HOW DOES AN INDIVIDUAL'S CULTURE TRIGGER BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION IN A DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT? THE CASE OF A EUROPEAN ENFORCEMENT NETWORKAN ACTION RESEARCH INQUIRY

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ABSTRACT

The following qualitative study explored how the role of culture within the individual schema impacted barriers of communication with a group of diverse stakeholders in a European enforcement network. The study utilized both insider-researcher and cooperative inquiry while collecting multiple diverse perspectives with an online pre-test survey, in-depth interviews, an online focus group, meeting facilitation and participant observation. Four action research cycles were used to gain collective input to expose how the role of culture impacted participant's personal biases, stereotypes, and judgments that potentially contributed to barriers of diverse communication.

The collective data informed the implementation of actionable strategies to confront barriers such as language, lack of trust, conflict, and unacknowledged schemas that disrupt multicultural communication. This study validates the importance of individual acknowledgment of how culture influences their schema before diverse communication can be improved for collaboration to occur.

The key findings further indicate how it was possible to change existing beliefs, stereotypes, and biases by first acknowledging what they are within a trusting environment. A focus on the individual's unique schema overcame the complexities of the stakeholders' multiple cultural identities to realize collaborative action. Actionable knowledge generated by collective stakeholders' perspectives, was used to create a new European business initiative. Sustainable change occurred by placing the impact of culture at the heart of inquiry when conducting a diverse stakeholder analysis, combined with a collective leadership approach. In conclusion, culture impacted the stakeholders' perception of reality, making change more effective at an individual level first, to confront the barriers of diverse communication in this European enforcement network.

INTRODUCTION

The European enforcement network is comprised of eighteen different companies representing Belgium, France, England/Wales, Italy, Poland, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Germany, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Spain, and

Portugal. Ignoring the role of culture in this diverse network potentially continues to increase barriers, inflaming further risk of lack of stakeholder engagement and conflict.

As a scholar-practitioner and insider-researcher, understanding how the role of culture impacts communication was central to individual perceptions of the world from a different cultural lens, which influenced personal judgments, biases, and stereotypes, also known as a "schema". The role of culture within the individual schema also posed challenges with creating a mutual understanding of shared terms and actions that could potentially have different meanings in each culture.

The barriers of language, trust, and internal conflict were blocking the collaboration of stakeholders to implement desired strategies by improving skills to nurture diverse relationships. Understanding how learning begins at an individual level, through the ability to recognize and acknowledge their own personal biases, judgments and stereotypes instigated the journey towards achieving higher cultural intelligence (CQ).

To investigate how culture influences stakeholder's schemas, it was necessary to ask further questions on individual perceptions. These questions assisted with exploring individual knowledge or awareness of own schema to interpret the influence of culture:

1. What are the participant's perceptions of the benefits of the network?
2. How do the participants perceive barriers of communication?
3. How does the participant's individual schema help/hinder with multicultural relationships versus same culture relationships?
4. How do the participant's cultural stereotypes influence communication?
5. What are the participant's perceptions of engagement and growth opportunities of the network?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identified Barriers of Communication

Confronting the barriers of diverse communication required further investigation into the combination of the nine contributing concepts of stakeholder analysis, leadership styles, individual schemas, the role of culture, language, lack of trust, multicultural relationships, knowledge transfer, cultural intelligence, and critical reflection, as shown in Figure 1.
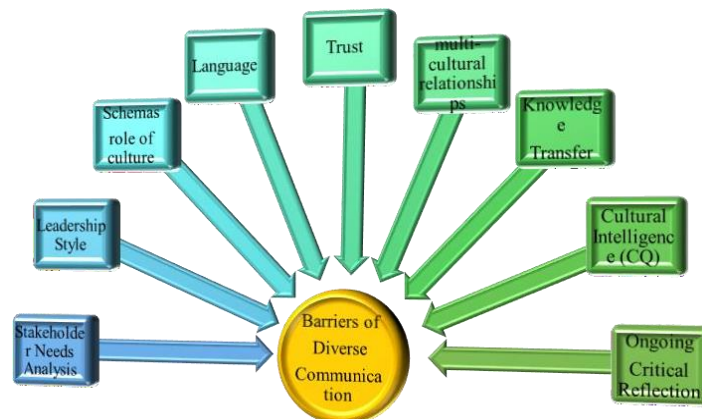

FIGURE 1
THEORETICAL CONCEPT MAP OF BARRIERS TO DIVERSE COMMUNICATION

The European network is experiencing the challenges of diversity, remote working locations, and collaborating knowledge demanding a realignment of strategies with effective actions (Gratton & Erickson, 2007). More recent research (Earley & Ang 2003; Thomas *et al.,* 2008; Ott & Michailova 2018; Caputo et al., 2018) has advanced the relevancy of the concept of "cultural intelligence (CQ)", which centralizes the role of culture at the heart of a stakeholder analysis, communication barriers, building multicultural teams and leadership to meet the demands of globalization (Spitzberg, 2000; Thomas & Inkson, 2017).

