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Interdependences between Global Mobility and Diversity

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1. Introduction

Diversity has been and still is one of the hot topics in the Global Mobility sphere: may it be in scientific publications, at conferences, e.g. at the ERC Worldwide Conference 2019 or in surveys, e.g. by KPMG¹. The raised interest shown by this ubiquity of the concept "diversity" shows its importance and relevance for international assignments. It also makes it worth taking a closer look at the interdependences between Global Mobility and diversity and their impact on international assignments: how do both fields affect each other and how can this help foster the development of Global Mobility from an operational function to a strategic partner. The goal of Global Mobility is to be a "partner on talent, advisory and risk management" instead of just being seen as responsible for the critical areas of "risk and compliance" (SantaFe 2018; 3). The present paper puts the focus on being a "partner on talent (...) management" and to try to find solutions for one of today's biggest challenges, the 'war for talent' (Chambers et al. 1998), by integrating Global Mobility and diversity and supporting the diverse workforce to reach strategic positions so that businesses can benefit best from the advantages of diversity.

The main thesis question of this paper is:

Can the interdependences between Global Mobility and Diversity and their impact on Talent Management help Global Mobility to become a more strategic partner of the business?

In particular, the following questions shall be addressed:

"How does Diversity affect Global Mobility?"

"What are the challenges of a globally mobile and diverse workforce?"

"How does Global Mobility affect Diversity?"

"How can Global Mobility and Diversity help advance Talent Management?"

The paper is structured as follows:

At first, the concepts of Global Mobility, diversity and talent management are discussed. The author includes different definitions of Global Mobility, various views on diversity and multiple concepts within the scope of talent management in order to show the variety of meanings attributed to the concepts. Another layer of complexity is added by showing how the theoretical concepts can be transferred to the practical implementation in organizations. This is followed by an assessment on how diversity affects Global Mobility. Through diversity, non-traditional expatriates enter assignment programs and bring benefits

¹ As examples: McNulty, Y., Hutchings, K. *Looking for global talent in all the right places: a critical literature review of non-traditional expatriates*. In: The International Journal of Human Resource Management. Vol. 27. 2016.

KPMG International Global Mobility Services Inclusion & Diversity Opinion Survey 2018.

and challenges with them. In the present paper, the impact and challenges of gender, sexual orientation, non-traditional family constellations and age of assigned expatriates are being put into the focus. The selection of those four dimensions of diversity and the limitation to assigned expatriates in contrast to self-initiated expatriates, can be accounted for by the limited scope of the paper and the limited amount of data which is available. Afterwards, the focus will be led to the impact Global Mobility has on diversity and therefore eventually on the general business. One further, very important topic for businesses in the age of the 'war for talent' (Chambers et al. 1998) is successful and purposeful talent management which currently is often being connected to Global Mobility management. In this paper, this connection is taken further: the goal is to examine how Global Mobility Management and its impact on diversity can advance talent management. This integration could help make the case for a more strategic Global Mobility Management because the added value on a core business goal can be shown. In the end, a conclusion on how the interdependences between Global Mobility and diversity can aid strategic talent management will be drawn and limitations will be shown.

The paper is based on a theoretical literature review. The integration of sources from different areas of research, academic publications and quantitative survey data leads to a holistic string of arguments regarding the research questions. Limitations of this method is the limited accessibility to quantitative data which has been sourced by academic research. The data of the present paper is sourced from research done by private organizations.

2. Concepts

2.1 Global Mobility

Expatis Academy defines Global Mobility as the part of the business, which is "(...)about enabling and supporting Line Management to ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time and the right costs" (Expatis Academy. Handbook for Global Mobility 2019). This operational view does not really account for the possible strategic value of Global Mobility. It therefore is not enough in times where "the winners and the losers of the next decade will be defined by those [organizations] who are able to attract, retain, and deploy their key talent globally" (PWC. Talent Mobility 2020). In order to provide a strategic value to the business, Global Mobility, the management of expatriates, needs to become a partner in strategic decisions and needs to prove its right to a seat at the table.

A more integrated definition of the organization of the global workforce can be found in the academic discipline of International Human Resource Management (IHRM) in which the need for a global human resources approach is justified by the growing integration of the global economy and the general internationalization of business (Tarique, Briscoe, Schuler 2016). Stahl, Björkman, and Morris (2012. P.1) define IHRM as follows:

"[it] broadly (...) cover[s] all issues related to managing the global workforce and its contribution to firm outcomes. Hence, our definition of IHRM covers a wide range of HR issues facing MNEs [multinational enterprises] in different parts of their organizations. Additionally we include comparative analyses of HRM in different countries."

