships with acquired foreign workers. Mutually understanding national cultural differences, based on all national cultural dimensions, including PD, UA, MF, IC, and LTO, is key to the achievement of multicultural worker integration after the cross-border acquisition (Haspeslagh & Jemison, 1991; Lawson & Shepherd, 2019; Taylor & Zhou, 2019). Kaleramna et al. (2019) asserted that the leader of a multicultural organization should provide merged workers with cultural training in the early phase of the postacquisition integration.

In terms of relationship building between the acquired and the acquiring firm workes, Sinkovics et al. (2015) stated that the IM should prioritize on development of

robust relationships with acquired workers before making significant progress toward collaborations if the acquired workers belonged to a high LTO culture. The people in a high LTO culture were likely to cherish relationships with other stakeholders to secure strong ties with them in the future (Khlif, 2016). The best practices found in this study should encourage internationally merged organizations to take more of a strategic view when dealing with multicultural worker integration involving high and low context national cultures.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for positive social change are numerous, considering a loss of 20 billion to 40 billion dollars occurs in the ICT industry annually for failed cross-border acquisitions or divested acquired targets, representing significant damage to ICT businesses (Cui et al., 2016; Zaks, 2016). The implication for positive social change includes potential improvement in human relationships across the countries that have distinct ethnic groups and diverse cultures by understanding and dissemination of cross-cultural knowledge, diversified business practices, and various communication norms through business-to-business or business-to-consumer interactions in the societies. Today, an international organization is an ethnic salad in which various cultures are blended yet distinct (G. Fusch, Fusch, Booker, & Fusch, 2016). By enhancing the success rate of postacquisition integrations of a diverse workforce, leaders' competencies gained from experience to collaborate with workers in different cultures diffuse among the industry across the borders.

This study also has the potential to provide positive social change for individuals, the community, and society by assisting researchers in analyzing how people can foster adopting spillovers of new technologies, methodologies, social systems, or philosophies between the countries of acquirers and foreign targets (Liang, 2017; Muqiang et al., 2017), which could benefit social development. Business managers can also improve their organization's international competitiveness by focusing more on how the organization uses cross-cultural knowledge to understand why expected synergies may or may not be generated through the cross-border M&As (Ahammad et al., 2016). As the community becomes more attractive and accessible for foreign businesses or multinational corporations to enter, it contributes to diversifying the ways of living and improves the quality of life for individuals who reside in the community.

Recommendations for Action

The cross-cultural integration managers interviewed for this study faced challenges in conducting the cultural integration of diverse workforce after closing the cross-border M&A deals. Each integration manager shared one's approach to mitigate negative impacts and reinforce positive outcomes resulted from integrating acquired foreign workers into acquiring firms. As Moilanen (2016) demonstrated, the manager of an acquiring firm tended to lead in the operation of a newly created organization and to take the ultimate responsibility to identify change processes for consolidations. All stakeholders should receive cultural awareness training to increase the potential for positive outcomes. The training program should include one on one meetings,

intracompany worker transfer, and cross-functional team meetings to discuss and share information on different business practices and communication styles.

I discovered during the interviews that the training would help improve results if workers of both acquirer and target from all levels participated. Haspeslagh and Jemison (1991), Lawson and Shepherd (2019), and Taylor and Zhou (2019) asserted cross-cultural training should be provided to all individuals of both acquirers and foreign targets in cross-border acquisitions covering differences between high and low context cultures and the appropriate behaviors that are needed to avoid potential harm to the organization. All of the cross-cultural integration managers interviewed in this study emphasized the need for making upfront conversations and exchanging opinions with acquired workers taking into account the differences in behaviors between high and low context cultures.

Postacquisition cross-cultural integration managers should focus on building and maintaining peaceful relationships with acquired foreign workers. To function effectively as an organization, an employer should deal with soft issues such as culture and communications (Moilanen, 2016; Sprajc & Podbregar, 2016). The relationships should be a long-term basis and serve as a stimulus for both the acquirer to the target to identify each other's valuable aspects and to acknowledge different cultures rather than forcing either side to acculture. Khlif (2016) stated acquiring an organization should develop healthy relationships with acquired workers before attempting to make any significant movements toward firm combination because the people in a high context culture would focus on building a relationship with other stakeholders as the first step toward business collaborations.