Stakeholder Analysis and Connections to Culture

Globalization impacts how practitioners utilize stakeholder analysis, which has adapted to expand from only focusing on the organizational needs to shifting more on the individual stakeholder, holistically as a person including the role of culture (Bryson, 2004; Reed et al., 2009; Kivits, 2011). The challenge is to build enough trust between stakeholders to share these deep, unconscious beliefs to understand how they are engrained within the schema (Harvey & Griffith, 2002).

Communication and Culture

Communication is a very complex topic on its own without adding the further complications of interactions between individuals from different cultures that involve intrapersonal, interpersonal and social skills to create a mutual understanding (Oliveira, 2013; Ochieng & Price, 2009).

Schemas

A key point in this research is the discussion that communication encompasses more than language; it is also our own individual interpretation of the information that triggers judgments based on previous experience (Oliveira, 2013; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018).

The Role of Trust

Trust is the glue that binds intangible confidence between stakeholders, the work group and to the organization (Meyer, 2014; Ochieng & Price, 2009). Trust is a phenomenon that needs to be specifically defined by stakeholders for a collective and transparent understanding of the term, so individuals can take necessary actions to build this bond (Jahansoozi, 2006). Dumitru (2012) reinforces that trust supports authentic multicultural relationship building and is more important than political correctness.

Language

Globalization is compelling organizations to move towards "language standardization" to improve efficiency, although it is necessary not to threaten non-English speaking stakeholders, causing the perception that their contribution is of a lesser value (Thomas & Inkson, 2017). Isaacs (1999) argues that miscommunication also stems from individual's prejudging or simply

not listening actively, so the information exchange is misunderstood, out of context, or interpreted differently than intended. House, et al. (2014) elaborate from a different perspective, confirming that miscommunication also occurs due to lack of CQ, which is significantly impacting organizational failures in various situations such as acquisitions, market penetration and team performance.

Confronting Conflict

The globalized business environment is fuelling rapid change in leadership requirements as multicultural teams are increasingly causing an assortment of challenges from fundamental misunderstandings that result in conflict, creating numerous negative consequences (Lewis, 2006; Thomas & Inkson, 2017; Hammer, 2005). Creativity, openness, active listening and empathy are necessary characteristics to understand others' perceptions to overcome miscommunication, which is normally at the root of conflict (Livermore, 2015; Covey, 2004).

Building Intercultural Relationships

Technology is increasing global communications and the availability of information from other countries is exposing individuals to a variety of cultures not experienced before (Keegan & Green, 2017; Poncini, 2003; Spitzberg, 2000). Building intercultural relationships is a priority for organizational growth in this current global economy that requires a new focus on management skills to nurture a diverse group of stakeholders for organizational competitiveness (Livermore, 2015; Harvey & Griffith, 2002; Ang et al., 2006).

Influence of National Culture

Culture is defined as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another", also the essential foundation of acceptable behavior (Hofstede, 2006; Gelfand et al., 2018). Globalization has propelled diversity management into a priority for organizations that strive to remain competitive although, the practitioner tool box remains low when it comes to figuring out an effective formula to strategically manage a multicultural organization (Podsiadlowski et al., 2013). Huang (2016) builds on existing research and provides tools to adapt this knowledge towards global project managers to bridge cultural differences while confirming intercultural skills are transferable.

The Role of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is described as a deep awareness and focus on developing meaningful connections with stakeholders observing non-verbal and verbal cues, with the ability to engage differently than the individual is automatically conditioned to do so (Bogus & Welbourne, 2003; Rosenberg, 2015). Emotions are triggered by our perceptions that are mainly discerning, absorbed, incorrect and culturally biased when developing any form of relationship (Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Adler, 1991). Adler's (1991) research continues to elaborate that individual

perception can be like a fog that filters our experiences to meet our expectations created by our cultural beliefs.

Leadership

Leaders today need to adapt to face the challenges of implementing strategies within multicultural teams that have been categorized as being at the core of globalization and the underpinning of balancing global strategies with localized knowledge (Zander & Butler, 2010; Rotheracker & Hauer, 2014). However, Deardorff (2009) argues that leadership has different meanings within different cultures and recommends using a "moral circle" to create a set of mutually agreed boundaries on expected group behavior for collaboration to occur.

Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is an evolving multidisciplinary concept for researchers to understand how to meet the current organizational demands of increasing complexities of diverse stakeholders in the current global economy (Ott & Michailova, 2018; Fang, 2017; Thomas, 2006). Due to rapid modernization, cultural diversity is now at the forefront of personal interactions that affect daily organizational transactions where CQ is now considered a necessity (Thomas & Inkson, 2017; Leung & Morris, 2015; Adair et al., 2013; Alon & Higgins, 2005). CQ is composed of four aspects of intelligence to include meta cognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral (Goncalves et al., 2016; Lorenz et al., 2017; Thomas et al., 2008; Early & Ang, 2003; Young et al., 2017). Conversely, if CQ is lacking there is a high risk of miscommunication resulting with an increase in potential stakeholder conflicts due to the reliance on automatic judgments and stereotyping (Kim & Van Dyne, 2012). Cultural intelligence influences individuals' approach to managing conflict by avoiding, problem solving or forcing, which is dependent on cultural identity and must be a priority for leaders to assess for effective communication to occur (Caputo et al., 2018). Cultural diversity affects all individuals due to globalization and existing research reinforces the valuable role of CQ (Gelfand et al., 2017; Fang et al., 2018). Cultural intelligence encompasses a set of skills that permeates the individual's schema to overcome barriers of diverse communication.

METHODOLOGY

Action Research (AR) is a collaborative process involving stakeholder participation to collectively develop practical knowledge with the scholar-practitioner (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). In addition, AR intervenes collectively on the barriers of diverse communication which evolves through inquiry, reflection and action cycles (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Alvesson&Deetz, 2000; Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). Four cycles of insider-researcher inquiry progressively generate collective perspectives from the ten participants for the duration of the study.
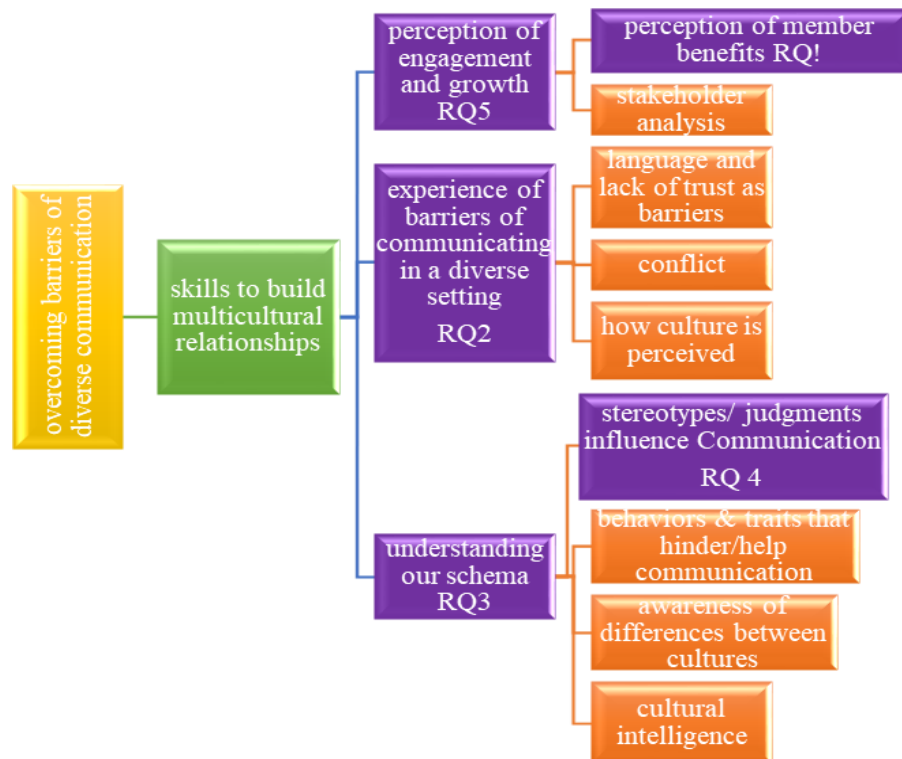
FIGURE 2
THEORETICAL CONCEPT MAP OF BARRIERS TO DIVERSE COMMUNICATION RELATING TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS (IN PURPLE)

Figure 2 provided a visual representation of the research data collection processes and how each related to the identified problem to produce collective actions based on the collaboration of perspectives. Data collection was through semi-structured interviews, focus group, and meeting facilitations with participant observations.

This first cycle of inquiry framed the perceived problem within existing literature in the context of the network. The second cycle of inquiry achieved a deeper understanding of the problem of poor communication within the network by collecting individual input from the stakeholders using online pre-test and semi-structured interviews.

