

The dynamics of communication in ethnically diverse groups: The experiences of academics

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Abstract

This article outlines a study of the dynamics of group communication between ethnically diverse members in an academic setting. The study provides an understanding of how ethnic diversity influences communication in small groups of academics. Drawing on in-depth interviews with forty academic researchers from five universities in Malaysia, it is shown that despite little interaction among members of different ethnic backgrounds on non-task activities, the groups were cohesive and their communication climate was supportive; thus emphasising the practices of collaborative decision making, co-operative problem solving and equal participation in the groups. Based on findings that vary somewhat from the literature, the study concludes that ethnic diversity brings a positive outcome to communication in groups.

Introduction

“A good thing about different racial or ethnic backgrounds – we might have different perspectives. Maybe because of the way [we were] brought up, our cultures, our values, we are different and we tackle things differently.”

The above interview extract is an example of how one academic perceives the effect of ethnic diversity on communication practices among the members in her workgroup. This paper aims to provide an understanding of the influences of ethnic diversity on communication and effectiveness in academic groups at an individual level. To achieve such understanding, I delve into individuals’ perceptions and experiences of the issues being explored. Group members’ perceptions and experiences comprehensively depict the nature of communication and effectiveness in ethnically diverse workgroups.

A considerable amount of research has been done on communication in diverse groups in organisations (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), particularly examining differences in gender and tenure (Frink et al., 2003; Wheelan & Verdi, 1992; Wisecup et al., 2005), and race and ethnicity (Cox et al., 1991; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Gibson, 1999; Roberson & Park, 2007). Nevertheless, despite the claims that ethnic diversity has a significant impact on organisations, there is no clear indication of how and why cultural diversity affects

group outcomes (Kirkman et al., 2004). Previous studies examining the relationship between cultural diversity and group outcomes have shown mixed results (Ely, 2004): some found positive outcomes, while others found negative outcomes. A considerable number of studies have identified the negative effects that heterogeneity could bring to groups (Mannix & Neale, 2005; Tyran & Gibson, 2008), such as communication barriers (Watson et al., 1993) and increased conflict among group members (Pelled, 1996). On the other hand, some studies have found a positive relationship between cultural diversity and group outcomes (Homan et al., 2007; Lim & Zhong, 2006). According to Kirkman et al. (2004), most of the studies that found positive support for heterogeneity used laboratory settings, while those that found negative support used field research. They suggest that more field research is needed to resolve these conflicting findings. Parallel with Kirkman and colleagues' suggestion, the present study uses field research to examine the impact of ethnicity on group communication and effectiveness.

Enthusiasm among researchers to examine the relationship between ethnicity, race, culture and group communication in organisations has brought about a number of studies in this area (Gibson, 1999; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Kirkman et al., 2004; Mason, 2004; Oetzel, 2002; Roberson & Park, 2007; Shapcott et al., 2006). Recent trends show a growing number of studies on groups, making use of employees in business, non-profit and financial organisations as a sample (Elfenbein & O'Reilly, 2007; Ely, 2004). However, due to the difficulties in controlling and manipulating natural groups in organisations (Oetzel, 2002), there is a growing number of studies employing groups of students in higher academic institutions as a sample (Gibson, 1999; Lim & Zhong, 2006; Watson et al., 1993; Wisecup et al., 2005). It is argued that such a sample cannot truly represent the real practice in organisations (Oetzel et al., 2001). In order to gain a better understanding of how groups are functioning in organisations, it is crucial for researchers to utilise real organisational workgroups as a sample (Strubler & York, 2007). The use of students does not reveal the actual behaviours of members in real organisations, and thus will lead to the question of validity when generalising the findings in the organisational context (Krebs et al., 2006, p.737). The present study, therefore, utilises groups in real settings in academic institutions in Malaysia as participants.

The issue of diversity is "extremely controversial, particularly in educational contexts" (Castor, 2005, p.481). As society is becoming more diverse and pluralistic, the challenge for academic institutions is how to communicate with members of diverse demographic backgrounds. Academics of different cultural backgrounds are more likely to face difficulties in understanding the acceptable behaviours and what is expected of them (Barbosa & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007). Most of the time, the use of language reflects hierarchical differences among them. For instance, an academic from Germany who works in a University that is high in power distance will find it very difficult to call his or her peer "doctor" when they hold a PhD degree, while it is a usual practice in the university. In this case, cultural and communication barriers prevail, which then lead to misunderstandings and ultimately threaten the group's stability.