This definition provides two valuable insights into why IHRM, with expatriate management or Global Mobility being a vital element, can be more than just reactor or the operational aid for the moving of staff across national borders: it can contribute actively to firm outcomes and is anchored in various parts of the business. An added value of Global Mobility is the ability to support talent management on a global scale through sending talents on international assignments: global leaders can be developed through global assignments assuming that the selection process was effective, the prospective leaders use their assignment to develop themselves and that they return to their sending entity (Stroh, Black, Mendenhall, & Gregersen, 2005). But the development of global leaders is only one reason for expatriation. According to Hocking, Brown & Harzing (2004), international assignments can have different focal points: they could fill in skill gaps in the receiving entities, help developing global organizations through control and coordination and help the assignees in their professional and personal development. The listed purposes can lead to very different assignment goals and also very different assignment set-ups. In Angela Weinberger's publication, various assignment types differing by lengths and characteristics are described: they range from International Business Travelers with an assignment duration of up to 15 days, over Short-term assignments of up to one year, Long-term assignments of up to five years, to a Local-to-Local transfer with an unlimited duration (Weinberger. *The Global Mobility Workbook* 2014). Traditionally, international assignments were long-term and included the move of an entire expat family. But the recent trend is towards shorter assignments as multiple surveys conducted by service providers of the Global Mobility profession have shown. *The Global Mobility Survey 2018* by SantaFe for example asked for the expected growth of different assignment types and found that none of the respondents expects a growth in strategic long-term assignments during the next 36 months. A significant growth is expected in business travel, permanent transfers and short-term assignments. Those numbers show that Global Mobility is changing. It could be the time to refocus and to set priorities on the development from an operational role to a more strategic role.

2.2 Diversity

The term diversity today is anchored in many countries' laws, in diversity chartas, in academic research and in the vocabulary of the general public. A very broad definition of diversity is given by Thomas (1996). He defines diversity as "(...) a collective mixture characterized by differences and similarities that are applied in pursuit of organizational objectives" (Thomas 1996). The differences and similarities he describes are not categories,

which can be applied to all "organizations", meaning nations, people, structures, etc. The set-up of an 'organization' has a big impact on the perception of who is a minority and which efforts are being made to prevent discrimination. This can be seen by the emphasis of anti-discrimination laws in different countries: Brazil includes "black and native Brazilians", India "Scheduled casts (...) and Tribes (...)" and the UK "Catholics/Protestants" (Heggertveit-Aoudia 2011). Each country's laws protect the minorities that are the most endangered in its national context. But diversity cannot only be seen on a national level and within the context of ethnicity or religion. Hubbard (2004) defines four aspects under which diversity can be organized: Workforce Diversity, Behavioral Diversity, Structural Diversity, and Business and Global Diversity. In this paper, the focus lies on workforce diversity, which "encompasses group and situational identities of the organization's employees (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, physical ability, age, family status, economic background and status, and geographical background and status" (Hubbard 2004. p.8).

The importance of workforce diversity for instance is demonstrated in countries' anti-discrimination legislation, which is a reaction to the specific country's needs. For example, Germany has a law called "Allgemeines Gleichstellungsgesetz" (General Equal Treatment Act) which was introduced in 2006. This Act strives for preventing or eliminating "Benachteiligungen aus Gründen der Rasse oder wegen der ethnischen Herkunft, des Geschlechts, der Religion oder Weltanschauung, einer Behinderung, des Alters oder der sexuellen Identität (...)" (discrimination due to race or ethnic heritage, gender, religion or ideology, disability, age or sexual identity" (AGG and author's translation).

But diversity in the workplace is even more than the identities described above. In 2003, Gardenswartz & Rowe defined the "Four Layers of Diversity" which give the above mentioned categories of diversity a framework which "(...) sets the tone for inclusion by reflecting each person's reality in the organization": they cluster the different identities into personality, internal dimensions, external dimensions and organizational dimensions.



Fig. 1: Four Layers of Diversity
Source: Gardenswartz & Rowe 2003

This model shows that a person can be diverse in many dimensions and to various extents and needs to be supported by a flexible organization which is committed to diversity.