To disseminate this knowledge, I will provide the results of the study to LinkedIn groups, such as Mergers and Acquisitions Professionals (MAP), International Consular Officers Forum, Business in Japan from the United States, European Union, Canada and Oceania, Japan Market Entry Association, *Harvard Business Review*, International Trade Network, International Business, Business in Japan, and Bilingual Workforce in Japan, government organizations, including Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Commercial sections of embassies of the United States, Canada, Norway, France, and the United Kingdom, and the participants. I will publish the study by the processes required to complete the Walden program, which will allow it to be accessed anywhere in the world. The strategies uncovered during this study should be beneficial to cross-cultural integration managers on their first assignment or veteran IMs seeking to implement process improvement efforts. The important themes presented in this study could improve cross-cultural integration managers' leadership skills with their team members.

Recommendations for Further Research

In this qualitative multiple case study, the purposeful sampling method to select participants was the first limitation. The recommendation to reach out to more varieties of a sample of participants, which would include numerous stakeholders (i.e., executives, expatriates, team members) and multiple subsectors (i.e., cybersecurity, digital media, automotive information, entertainment, manufacturing, robotics, in addition to semiconductor, and software), would enable the application of the study findings to the larger population of global ICT cross-border M&As. During this study, data saturation was attained after interviewing eight participants from four Western countries (the United

States, Canada, France, and Norway). No further participants would be needed to include in the study as indicated by redundancy or data replication. The findings from this study expand the understanding of core knowledge and competencies necessary for cross-cultural worker integration management in the private sector, which may increase success rates of cross-border M&As and gain practical strategies to create a collaborative multicultural workforce, promoting to develop competitive advantages for global competitions and increasing profitability.

The second limitation of this study was the participants' level of knowledge of the theory used in the study, Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national culture theory. Categorizing the collected data into each of the five dimensions could raise concern for researchers interested in investigating multicultural management challenges and strategies connected more specific to given dimensions of the national cultures covered in Hofstede's theory. As this study addressed all five dimensions of national cultures, targeting to introduce one of the first attempts to relate the cultural integration challenges to national cultural differences, future research must focus on selected dimensions of national cultures covered or not covered in Hofstede's theory. The third limitation of this study was that not all the national cultural indices shown by Hofstede were agreed by all researchers or participants. Future research based on other theories or conceptual frameworks such as the global leadership and organizational behavior effectiveness (GLOBE) index may strengthen the study for researchers seeking to deepen the knowledge.

This study was derived from a qualitative research method with a multiple case study design. Other methodologies and designs, such as mixed method, may be used to discover relationships between specific cultural integration challenges and cultural dimensions at the same time explore cases. The mixed-method study should be considered for more in-depth research on strategies and knowledge necessary for post-M&A multicultural worker integration management.

Reflections

My motivation to conduct this study was to explore strategies that global business leaders used to manage multicultural environments mixed with different national cultures where leaders' values might not be applicable to everyone. I chose cross-border M&As as the platform to identify challenges and applied strategies when leaders supervised their acquired foreign workers. To ensure the challenges discovered from interviews were related to national cultural differences between acquires targets, I used Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of national culture theory to select ideal cases representing the cross-border M&As that took place between culturally distant organizations.

While I proceeded with the literature review and data collection, I was convinced the cross-border M&A was an excellent choice for the topic yet challenging to find participants, especially the cases that acquirers were in low context cultures, and the targets were in high context cultures. During the interviews, I found every participant enthusiastic in responding to interview questions. I often heard the participants say they were thrilled to talk about their experience using the five cultural dimensions as guidance

to recall and recognized the interview as an opportunity to change their perceptions on different behaviors of the people who came from other cultures.

Participants' commitment to providing professional and private experience was inspirational. I am grateful for having the opportunity to contribute to enhancing the participants' awareness of the importance of cultural integration in association with national cultures. It was also a great opportunity that I could develop many enduring relationships with students and faculty from all over the world.