Minority groups in universities and colleges continue to face challenges in attaining tenure and higher ranked positions (Evans & Chun, 2007) either at the university or faculty level. Though promotions among academics are evaluated on an individual basis, they are determined by those who are in power.

It is more likely that the ethnic minority groups are discriminated against by the majority. Barbosa and Cabral-Cardoso (2007) stressed that academics from minority groups who are less familiar with the political manoeuvring are more likely to be negatively affected by the politics of the career advancement system in universities. Based on ethnic background, an underrepresented minority group is subject to more bias and prejudice. For instance, in academic medicine, race and ethnicity is considered to be the main factor that differentiates the minority from majority groups in relation to promotion criteria, recruitment efforts, leadership behaviour towards faculty, and scrutiny of professional competence or credentials (Price et al., 2005). In fact, ethnic minority groups also face difficulties in obtaining research grant funding and support for professional advancement.

Motivated by this background, the two main research questions addressed in the present study are:

1. How do academics experience ethnic diversity in a small group?
2. How does ethnic diversity influence task and relational communication in academic groups?

Ethnic diversity and social categorisation

In this study, diversity is defined as “the collective amount of differences among members within a social unit” (Harrison & Sin, 2006, p.191). In particular, it is limited to ethnic diversity, that is, the differences that are visible in people that often trigger responses based on bias, prejudice or stereotypes (Miliken & Martins, 1996). Ethnicity is defined as the common characteristic of a group of people who belong to a particular race or religion, or who possess values, attitudes and norms that reflect their cultural heritage (Cox et al., 1991; Paletz et al., 2004). Using self-categorisation theory as a springboard, this study examines how ethnic diversity influences communication in groups. Self-categorisation theory (an extension of self identity theory) is widely used by researchers to understand issues and problems in the workplace (Ellemers et al., 2003; Turner, 1985), particularly in examining ways that members of diverse groups interact.

Although self-categorisation theory dominates research using a positivist approach (for example, Ayoko, 2007; Chatman et al., 1998; Kirkman et al., 2004; Richard & Shelor, 2002; Vodosek, 2007), this study is framed by the theory looking at it from a constructionist approach. This is due to the exploratory nature of this study which seeks to examine the experiences of employees in academic institutions working in ethnically diverse groups. A similar approach has been adopted by previous researchers. For instance, Schaafsma (2008) used this approach to examine ethnic minority and majority members’ experiences of interethnic relations in their work unit. Based on interviews with a total of 219 respondents conducted over a period of 14 months, Schaafsma explored participants’ real experiences on the issues relating to interethnic relations at the workplace. Similarly, in order to understand how experienced physiotherapists communicate clinical reasoning with patients and novice physiotherapists, Ajjawi and Higgs (2007) also used the constructionist approach. The approach allowed the researchers to

understand the participants' practices and experiences related to the communication of clinical reasoning.

Self-categorisation theory suggests that people identify themselves based either on their personal or social identities and that their self-categorisation processes have implications for intragroup similarities or differences (Haslam et al., 2000). When the individuals begin to categorise themselves into a particular group, social categorisation takes place. Most often, individual members tend to favour those who share a common identity.

Social categorisation is defined as a process of bringing together social objects or events in groups which are equivalent with regard to an individual's actions, intentions, attitudes and systems of beliefs (Tajfel, 1974, p.69). The social categorisation process takes place when individuals perceive others as similar to the self (in-groups), or different from the self (out-groups). In particular, the division of members into in-groups or out-groups is based on individuals' categorical judgements of other people (Haslett & Ruebush, 1999), which are mainly based on their demographic characteristics such as age, ethnicity and gender. According to Chatman and Flynn (2001), others' apparent physical features such as race, sex or national origin become an important basis for an individual to categorise them and predict their behaviours.