One impediment to diversity and inclusion is unconscious bias. It is "a person's predisposition in favor of, or against, a person, group or thing" (Ford, Sibbersen 2019). Unconscious biases develop over time and depend on a person's experiences. But they can be interrupted if a person is aware of those biases and is trained to overcome them. True diversity and inclusion can only be achieved if an organization as a whole is dedicated to minimizing unconscious biases and when the top managerial level is committed to diversity goals. But why are organizations so focused on diversity and inclusion? The goals of investing in diversity and implementing diversity policies are manifold. PWC's 2018 *Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarking Survey* found that 44% of the 379 corporate respondents from over 18 European countries use their diversity and inclusion programs to attract and retain talent, 20% use it to achieve business results and 15% to enhance external reputation. Those reasons are motivated by internal strategy decisions and needs. But externally motivated objectives of diversity and inclusion also enhance the importance of a sound diversity program: 16% of the respondents name compliance with legal requirements and 3% say they respond to customer expectations. Another survey performed by PWC in 2014, the *18th annual global CEO Survey*, added more benefits which result from having a diversity and inclusion strategy: the CEOs see better possibilities for innovation, internal and external collaboration and higher customer satisfaction. They also see a chance for leveraging technology and developing new markets (PWC *18th annual global CEO Survey* 2014).

As an acknowledgement for the above mentioned drivers for committing to diversity, many businesses across Europe have pledged themselves to a national "Diversity Charter".

The EU commission created a platform where European Diversity Charters can exchange and share experience and good practices more easily (...). "NGOs, public bodies, private companies, (...)" in 21 European countries have signed national charters in which "(...) the organization voluntarily commits to promote diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace, regardless of, for example, age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation" (EU Platform of Diversity Charters). In Germany for example, more than 2.900 organizations have signed the "Charta der Vielfalt" (Charter of Diversity) which shows businesses' willingness to put the topic of diversity into the foreground – at least to the extent to which it is visible to the public.

Reality shows that although businesses publicly commit to diversity, a large portion of said businesses are struggling with translating diversity and inclusion strategy into action, even though surveys show that more diverse companies experience the benefits of this diversity beyond pleasing the public eye and complying to regulations. But what is the difference between organizations where diversity is seen as a chance for progress versus those organizations where diversity is seen as a barrier for success? The respondents of the PWC Survey suggested that for example employee and leadership training, the diversity and inclusion program leader being present in the C-suite and the connection of diversity with talent attraction and retention goals make the difference (PWC. *Diversity & Inclusion Benchmarking Survey* 2019).

2.3 Talent Management

The term talent management does not originate in academic research but was coined by businesses and consultancies, which is one possibility to explain the lack of clear cut definitions. One widely accepted definition coins strategic talent management as

“(...) activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key positions which differentially contribute to the organization’s sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents and to ensure their continued commitment to the organisation” (Collings and Mellahi 2009).

Interesting is that this definition concentrates on key positions, ‘highly’ talented employees, which are valuable to the business and formulates successful succession and a high employee engagement as goals. It concentrates on the few excellent employees and disregards everybody else. A very different approach to talent management is to view ‘talent’ as a potential which every employee has to a varying extent and which in its own right is valuable to the business. The TMS (talent management system) defined by Hehn (2016) aims at aligning this potential with strategy to be able to handle present and future challenges (Hehn 2016).

A way to strategically and purposefully carry out talent management is by integrating the stages of the talent management lifecycle and implementing measures to "retain top talent and boost employee engagement" (Cattermole 2019). The talent management cycle has six key stages: attraction, recruitment, onboarding, development, retention and separation. In basic terms, an employee is attracted to an organization thanks to its brand or reputation. An employee will apply for a position within a company and if successful, will go through an onboarding process. A company will then look to develop that employee and try to retain talent over many years, keeping the knowledge and experience within the company. Naturally, there will be a time when the employee leaves the company (Cattermole 2019).

International assignments can be seen as a talent management measure. Although most of the assignments in reality are still focused on the benefits for the organization, some expatriate roles are designed as developmental or as coordination roles which are "about developing coordination through global mindsets in the organization" (Cerdin, Brewster 2013). A KPMG survey (*Global Assignment Policies and Practices Survey 2018*) found that this ratio could change dramatically. The survey respondents answered that today only 2% of their total assignee population is explicitly developmental/training as described in the corresponding policy. But 63% of the respondents replied that they expect the policy type of "developmental/training" to increase. In comparison to that, only 32% expect this policy type to remain the same and only 5% anticipate a decrease. Global Mobility can prove itself in this context as a valuable partner for talent management. But developmental assignments are not the only area where Global Mobility can offer support. The policy type of "permanent transfer/indefinite length" is used as a cost saving method but can also be seen as a measure for talent acquisition and retention. At the moment, only 19% of the assignee population is permanent transfers but 58% of the survey respondents expect the number to increase.