The following flow chart provided a visual of the complexity of diverse communication by showing how each sub-topic (in orange) requires further investigation to engage with the identified barriers as outlined in Figure 3.
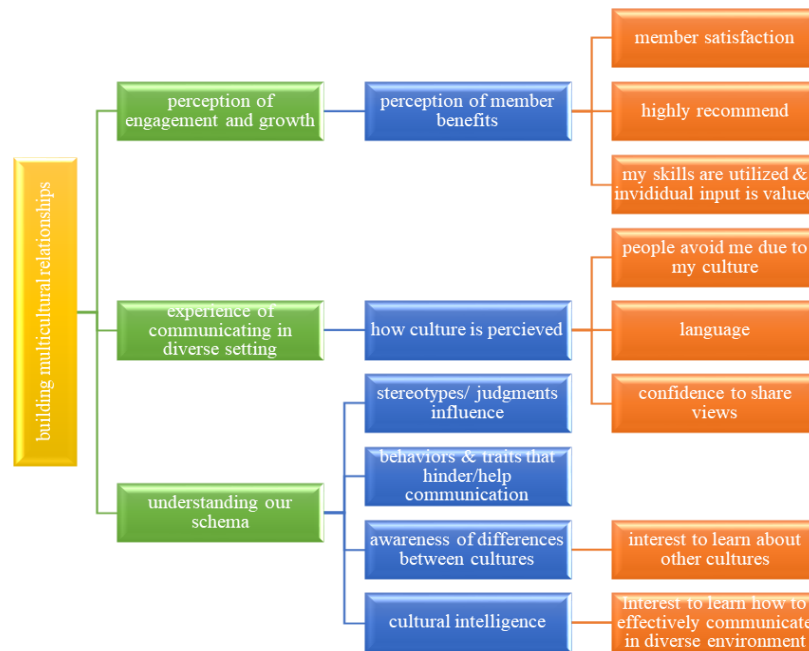
FIGURE 3
SUB TOPICS FOR INQUIRY USING ONLINE PRETEST

Summary of the First Cycle of Insider-Researcher Inquiry

During the meeting member perspectives were shared from the small groups sessions to identify that further inquiry was necessary on the problem of poor communication and how language, trust, and individual culture contributed to existing conflict. To investigate what poor communication means in the context of the network it is necessary to dissect the barriers to building multicultural relationships with three further sub-topics:

1.   Understanding our schema;
2.   Experience of communication in diverse settings;
3.   Perception of engagement and growth within the network.

The patterns of communication traits to improve effectiveness were directly linked to efficiency of using English as well as cultural interpretations.

"Finds communicating frustrating as it's difficult to get the intended message clearly so takes more patience and tolerance" (Participant A6, 2018).

Summary of Inquiry Cycle 2 – Pre-Test and Online Interviews

The two aspects of inquiry during cycle two, involved both the online survey pre-test and semi-structured interviews of the ten participants. The pre-test provided an opportunity for the participants to prepare for the interview and trigger their thinking about the network. Each individual interview reinforced how the role of culture contributed to differences in perceptions of diversity.

"Language is a barrier for deep expression and meaning – I use lots of body language and eye contact to see if we share understanding" (Participant, A3, 2018).

Summary of Inquiry Cycle 3 – Focus Group

In summary, all participants shared candidly some of their personal judgments of other cultures, acknowledged openly to the group some stereotypes that exist and showed how these perceptions can either contribute to or contaminate building relationships with people from other cultures.

"I give the benefit of the doubt that intention is good from the other person and let them create my impression of them not the culture" (Participant A3, 2018).

Most of the participants acknowledge these stereotypes are transferred from parents and society from a young age.

DISCUSSION CHAPTER

The Findings Correlated with Research Questions and Literature

The data collected through this insider-researcher inquiry uses thematic template analysis and interpretation (Cassell & Bishop, 2018). The data is generated from a pre-test survey, semi-structured interviews, focus group and meeting facilitations with participant observations, and links to the literature to address the research questions with ongoing reflections. Ongoing reflections share my research journey whilst challenges my own biases, judgments and stereotypes while acknowledging unexpected learning (Rigg & Trehan, 2008). Furthermore, focuses on how the findings confirm that confronting communication barriers enables learning to occur at first, second and third person in action research. This section continues to share how the findings, based on collective input impact the networks' communication process between stakeholders.

Findings Correlated with Research Question One

> **Research Question 1:**
> **What are the participant's perceptions of the benefits of the network?**

The stakeholder analysis of the participants' input using the online pre-test and interviews focusing on the individual perception of the benefits of the network matches the strategic intention. This research question initiates the research process and opens dialogue with the participants. The network offers a collaboration of enforcement experts from eighteen different European countries, which provides a competitive advantage to the member.

The initial inquiry cycle highlights miscommunication between members is a concern which is also causing the benefits of membership to become blurred. Moving through the cycles of inquiry uncovered new benefits of formally creating a company with the members of the network. This finding is a direct result of the research, without digging deeper into identifying the benefits this opportunity could have been neglected.

On the surface the network benefits are the intended purpose of the network. It is only after further inquiry and focus on individual members' perception of their experience of the

network are the core reasons for conflict exposed such as multiple interpretations of trust and member response times. This is a significant finding that is critical for the collaboration of the members. Creating a member service charter creates an opportunity for continued collective efforts to define terms and actions in the context of the network by the members. This unexpected finding could be the main source of conflict and misunderstandings when each member perceives a different interpretation of these terms or actions. Working through this process collectively unified the members therefore, resulting with each participant experiencing the benefits as intended. Furthermore, clarification of participants' perceptions is vital to achieve collaborative action towards achieving network objectives.