At the outset, it is more likely that individuals tend to use demographic characteristics (particularly race or ethnicity) to categorise themselves and others into social categories (Richard et al., 2007), and associate themselves and those who belong to the same group positively (Caspersz et al., 2002; Tajfel et al., 1971). This fosters workgroup differentiations when the members perceive in-groups as equal to the self, which in turn leads to in-group favouritism and out-group discrimination (Hogg & Terry, 2000). As a result, they see others as a group stereotype rather than unique individuals (Mannix & Neale, 2005). Consequently, such differentiations create "us-them" dynamics within groups (Cunningham, 2005, p.252), where the group members show an ethnocentric attitude toward dissimilar others (out-group bias) while regarding their own group as superior (in-group bias) (Ensari & Miller, 2002). This can be best explained by "intergroup bias" where out-group members are likely to be stereotypically judged more quickly and negatively than the in-group members.

Categorisation is fundamental to communication in ethnically diverse groups. Increased diversity in groups, more often than not, results in "group processes losses, which in turn, lead to group performance losses" (Ely, 2004, p.756). The way individuals identify themselves by socially comparing themselves with others directly influences their perceptions and interactions with other members in the group (Ellemers & Rink, 2005), which in turn, affects group effectiveness. In ethnically diverse groups, the categorisation process is seen as a "key mechanism" (Cunningham, 2005) due to the composition of group members with regard to ethnic backgrounds, and typically triggers intergroup bias. Consequently, group effectiveness and members' affects are more likely to be low. In ethnically diverse groups, members who are dissimilar in terms of ethnicity are more likely to experience communication difficulties when interacting with those who are ethnically different from them. Such differentiations exist as a result of categorisation processes that individuals use as a way of organising the world around

them (Tajfel et al., 1971; Turner, 1985). Often, group members use demographic characteristics to categorise others (Turner, 1982) and invoke behaviours that match their expectations. Consequently, it will decrease the effectiveness of the group.

Previous research suggests that people interpret others' behaviours differently, based on whether the person is perceived as an in-group or out-group member (Ellemers & Rink, 2005). Subsequently, those who are demographically different are likely to be more affected by in-group / out-group biases than those who are similar (Kirkman et al., 2004; Tajfel et al., 1971). People who come from the same ethnic background feel more comfortable interacting with those who belong to the same ethnic group.

The in-group / out-group effect provides an explanation for the reasons heterogeneous groups hold less co-operative norms. In this regard, communication in ethnically diverse groups is mainly influenced by the social identity salience of the group members (Haslam et al., 2000). When ethnic differences become salient among the group members, the ethnically dissimilar individuals tend to favour in-groups rather than out-groups which subsequently results in less co-operation among members of out-groups (Chatman & Flynn, 2001).

Ethnic diversity and communication

Earlier studies of group communication are dominated by a focus on task communication, particularly the examination of decision making and problem solving groups; but these studies did not directly examine the effects of diversity on group communication processes. Only recently have researchers begun to examine the influence of diversity on group decision making. For instance, Li and Siegel (1999) conducted a study to examine whether the proportional representation of racially-mixed groups has an effect on communication behaviours in decision making groups. The result indicates that Asians who were in a numerical minority position in a Caucasian-dominated group communicated less and were more passive compared to their counterparts who were in more balanced or homogeneous groups. Recently, Sommers (2006) conducted a study to examine the effect of ethnic diversity on group decision making and indicated similar findings. Comparing Whites and Blacks in a jury context, his study found support for the contention that ethnic diversity in groups leads to increased performance.

Although task communication has gained more attention from scholars in group communication studies (Pate et al., 1998; Webber & Donahue, 2001; Wisecup et al., 2005), relational communication is also pertinent in groups. Relational communication is defined as "verbal and nonverbal messages that create the social fabric of a group by promoting relationships between and among group members" (Keyton, 1999, p.192). Certainly, relationships among members in groups play a significant role in group processes, and the importance of relationship has been recognised by group researchers, particularly in decision making and group problem solving task groups (Frey & Sunwolf, 2005). Relying on task-related communication alone is not sufficient for groups to achieve their objectives, rather, the relationships

with those with whom they must interact should also be the concern of group members (Keyton, 1999). In understanding how employees of academic institutions communicate in groups, this study examines both task and relational communication.