Permanent transfers are one of the measures of talent management on a global scale. This type of talent management has been coined Global Talent Management. Scullion et al. (2010) define it "(...) in broad terms as an organization's efforts to attract, select, develop and retain key talented employees on a global scale". One of the goals for Global Mobility is to be seen as a valued asset to Talent Management. To this end, Global Mobility needs to be integrated more efficiently into assignment decisions and the development and advancement of strategic topics.

3. Impacts of Diversity on Global Mobility

In Global Mobility the standard expatriate for a long time has been a senior white man with a travelling spouse who was assigned from headquarters into a less developed entity to bring knowledge and to proof his ability for proceeding in his career after his return. Today, assignments and assignees have changed: assignments themselves are shorter and more

flexible and assignees are no longer a homogenous group but are divers. This development has multiple reasons with main accelerators being the societies themselves which in general nowadays are more accepting when family situations differ from the old norms. The other accelerator is the businesses' efforts to employ a more divers workforce for a multitude of reasons, one being the worldwide talent shortage (McNulty 2016).

Assignees, who can be divers in all the four layers of diversity will in the following be named non-traditional assignees or expats. The emphasis will be on the categories gender, sexual orientation, family status and age, which each will be looked at individually. Reason for the choice of categories is the limited availability of data which can be drawn upon.

The question which shall be answered is "which impact does diversity, i.e. non-traditional assignees, have on Global Mobility and which challenges do arise through non-traditional expats?" The term "non-traditional expat" is borrowed from McNulty (2016). She uses the term "(...)" as one that implies a family situation that is more encompassing than the restricted definition of a nuclear family consisting of a male breadwinner, female non-employed supporting spouse, and children of both parents." In the context of this paper, the term "non-traditional expat" is extended by also including all assignees belonging to minority groups or being defined as divers. Some of the challenges those non-traditional expats face do not only arise in an international context, but also at the employee's home location. McNulty uses the term "hyper-divers" to describe this added layer of diversity: non-traditional expats are "divers" before they relocate by "(...) represent[ing] a unique point of difference compared to their colleagues, (...)"; and "hyper" "because expatriation adds another layer of complexity to their already unique status" (McNulty 2015). This unique status affects international assignments even before they begin: in some cases, employees from divers demographic categories decide against an assignment based on those categories. KPMG asked Global Mobility professionals in 2017 whether they had encountered such adverse decisions triggered by diversity: 39% of the respondents affirmed that sexual orientation, 21% that gender/gender identity, 22% that age and 11% that other reasons, including having a child with special needs, had sometime been a trigger (KPMG *International Global Mobility Services Inclusion & Diversity Opinion Survey* 2018). The survey looked into the various categories on an individual basis without considering that some assignees might be "hyper-divers in more than one category. In reality, such an isolated view can lead to false interpretations of the data: a state of multiple hyper-diversity can pose new challenges which have not been considered. An assignee can, for example, be part of the LGBT community and can be a single parent at the same time. Although the author is aware of possible cross-dimensional implications, the focus of this section of the paper is again on individual categories. In the following, the emphasis lies on the previously defined categories, how they influence Global Mobility and what challenges arise.

3.1 Gender

The #metoo campaign was founded in 2006 to help survivors of sexual abuse. In 2017 it had reached its preliminary peak and gave the debate about gender equality a new momentum (<https://metoomvmt.org>). In 2019, this debate has not at all reached its end. In an article of *The Wall Street Journal* in September 2019, the need for a continued fight for gender parity has once more been manifested: only 20% of the board seats of public companies included in the U.S. Russell 300 index are held by females (Feintzeig 2019). This lack of female representation in top positions is one of the big motivators for diversity management. Another motivator for promoting women in the workplace is because it makes business sense to have women in those positions. *The Catalyst Report* (2013) found that having women on a corporation's board has positive financial effects: those corporation with women on their boards create a higher return on equity, sales and capital (Heim, Hughes 2016).