Conclusion

To achieve creating value following the cross-border M&A, the business leader should start building relationships with acquired workers before attempting to make any significant movements (Khlif, 2016). The study findings revealed various practical knowledge and competencies that successful integration managers used, which provide potential learning and leadership for others. Major lessons I discovered were (a) workplace transparency, (b) business practices and working styles, (c) communication styles, (d) cross-cultural education, and (d) relationship building. All these lessons suggest that leaders of acquirers should (a) know the national cultural differences, (b) compromise with the differences as national cultures cannot be changed, (c) let targets change how they practice business, and finally (d) be honest and discuss frankly with acquired foreign workers about acquirer's needs to keep favorable relationships with the acquired workers. Based on these findings, global business leaders could find strategies to start and improve postacquisition multicultural integration management policies and education programs to address cultural clash issues.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers' regarding different views of relationships between supervisors and subordinates that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of the post-M&A integration?

2. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, what strategies are most successful for managing their different behaviors regarding the relationships between the supervisors and the subordinates?

3. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers when they dealt with uncertain information or ambiguous communications that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

4. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you deal with their different attitudes toward uncertainties or ambiguous communications and manage misunderstandings between them?

5. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and the home-country workers regarding their different levels of assertiveness or modesty in attitudes toward their colleagues that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

6. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage the conflicts in the workplace relating to their different levels of assertiveness or modesty?

7. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between acquired workers and home-country workers regarding their work styles, either working in groups or working independently, that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

8. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage their different reactions toward working in groups or working independently?

9. What potential conflicts or frustrations, if anything, did you observe between the acquired workers and home-country workers regarding the views about adopting different business practices that had to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integrations?

10. To integrate the acquired workers and home-country workers, how do you manage with their different views and reactions regarding adopting different business practices?

11. What additional information could you kindly share with me regarding the successful strategies you use to integrate the workers with different national cultural backgrounds that has to be addressed to other leaders to ensure the success of post-M&A integration?

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Participant Code: _____ Date of Interview: _____ Interview

Format:

Face-to-face _____ Skype _____ Telephone_____ Other_____

If other, describe: _____ Miscellaneous

Notes on Interview format:

Introduction to Interview

My name is Kimihiro (Hero) Iwao, and I am a doctoral candidate at Walden University. I

am conducing a research study for my doctoral project for my Doctor of Business

Administration (D.B.A.) on how leaders of ICT companies manage diverse work teams

following cross-border M&As. Since you are a leader of a company that has been

successfully operating for more than 5 years since you acquired company ABC in another

country XYZ, I am very interested in what you have to say about your conflict

management skills as a leader of a global organization and how you feel your techniques

might be effective in influencing diverse employees to work together to achieve the

organizational goals and value originally planned to create at the time of the merger. I

want to know your story; what your experiences are; what advice you have for others and

what you think for the benefit of teaching business administration and leadership to a

younger generation. By sharing your knowledge, you will provide a better understanding

of multicultural management, whether you feel they have any direct or indirect influence

on cultural integrations, knowledge transfer, and positive spillover effects in the society.

After I introduce myself I will began the interview with the following steps:

Step 1

I will offer participants refreshments.

I will ask if the participant have any questions before beginning the interview.

Step 2

I will get started with the interview questions.

- I will watch for non-verbal queues.

- Restate or paraphrase the questions as needed.

- Ask follow up probing questions to get more in-depth.

Appendix C: Data Collection Process Outline

1. Set time and location; provide information regarding the consent form and copy of the signed form.

2. Interview willing participants individually or in the focus group; ask thought provoking questions to obtain knowledge regarding perceived factors relating to skilled employees workforce acquisition and retention.

3. Record the interviews or focus group on personal iPhone.

4. Upon completion of the interview or focus group, verify that both recordings are clear and complete.

5. Transfer information from digital audio to a Word document and save in multiple locations.

6. Confirm transcribed data and recorded data match.

7. Conduct member checking by emailing a summary of verbatim transcripts to participants to confirm the accuracy of the responses the participants provided.

8. Input raw data into the evaluation software.

Appendix D: Recruitment Email

Greetings.

My name is Kimihiro (Hero) Iwao and I am a Doctoral Candidate working on my dissertation at Walden University. I am conducting a research study concerning Strategies for Cultural Integration Following Cross-Border Mergers and Acquisitions. I am emailing to ask if you would like to take about 30 to 60-minute interview to complete after normal work hours. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be kept confidential.

If you are interested, please reply to this email.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (kimihiro.iwao@waldenu.edu) or ██████████████.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kimihiro (Hero) Iwao

Doctoral Candidate Walden University