Findings Correlated with Research Question Two

> ### Research Question 2:
> ### How do the participants perceive barriers of communication?

The participants' input during the inquiry indicated that traits such as willingness and openness to learn, along with the ability to actively listen to people from other cultures can improve personal growth from their individual perspective (Li et al., 2015; Rehg et al., 2012). Communication is the core means to exchange information between members therefore, understanding the barriers in the context of individual perception contribute to seeking solutions. The findings indicate that there is discrepancy in the interpretation of what trust means through the varying cultural lenses applied. The level of cultural intelligence varies between participants and must be continually supported by a coaching leadership style for the change process to be sustainable (Ang et al., 2006; Gelfand et al., 2018; Caputo et al., 2018). Individual participant exposure to other cultures within the network initiates mindful approaches to adapting and thriving in diverse situations which can confront barriers to multicultural relationships (Crowne, 2013). Although, only when the individual pursues to improve their cultural intelligence skills in a supportive and trusting environment.

Although, the challenge remains how to help stakeholders overcome the language barrier when confronted by the role of culture that the findings inform. Language is a barrier to expressing deep feelings or thoughts due to the stakeholders' lack of efficiency in English, posing risks of misunderstandings. The findings from one participant (C1 participant, 2018) indicates that by using different languages other than English, it is possible to express thoughts and feelings effectively. Although, for this to occur the members must have a proficiency in the alternate language or this approach could cause further conflict. The creation of the member service charter is proving to be a process that is clarifying key meanings for the operation of the network.

The findings also align with the literature indicating that non-verbal communication is relied on to clarify verbal communication in English when the participant is unsure how to efficiently translate (Oliveira, 2013; Neuliep, 2018). The barrier of language in multicultural communication prompts the individuals' responsibility to be more mindful to insure the message received is the one intended (Adler, 1991).

Findings Correlated with Research Question Three

> **Research Question 3:**
> **How does the participant's individual schema help/hinder with multicultural relationships versus same culture relationships?**

Unexpectedly, a new opportunity for the network is identified instigated by the initial inquiry into the barriers of communication to improve multicultural relationships. Investigating the skills to develop multicultural relationships shifted to a focus to identify what the specific barriers are in diverse communication. Digging deeper into the problem it is uncovered that the core barriers are language, trust, conflict and unacknowledged schemas. Without mindful dialogue between stakeholders that share trust it is not possible to dig deeper into understanding their individual schema (Thomas, 2006; Leung & Morris, 2015). If participants do not acknowledge existing biases, judgments and stereotypes, consequently will continue to perceive their reality without any changes or possibilities to adapt to diverse environments (Gelfand et al., 2017; Young et al., 2017).

The findings on confronting the identified barriers of communication such as language, trust, conflict, and unacknowledged schemas do hinder the ability to nurture relationships in a diverse environment (Alon & Higgins, 2005). The impact of the role of culture within the schema cannot be neglected, as indicated by the findings in the results of this research (Oliveira, 2013). In addition, centralizing culture at the heart of inquiry assists with overcoming the barriers of diverse communication (Siakas et al., 2010). These findings emphasize how the role of culture, within the individual schema impacts stakeholder analysis, leadership, cultural intelligence, trust, and skills to build multicultural relationships (Bucker et al., 2016; Gelfand et al., 2017; Deardorff, 2009).

Findings Correlated with Research Question Four

> **Research Question 4:**
> **How do the participant's cultural stereotypes influence communication?**

The participants in this study are experiencing communication barriers such as language, lack of trust, and conflict. Cultural stereotypes are not new, although the researcher attempted to shift individual perspectives by focusing on their schema to overcome barriers collectively in this diverse approach. The amalgamation of existing literature with multiple participants' perspectives can improve diverse communication problems between stakeholders. The findings indicate that stereotypes can influence communication either negatively or positively depending on the individual perception of the other culture. On the other hand, it is imperative that the individual first acknowledges and identifies the stereotypes they hold before it is possible for change.

In my role as an insider researcher, I use ongoing critical self-reflection throughout the cycles of inquiry to mindfully acknowledge how my own biases, stereotypes and judgments that are impairing my interpretations of participants' perceptions. Simultaneously, I guide the participants through the disruptive individual process of learning to acknowledge personal biases, stereotypes and judgments as shown below in Figure 4.
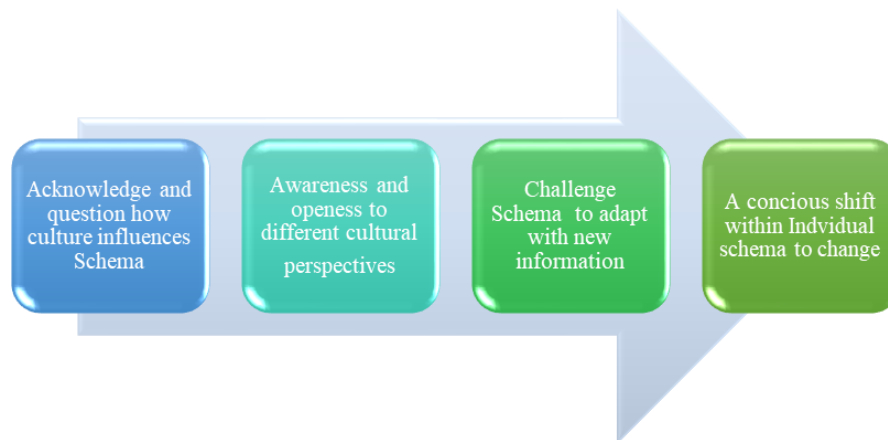