Although there is still a lot of work to be done, gender diversity in the globally mobile workforce is slowly growing: SantaFe's *The Global Mobility Survey 2018* found that now 25% of respondents' assignee populations are female and the trend is growing: 24% of the Global Mobility respondents expect more gender diversity within the next five years. A very important aspect of this survey is that SantaFe, in addition to Global Mobility professionals, also interviewed business leaders on future trends: also 22% of this latter group expect more gender diversity within the next 36 months. More women are and will be on international assignments, so businesses must be ready to deal with stereotypes from within the business and external challenges for women regarding assignments. A survey conducted by PWC regarding the international mobility of women in financial services found that many of the stereotypes regarding women and international assignments cannot be verified by data. 66% of the women would like to go abroad for work at any stage in their life. In comparison, only 60% of the male respondents gave the same answer. Despite those numbers, 45% of the female respondents cited the assumption of the business that women with children would not want to go on an assignment as an inhibitor. In addition to that, 30% of the respondents quoted traditional mindsets which typically associate males with international assignments as a barrier (PWC. *Women of the world* 2016). The above quoted results stem from one industry and cannot be generalized easily. The employment related goals and the mindset of employees of the financial services industry might not be representative for the general public. Results from the *RES Annual Report 2016*, which included multiple industries, could indicate that women working in the financial services are outstandingly ready to go on assignment. And that when broadening the scope to more industries, this trend is not confirmed. The RES 2016 report included answers from 61 MNEs across various industries. In this report, representatives from multinational enterprises were asked whether they found it difficult to identify and motivate suitable candidates for international assignments. The result is that

when asked about candidates without specifying the gender, 30% of respondents stated that it is difficult to very difficult to identify candidates, and 22% stated that is difficult to very difficult to motivate candidates to accept international assignments. When specifically asked about female candidates the percentage for identifying candidates went up to 55% and for motivating candidates to 40%. The numbers are difficult to interpret because information on framework conditions, like length of assignment or host location, is not provided. Reasons for the lack of readiness to move abroad could stem from resourcing approaches of the business, the type of host locations, the quality of the expatriate package, the individual career experience, or other factors that lie within the individual multinational enterprise (RES Annual Report 2016). The difference between the perceived readiness of women to work abroad in financial services vs. the difficulties of multinational enterprises from mixed industries to find suitable female candidates, could be tried to be explained by set-up of the financial services industry where many career-oriented individuals work and where the knowledge that an international assignment can be a career-maker is well-known.

The challenges which Global Mobility departments need to accommodate when sending women abroad are similar to traditional challenges to assignments, but due to the "hyper-diversity" status of women, are still more pronounced. The risk assessment of host countries, for example, has to be done with special considerations to culture and laws affecting women. 2.7 billion women worldwide are less free in their job choice than men. In 104 countries there are even laws preventing women to carry out a number of jobs (Rock-Speelman, Parakatil at Mercer Mobility Exchange). Another challenge is closely connected with the next chapter, non-traditional families: if women are single mothers or have other family configurations which call for extended attention, the employer needs to show enhanced flexibility to enable this diversity group to be successful on their assignment (Bravery, Baker, Roche at Mercer Mobility Exchange).

3.2 Sexual Orientation

Recent developments, like legalizing same-sex-marriage in the U.S.A and other countries, have helped to decrease injustices and discrimination against the LGBT community². At the moment, 30 countries around the world have created legislation which allows same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center 2019). But discrimination still exists. Diversity initiatives play a central role for creating parity in the workplace for this minority group. But over half (52%) of the businesses included in Mercer's *North America LGBT Global Mobility Pulse Survey 2014* answered that they did not have a global Diversity & Inclusion policy that makes specific reference to LGBT employees. The result is that a large portion of the North American

² LGBT = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (one's sexual or gender identity). Source: *The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*.

workforce, which needs to be included in the efforts to improve diversity standards, is left out. But even without or especially without the representation in those initiatives, LGBT employees have a great impact on Global Mobility: the preparation and execution of an international assignment need even more care than in the case of traditional expats. The Mercer pulse survey asked about "(...) the main barrier to LGBT mobility for your organization". 56% of participants answered that "compliance (legal, immigration, tax, etc.)" were the main barriers whereas 28% stated that "family/dual career issues", 23% that "safety/security", 4% that "additional cost" were the main barriers. Fortunately, 23% of participants answered that they see "no barriers" for LGBT mobility. The issues opposing LGBT mobility definitely need to be considered since they are closely connected to duty of care, business costs and compliance issues (Mercer. *North America LGBT Global Mobility Pulse Survey 2014*). But the 23% saying that LGBT assignments do not face any of the barriers mentioned above show that companies can prepare a diverse global mobility agenda if they are prepared to go the extra mile.