Despite the conflicting findings on the role of ethnicity in group communication (Williams & O'Reilly, 1998), the conclusion that is drawn from past studies (Cox et al., 1991; Watson et al., 1993) is that ethnic diversity in groups does have a significant effect on the communication processes of groups (Mason, 2004). This is clearly reflected in research conducted by Cox et al. (1991), who studied the effects of ethnic group differences between Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and Anglos in the evaluation of co-operative and competitive behaviours in a group task. They found out that at the individual level, the Asian, Black and Hispanic employees had a more co-operative orientation to a task than Anglos. Similarly, in a study conducted by Sargent and Sue-Chan (2001), it was concluded that groups of higher ethnic diversity showed higher levels of task-specific and group efficacy at the conclusion of their project. This finding provides evidence that ethnic diversity facilitates better communication among group members provided that the group is cohesive and the members are interdependent in completing the tasks. However, as the study was conducted among university students, the findings cannot be generalised to natural workgroups. The present study will use natural groups in academic institutions to examine the influence of ethnic diversity on communication among group members.

The group communication climate is another important factor that determines the communication behaviours of members in ethnically diverse groups. Burn (2004) suggests that a co-operative or supportive communication climate promotes co-operation that could lead to increased cohesion and productivity, while a competitive or defensive communication climate promotes competition among members. Members who experience a co-operative communication climate in their groups will be satisfied with the groups and could work longer and perform better on the work tasks. In a study conducted by Hobman et al. (2004), group openness is found to be a moderating factor to support workgroup involvement. When communicating with members of different ethnic backgrounds, openness could provide a basis for the members with more open communication. Consequently, the group openness undoubtedly becomes a platform for the members to appreciate each other's differences by exchanging ideas, thus leading to creativity in ideas (Hobman et al., 2004; McLeod et al., 1996).

Methods

In-depth interviews were conducted with 40 academics who had experience of working in ethnically diverse groups in two private and two public universities in Malaysia. In this study, the in-depth interviews were mainly used to explore the respondents' stories about their experiences communicating in ethnically diverse groups. This study used a combination of structured and unstructured interviews (also called semi-structured in-depth interviews). This type of interview allowed the respondents to

freely talk about their views and perceptions on the issue through a loosely structured list of questions, that is, an interview guide (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The interview questions covered several issues related to group members' perceptions of group communication and effectiveness in ethnically diverse groups including: (1) the practices of communication and effectiveness in their group; and (2) their attitudes towards working in ethnically diverse groups.

With the respondents' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded except for two due to interviewees' reluctance. In the latter case, detailed notes were taken. All the interviews were then fully transcribed. The qualitative data were then organised, categorised and analysed with the assistance of qualitative computer software, Nvivo8. They were then transcribed. The interview data were analysed based on phenomenological analysis.

Findings

The first pattern of the study findings suggests that the respondents' experiences of ethnic diversity were posited in three main dimensions: beneficial, neutral and challenging. Mixed ethnicity in groups creates a positive climate which enables its members to gain new learning experiences from each other. The view least shared by the respondents was that ethnic diversity is challenging. Accounts that did express this view revolved around the cultural and religious differences which infused problems and challenges among members of different ethnic backgrounds when adapting to the differences.

The dominant view expressed by respondents when describing their experience was neutral. In this view, ethnic diversity was seen as neither problematic nor beneficial. Rather, these respondents noted that individual differences were more pertinent than ethnic differences when working in a group. The common statements used by these respondents were: "I don't feel any difference", "nothing comes to my mind", "ethnic diversity does not make any difference", "it has nothing to do with ethnicity", "I never look at the quality of work based on ethnicity". It is, however, important to note that the majority of respondents who held this view were those who belonged to public universities.

The discussion in the interviews also demonstrated that ethnic differences had a positive influence on group communication among academics. This perspective was grounded in the notion that ethnic differences can be a source of new insights and skills (Ely & Thomas, 2001) which could benefit individuals in the group and the group as a whole. Recognising that people of different ethnic backgrounds bring different sets of experiences to the groups explains the positive experiences the academics reported when asked about what diversity meant to them. One participant acknowledged the advantage of diversity when he described it as a good experience for the group members: "We get to understand how they [people of different ethnic backgrounds] work". As a Malay participant suggested, ethnic diversity is a resource which individuals in a group could use to learn working styles from each other and from which they could take whatever was useful for the betterment of the group.