FIGURE 4
INDIVIDUAL SCHEMA CHANGE PROCESS BASED ON FINDINGS

Throughout the four cycles of inquiry, the data indicates how participants begin to attempt to shift their perspectives with critical self-reflection (Leung & Morris, 2015). Acknowledgment of the role of culture within the schema is identified as an integral aspect of inquiry to spark acknowledgment of how beliefs, biases and stereotypes are influencing individual stakeholder perceptions (Fine, 1991; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). Per the findings and supported by the literature the perception of stakeholders is directly influenced by their culture, generating their personal views of reality, with no right or wrong as suggested by Stone, et al., (2010) & Oliveira (2013). Collective participant perspectives are informing each new cycle during ongoing inquiry into existing literature deciphering the barriers of diverse communication framed by the research questions.

The findings clarify that misunderstandings are causing conflicts between stakeholders. The conflicts arise based on the different perceptions of each of the participants and confusion of expectations that are based on the role of culture. A key finding identifies how each participant interprets the meeting interactions by using their cultural lens. At the same time, the findings indicate how most members consider themselves open to different approaches and perspectives. Although, with further inquiry it is apparent that unconsciously participants do make automatic judgments about other cultures that have been engrained into them over their lifetime (Meyer, 2014; Isaacs, 1999).

Does diverse stakeholder management require vulnerability to be effective (Brown, 2012)? During the data collection participants are encouraged to mindfully share or acknowledge a personal cultural stereotype, which exposes them to be vulnerable in a diverse group. Although

this process of acknowledgment is very uncomfortable and poses an emotional risk to experience change with individual beliefs, biases or stereotypes, it is deemed beneficial in this study. A key finding confirms that participant C2, did not put them forward to be on the Board of the network due to the belief that his national culture is not respected enough. This finding confirms the power of the role of culture has on stereotypes and individual perception.

It is necessary to reflect on how stereotypes could be penetrating this individual's schema to trigger a belief that their culture is not respected by other cultures in Europe. The role of culture is having a significant impact on this participant's perception of how their beliefs influence further barriers when communicating with other stakeholders from different cultures (Meyer, 2014; Stone et al., 2010). The role of culture is interpreted as impacting how this participant views others, which is validating that the role of culture does contribute to an individual's schema. Barriers of diverse communication are influenced by the role of culture within the individual schema interrelating directly with engagement and growth of the network.

During the inquiry participants expose their stereotypes during the data collection. On several occasions the findings share how participants verbally confirm they consider themselves open to all cultures and then in the next sentence contradict this by stating a stereotype to justify their viewpoint. The findings further indicate the individual realization of how understanding when, how and why these stereotypes are formed it is possible to change them with new information.

As the facilitator, it is realized that it is essential to have a trust-based relationship with the participants to engage in authentic dialogue before I can mindfully challenge their viewpoint (Livermore, 2015). By using authentic dialogue combined with active dialogic listening and repeating the message back with an explanation, that assists me to fully comprehend what the intended message is (Booher & Innes, 2002; Harvey & Griffith, 2002).During this dialogue, collectively participants begin to learn about the impact of their individual schemas on their view of others and how this knowledge can be a powerful change in perception during the integration of multiple perspectives about shared reality. The researcher interpreted the findings to suggest how the participants evolved personally by sharing in a trust based dialogic exchange through the interviews, focus group and meetings.

The findings further highlight trust is a core barrier to sharing deep personal information triggering natural defense mechanisms such as denial or sticking to existing beliefs (Stone et al., 2010). The findings confirm the establishment of trust between participants is aided with the use of critical-dialogic empathy to encourage reflection and consideration of different perspectives shared (Nagda, 2006). During the focus group, critical dialogic empathy frames the discussion on sharing personal stereotypes, with each participant being open to alternative perceptions or collective mindfulness (Vogus &Welbourne, 2003).

To establish this balance is a delicate process that could turn into conflict if not conducted mindfully (Raelin, 2011; Thomas, 2006). During the moments of vulnerability, it is necessary to be cautious in how context is provided so feelings are acknowledged to guide participants through the discomfort without causing conflict during the focus group or interviews (Raelin, 2017; Jiacheng et al., 2010). It is not possible to stimulate such a deep level discussion without trust. It is my interpretation that all participants did begin to acknowledge their schema

while identifying the sources of their beliefs, which are founded from the culture they are raised in (Deardorff, 2009; Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; Dumitru, 2012).