Multinational corporations often cannot assess how much potential is lost because employees hinder themselves from going on assignments or interrupt assignments due to their sexual orientation. In order to support those employees, it is vital that employers know about the factors why the assignment was turned down or failed. This, apparently, is not easy: the multinational enterprises often do not know the reasons or even about the sexual orientation of the candidates. This lack of awareness of LGBT employees is shown in the *North America LGBT Global Mobility Pulse Survey 2014 (Mercer)* where only 7% of participants track sexual orientation. Those 7% are especially low when considering that the question was posed with the prerequisite that tracking this category was "possible and no legislative restrictions or sanctions exist." This is another issue that might hinder the support of LGBT and other categories of non-traditional expat candidates: often their employers do not know about their orientations or situations and have no possibility to legally source this data. This again shows the importance of an inclusive company strategy and culture where employees know that belonging to a minority or a non-traditional employee group will not automatically bring them disadvantages. In the US, at least 23% of the respondents of Mercer's pulse survey answered that they "offer confidential discussions with HR or other resources (e.g. LGBT network)" to discuss personal circumstances. There is, however, much room for improvement: only 9% of respondents offer "alternative assignment type e.g. Commuter, Short-term" or 7% "offer assignment to alternative (LGBT friendly) location" whereas 31% of respondents answered that they have "no action" to "ensure LGBT employees receive the same career opportunities, vis-a-vis global mobility, as all other employees" (Mercer. *North America LGBT Global Mobility Pulse Survey 2014*).

What needs to be done is to create LGBT friendly policies; to make better risk assessments of host countries to be "aware of local cultural and legal threats"; to have a

broader definition of spouse which includes same-sex-couples which are not married due to the home countries' laws; and create an inclusive company culture so that no employee feels the need to hide their sexual orientation which can have impacts far beyond the work context (von Glinow 2017).

3.3 Non-traditional families

Non-traditional family set-ups are defined as non-traditional because they deviate from the traditional family setup as a nuclear family with an employed father, a supporting female spouse and dependent children. McNulty (2015) adds different family set-ups to the discussion about divers assignees: step-family - comprised of parents and their child/ren from present and/or earlier relationships; single-parent family - one parent living alone with child/ren; split family – parents or one parent relocating without child/ren, parent living in different, often less desirable and less safe location than family and commute back often; overseas adoption family – expatriated parent(s) adopt child in host location or from a third country that is neither home, nor host country; multigenerational family – family who is responsible for a dependent relative, mostly for elderly parents; families with special needs child/ren – families expatriating with children which require special attention and special care, e.g. Children with learning disabilities, cognitive or physical disabilities, mental illnesses or food-related illnesses and also terminal illnesses. McNulty also defines LGBT, female breadwinner with trailing spouse; single male and female assignees; and semi-retired empty-nesters as divers family set-ups. Those categories will not be elaborated on in this chapter because of the similar content of the chapters about Sexual Orientation, Gender and Age.

All those categories have in common that a) traditional Global Mobility policies and processes will not be able to provide the support that non-traditional expat families need when they relocate and b) the families face additional challenges compared to traditional expats which Global Mobility departments have to mitigate in cooperation with the families. Businesses have started to react to those workforce changes: a KPMG survey (2018) asked the respondents how their companies defined "family" for the purpose of international assignment benefits. Whereas 64/65% of companies include unmarried domestic partners/companions of same gender/opposite gender, only 9% include dependent parents/extended families of the assignee (KPMG. *International Global Mobility Services Inclusion & Diversity Opinion Survey 2018*). If the dependent parents/extended family cannot relocate with the assignee, then assignees from collectivistic cultures will be more likely to turn an assignment down. Those cultures tend to define themselves as part of a community and put the goals of the collective before their individual goals (Hofstede 1980). In addition to this, some of the challenges faces by non-traditional expat families are as follows. Non-traditional expat families require non-traditional benefits: whereas it is for example often