Despite the differences among ethnic groups, most respondents reported that ethnic diversity was either beneficial or had no influence on communication in academic groups. Although the mix of ethnicity in a group becomes a new source of learning and provides synergy to group members, individuals' personalities and communication styles were perceived as contributing towards a greater influence on group communication. The majority of respondents who held this view acknowledged commonalities on personality and working style as more important than ethnic similarities and differences:

I believe it's more up to individual rather than ethnicity because it depends on individuals. Some individuals are more relaxed, some individuals are more sort of organized. There are some people who are very organised and some people who are unorganised and relaxed. So it depends on individuals, not ethnic background. (MCM12)

The second pattern of the study findings relates to the experiences of academics in terms of their perceptions regarding how ethnic diversity impacted on their task and relational communication. It is clear when looking at the pattern of task communication in the multi-ethnic groups that co-operative communication is widely practised among members. Among the major patterns in task communication include: collaborative decision making, co-operative problem solving and equal group participation. As well as using collective decision making, groups of academics also solved project-related issues co-operatively. Despite their different ethnic backgrounds, members of academic groups had opportunities to participate equally in group discussions:

No one has been sort of been discriminated when it comes to giving opinion, or if we are not interested in listening to their ideas because they are from different ethnic background. (FAM20)

Although respondents repeatedly indicated the importance of reaching a consensus when making a decision on task-related issues in their groups, importantly, those who have more knowledge about the issues being discussed are more advantaged in the making of decisions. Most of the time, ethnicity is not taken into account regarding who was supposed to make decisions in the group. As a Chinese respondent noted, "It has nothing to do with ethnicity but different areas of expertise" (FCM 16).

In regard to relational communication, despite the lack of socialising and non-task activities among academic members, ethnic diversity resulted in a cohesive group and supportive communication climate. Members of academic groups experience a lack of socialising with others in their groups. Approximately one-third of the respondents reported spending only short amounts of time with other group members. One Chinese respondent reported that, other than at meetings, his group members only met during events organised by the university such as faculty gatherings, open days or convocations (MDC5). On top of that, more often than not, members meet only to discuss issues related to project tasks. They seldom meet to discuss issues related to non-task activities. For example, another Chinese respondent who was a group leader said:

Only during lunchtime we will talk about other thing or else will be totally scientific.
(FCC8)

Despite their lack of interaction on non-task related matters, the groups appear to be cohesive. The construct of liking was at the centre of cohesiveness in multi-ethnic academic groups in Malaysia. Approximately half of the respondents of all ethnic groups agree that liking other group members creates a cohesive group. Quite often, the respondents referred to liking as 'knowing each other well', which allows the group members of different ethnic backgrounds to become close to one another. In general, members of different ethnic backgrounds who know each other and are familiar with one another can work together to create a cohesive group.

A supportive communication climate exists alongside ethnic diversity in academic groups. Most respondents agree that the fact they can communicate well with other group members, regardless of their ethnic background, is an important factor that leads to effective communication in the groups. Many respondents acknowledge that individual members' tolerance and willingness to accept others' differences helps their groups create a good communication climate. A Malay respondent described her experience as follows:

We have good communication. They can understand me. For example, when I said, 'I'm sorry I have to take a break because it's my prayer time. So is it okay if we postpone the discussion?' They said 'okay, okay, you go'. (FDM2)

The non-existence of ethnic bias among members also makes good communication among them feasible. The majority of respondents declared that their group members were very focused on their research and therefore they did not find any sense of bias in the group. In fact, respondents did not see that ethnic background was important in a research project:

For us, for a scientist, for us background is not important at all. Not really because our project got nothing to do with ethnic background. (MDC1)

Discussion

The findings from the interview data suggest that ethnic diversity generally has a positive influence on communication practices and the effectiveness of academic groups. The main exception to these positive relationships was found in the relational communication practices, particularly in the informal group contexts. Ethnic diversity, as portrayed in the literature, brings negative working experiences for group members (Barbosa & Cabral-Cardoso, 2007; Christerson & Emerson, 2003; Íris & Carlos, 2007). The findings of the qualitative investigation in this paper highlight the positive and neutral ethnic diversity experiences among academics in workgroups. For many academics, interacting with ethnically

diverse members in workgroups did not create negative feelings. Rather, ethnic diversity was associated with a positive group outcome. Likewise, ethnic diversity in a group was not perceived as a hindrance to effective communication. In fact, the majority of the respondents claimed that ethnic diversity was never seen as either problematic or beneficial to the group.