This journey of joint discovery of our schemas simultaneously is supported with ongoing critical reflection to bring unconscious decisions to the conscious mind (Rigg & Trehan, 2008; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2018). The findings confirm that living and working in different cultures also impacts their individual schemas with multiple cultural identities (Meyer, 2014; Smith & Fischbacher, 2005). Regardless of how many cultures the participants expose themselves to, it did not equate to possessing cultural intelligence (Crowne, 2013). Therefore, it is necessary to begin at the individual level to understand how their culture influences their reality for collective impact.

FINDINGS CORRELATED WITH RESEARCH QUESTION 5

Research Question 5:
What are the participant's perceptions of engagement and growth opportunities of the network?

The purpose of the meeting in Milan is to identify the problem the network is experiencing. During this initial beginning of the research project in this meeting, the role of culture is neglected with a sole focus on investigating ways to improve stakeholder engagement and growth of network. Communication evolves as a core concern, although sifting through various ideas language is identified as a barrier. At this stage, I am aware of the different cultures although, I do not consider how the role of culture is influencing stakeholder perceptions. Alternatively, I seek collective input which aids in the discovery that the problem goes beyond communication skills. The literature is pivotal to provide insight into identifying further barriers of diverse communication that informs the inquiry and data collection as the findings confirm.

The findings highlight the individual shifts of perception between the initial meeting in Milan and in the final fourth cycle of inquiry in Vilnius. As the cycles progress the findings show how with a focus on the barriers to communication, previous perceptions are disrupted. Furthermore, the findings validate how mindful awareness of the role of culture penetrates the individual schema and influences participants' perceptions of reality. By challenging individual perceptions, it is possible to change original beliefs, biases and stereotypes to overcome barriers of language, trust and conflict. The participants of the study integrated with the remaining stakeholders in the Vilnius, indicated an evolved understanding of diverse interactions by the participants. On the other hand, the participants are in the infancy stage of discovery which requires ongoing training for the change to be sustainable.

Stakeholders are at different stages of personal awareness, ranging from being completely unaware differences between cultures exist to another who avoids diverse situations as much as possible. Furthermore, trust is nurtured between stakeholders when personal information about cultural norms are disclosed during the social part of the meetings and the small group sessions.

These findings coincide with the research by Nagda (2006) who suggests when stakeholders share personal information it is possible to gain insight into other cultures. Alternatively, if stakeholders experience fear simply from a lack of understanding another culture can result in avoidance as confirmed by the findings and supported by the research contribution by Neuliep (2018). The findings indicate stakeholders are shifting towards adapting within the diverse environment, which is referred to as ethno relative (Ferraro & Briody, 2017; Yershova et al., 2000).

In the fourth cycle of inquiry at the meeting at Vilnius, collective input establishes the network's first moral circle (Deardorff, 2009) to define terms as acceptable service standards by all. The moral circle is a useful concept which links trust, leadership and cultural intelligence with stakeholder analysis based on diverse relationships to overcome barriers. In addition, the moral circle outlines shared definitions that supports the findings that if expectations are not clear trust evaporates when members do not respond in a certain manner or time frame. Now that all members fully comprehend and agree to the service terms that they participated in defining, member engagement is impacted positively. I interpret that this collaboration creates a synergy and bond between stakeholders. I further interpret that the research process contributes to the confidence in formalizing a business with participating members. Failure to work through this process and collectively contribute stakeholder perspectives result in conflict and lack of engagement.

The findings also confirm that stakeholder conflict arises when regular updates are not provided when members neglect their responsibilities as members. On the other hand, further inquiry stimulates the investigation to discover that cultural expectations differ on interpreting the acceptable response times between members. For example, in one culture it is acceptable to respond within fourteen days versus another culture where the expectation is to respond within the same day. This is a key finding that supports the need to create a member service charter that stipulates the consensus of all members on the agreed response time for the network. Working in groups during the meeting in Vilinus, it is agreed that for any correspondence between members' confirmation of the request must be in writing within seventy-two hours. The member service charter outlines specifics so there is a mutual understanding based on the collaboration of input by the members. This is a positive finding for the network that could overcome existing sources of conflict and misunderstandings to improve engagement and growth.

In addition, the researcher's facilitation of the meeting has a different approach with a new understanding of the importance to consider the role of culture. Understanding how facilitation skills improve after being confronted by their individual perceptions to be authentic and open and to actively listen to all input, as opposed to simply attempting to persuade the group to their way of thinking. By sharing some examples of the researcher's own stereotypes, biases and judgments subliminally provides permission for other to do the same (Zhao et al., 2013). In the role as researcher and facilitator, it is useful to conduct a cultural due diligence to understand how culture influences the behaviour of each participant and the context (Logan, Steel & Hunt, 2015; Deardorff, 2009).

The findings indicate using insider-researcher inquiry provides a positive advantage to discussions with each participant based on an existing relationship, with a focus on what they

like about the network and what can be improved. Structuring the questions in this flow provides an easy conversation starter. On the other hand, another interview session with participants after disclosing the findings in Vilnius could have provided more insight into how members perceive the process of acknowledging their schema. Although, verbal feedback during the social evening indicates participants did have some surprises by shifting their perspectives based on new information. This is encouraging progress, while we continue this learning journey together to improve our cultural intelligence for collaborative action towards creating a new European enforcement company (Gut et al., 2017).

CONCLUSION

Overview of Research on Barriers of Diverse Communication

Confronting the barriers of diverse communication during this insider- researcher inquiry validated the role of culture does impact the individual schema that directly influences diverse communication. In addition, it interrelates to stakeholder analysis, leadership approach and building multicultural relationships. To lead and communicate with diverse stakeholders, it is impossible for me as the facilitator to adapt one approach to appease the group. Therefore, if each individual stakeholder acknowledges how their own culture influences their schema, it is possible to adapt to other cultures. The delicate process of acknowledging the individual schema requires a deep level of trust between stakeholders to avoid conflict. When stakeholders are accountable for their own perceptions and aware that their schemas can change, it is possible to confront the barriers of diverse communication. Awareness of culture combined with a willingness to learn about different cultures is a good start to develop stakeholders' cultural intelligence. Using a combination of insider-researcher and collective inquiry with critical ongoing reflection, individual and organizational learning occurred.

A social constructionist lens invited all participants to provide input from multiple perspectives regarding barriers to communication, such as of language, trust, and unacknowledged schemas. On the other hand, a positivist lens only assesses results on empirical data which could not encompass the participant's unique subjective contribution to the process. The intervention outlined the value of learning by experience and acknowledgement of the change in us to launch continuous personal and organizational growth. Participant evaluation continually evolved using reflection when acknowledging personal perception with each action cycle engaging inquiry into the barriers of communication.

The actionable knowledge initiated expanded the practical application of focusing on the role of culture within the individual schema to stimulate engagement and growth for the network. An overview ensued to describe how the learning changed the perceptions and behaviors of participants, how the intervention improved the network, and unexpected outcomes and implications of this research.

The Process of Knowledge Creation

The research process was initiated to confront the obstacle of barriers of diverse communication through the focus on the role of culture within the individual schema. The theoretical labels frame the inquiry using an online pretest, interviews, focus group and meeting participation to conduct four cycles of action research. The complexity of the problem is exposed upon initial inquiry as I sifted through existing research to begin the data collection process. Although the practical focus appears to be a clear objective, the individual change journey is very messy and must be mindfully facilitated to insure a trusting environment is established.

As an insider researcher with existing relationships with each participant I can dig deeper into their individual schemas based on the trust that exists, which is fundamental to the authenticity of this inquiry. It is necessary to transfer the knowledge and skills to improve individual skill levels of cultural intelligence. The researcher was attempting to overcome misunderstandings with a diverse group of stakeholders which requires different skills to inspire every individual to acknowledge their own schema. It is confirmed by the data that with individual acknowledgment of what their biases, stereotypes and judgments are, personal change can occur. The literature interrelates with the problems that barriers of communication cause with further elaboration in the context of a group of diverse stakeholders.

The literature continued to reveal that skills such as flexibility, authenticity and accountability could improve the pursuit of cultural intelligence. Merely understanding similarities and differences between cultures is no longer adequate when dealing with diverse stakeholders with multiple cultural identities. In addition, engaging diverse stakeholders required acknowledgement of how my own biases, stereotypes and judgments impair my perception of reality. It is only after the researcher worked through this uncomfortable process of disclosing their own biases and stereotypes that it was possible to mindfully be more open to different perspectives.

In a leadership role, it is necessary to share a trusting relationship to reveal the raw truth of each person's perceptions. Without going through this process with critical self-reflection guided by a trustful leader who will not pass judgment, it could be a challenge to learn about how we all think differently based on personal experiences. When a leader places the role of culture at the heart of inquiry, is it possible to expose stakeholders to other perspectives through understanding their own limitations?

Diverse communication is complex and without navigating through the swampy land of self-discovery it could contribute to further barriers of communication. Culture can potentially be related to as the compass that guides our core values and beliefs (Meyer, 2014). Neglecting the impact of culture will continue to block trust, causing conflict resulting with lack of collaboration of diverse stakeholders (Kim & Van Dyne, 2012; Caputo et al., 2018; Korzilius et al., 2016; Thomas et al., 2008). All the above themes were intertwined to synergize into a group of skills that encompassed trust to achieve a multi-cultural organization with high CQ stakeholders and leaders who are "edge walkers" that will thrive in this global economy (Deardorff, 2009; Yershova, 2000; Rehg et al., 2012).

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