The pro-diversity belief (van Dick, van Knippenberg, Hägele, Guillaume & Brodbeck, 2008) expressed by respondents in this study promotes their positive working experiences in the groups. Accordingly, another possible explanation to the academics' positive experiences is related to the in-group and out-group categorisation. What is likely to happen in group processes is that, as individuals perceive their group membership as salient, they tend to categorise others on the basis of their surface level characteristics such as ethnicity. They are more likely to consider individuals who possess similar characteristics as the in-group and behave negatively towards those who are not similar or whom they consider as members of an out-group. In this study, the findings indicated that members' weak ethnic identification moderates the social categorisation process, and this should lead, in turn, to a greater understanding when interacting with diverse members and greater ability to develop an effective workgroup.

It is clear that ethnic identification is not an important indicator which strongly influences the academics' experiences and perceptions of communication in ethnically diverse groups. Rather, it became apparent that a range of variables mediate the connection between ethnic diversity and communication among academic researchers, most notably related to individuals' different personalities and workgroup climates. Theoretically speaking, this pattern of result suggests that intergroup relations are not salient in academics groups' experiences of ethnic diversity. This finding was not supportive of the literature. Previous studies using self-categorisation theory indicated that groups that are grappling with ethnic diversity experienced communication difficulties such as conflict, lack of group cohesion and lack of co-operation among group members (Chatman & Flynn, 2001).

Implications and conclusion

Previous studies that used field research suggested the effect of heterogeneity on groups led to negative results (Kirkman et al., 2004). Most of these studies employed quantitative methodologies. On the other hand, using qualitative methodology, this study found positive results. Other than the research design employed in this study, the research context also explains the difference in findings. In this study, the use of academic groups that were ethnically diverse showed group outcomes that were different from group outcomes in non-academic organisations. It is, however, important to note that the diversity among academics is more salient on individuals' personalities rather than ethnic backgrounds. Academics tend to work well with others of different ethnic backgrounds and tend to value co-operation, provided that the members have similar personalities. Hinds et al. (2000) argue that individuals are more likely to choose future members who they already know, and those who share the

same areas of interest. The academic respondents in this study strongly believe that individuals' personalities are more important than ethnic backgrounds in group interactions. Most often, in a small research group, academics tend to choose to work with those persons who match their needs and expectations. For this reason, the choice of members in group research projects is most frequently based on the similarity of individuals' personalities. More often than not, group members with similar personalities facilitate interaction and task-oriented work.

In addition, high educational level and high intercultural exposure to ethnic diversity were seen as the contributing factors which determine effective communication in academic groups. As highly educated people, academics may have had formative experiences with interethnic interaction during their academic training periods. Tamam (2009) reported that Malaysian university students have ample opportunity to forge interethnic friendships at university. Many academics in Malaysia receive at least their first degree in either local universities or universities abroad and had opportunities to interact with almost all ethnic groups in the country including Chinese, Malay and Indian. Therefore, high interethnic contact and exposure to out-groups among academics in Malaysia is a factor which can explain the positive communication experience found in this study. However, the present study does not look specifically at the relationship between the perception of interethnic contact and the prior experience of this contact. With this limitation in mind, this study is not able to further explain this issue. Further study should examine this relationship to further understand the interactions among academics in workgroups and the influences on group effectiveness.

The findings in this study have implications for self-categorisation theory. The overall findings of this research provide new insights into ethnic diversity in groups, underpinned by the social categorisation perspective. Although the literature extensively investigates the implications of ethnic diversity in groups, there has not been a wide exploration of the insights of individual group members in an academic context. In regard to practical applications, the findings can be used by managers and employees of culturally diverse organisations generally, and academic institutions particularly, as a guide to more effective workgroups.

In this study, the sample is confined to academics who work in small group research projects, and the findings may lack generalisability to the broader academic population. Further research could gainfully employ samples from different types of academic groups, such as curriculum and administration groups. The recruitment of different types of groups may allow the findings to be generalised by making comparisons between them. In addition, the inability to examine group composition made it impossible for this study to make a comparison between one group and another, as individuals' perceptions do not necessarily represent their group. As such, it would be worthwhile for future research to examine the effect of ethnic diversity on workgroup communication and effectiveness at the individual, group and organisational levels.

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