standard that health care for adopted children is included in the expatriation package, healthcare for dependent elders needs to be specifically addressed in a policy. The flexibilization of policies is again at the center of the challenges for Global Mobility departments. If policies are not made more flexible, the preparation for expats and the support through Global Mobility needs to be kept as exception management, which puts stress and extra work on all parties involved. But challenges do not only arise from inside the organizations: immigration procedures of host locations might also not be ready for non-traditional expat families. The acceptance of diverse family definitions in the home country not necessarily translates into the host countries. This can lead to insecurity regarding the families' immigration status, extra efforts in the visa process and up to denied visas and therefore delays in relocation and in extreme cases even cancellation of the entire assignment. Children from overseas adoption families might need to be re-adopted in the home country because the host country (example: United Kingdom) does not recognize adoptions from countries which did not sign the Hague Convention. The re-adoption process is an on-top bureaucratic burden which needs to be supported or at least understood by the sending company and which will cause delays in relocation. An even more difficult challenge is obtaining a visa for a dependent relative who is not part of the nuclear family. It needs to be proven that the relative, e.g. elderly parent, is solely dependent on the assignee family and that the family has the sole responsibility for said dependent (Malecki, Day, Franklin, D'Argenio 2013).

Another challenge from outside the organization which affects the assignees and their employers are tax issues. Tax laws, even with a double taxation agreement in place, always need to be assessed in a national context: this can have an impact on common law or unmarried partners and on families relocating with dependent relatives. Whereas many countries have legislation in place where non-married spouses can file their tax returns together and therefore might get tax cuts, it is not guaranteed that the host country has the same rules in place. The same applies to deductible amounts for extended dependent family members (Malecki, Day, Franklin, D'Argenio 2013). It is also important to mention that those tax implications can also mean that non-traditional expat families move to a location where they will experience favorable tax laws.

Another example of challenges for non-traditional family constellations are the implications for families with children with special needs. In their home location, those families can rely on the support network that they have built and know about schools and trainings which ensure special education. Companies need to be open about possible challenges and proactive with the necessary support in the host locations from the beginning of the assignment planning: in the host location, families could be faced with stigmatization, segregation and poor assistance which could maybe result in adverse assignment decisions

(Carlton, Perelstein 2013).The other possibility could be that the family encounters a better established care system for their special needs children.

The status as a non-traditional family that wants to relocate can be challenging. It is the organization's duty to support those families so that a diverse company culture can be fostered. When the company culture is diverse and inclusive, non-traditional expats may be less prone to self-discrimination and apply for international assignments without "(...) imposing irrelevant personal characteristics on the decision to expatriate (...) [but] rather (...) properly relevant criteria (e.g., job skills, cultural intelligence, seniority, tenure" (McNulty 2016).

The goal of "more diversity" in a business has a large impact on international assignments. This is one of the top reasons why Global Mobility should be included in strategic decisions concerning diversity and also talent management.

3.4 Age

The implications of the dimension 'age' in Global Mobility can be approached from two angles: the differences between the experience levels in the global workforce which naturally also include the generational divide between young and old; and the differences between the current generations in the workforce, namely Baby Boomers, GenX, Millennials or Gen Z etc. Both angles include the area of conflict between young and old, but the current debates around the "new generations" which are also fueled by the media, can be challenged: are the characteristics truly unique or "(...) are we just restating the never-ending opposition between the attitudes of young and older employees?" (Renaud, Meier at Mercer Mobility Exchange). Truly new is the technological advancement and the digitalization of the world and therefore how new generations are trained to react quicker and face new challenges. But the question remains: are these developments really completely new? The traits ascribed to the new generations, "(...) desire for fast changes, increased mobility, and flexibility (...)" have always been applied to younger generations of workers (Renaud, Meier at Mercer Mobility Exchange). This question cannot be answered in this section. Instead the focus lies on the differences of early-mid, mid-peak, and late-stage career individuals as defined in *The RES Forum Annual Report 2017: The New Normal of Global Mobility – Flexibility, Diversity & Data Mastery*.

Early-Mid Career Individuals	Born after 1981
Mid-Peak Career Individuals	Born between 1964 – 1981
Late Stage Career Individuals	Born before 1964

Fig. 2 Career Stages and Age
Source: Dickmann 2017

But are the differences – in assignment drivers and assignment outcomes - real or are they just perceived differences? The presented results stem from the RES annual report 2017, which are based on data from 33 multinational corporations. The assignment drivers are sectioned into personal drivers; monetary and non-monetary incentives; developmental and career motivations; family and location considerations. The data of the report shows several noteworthy trends and differences: personal motivators - the desire for adventure and to see the world - and professional challenge, from the developmental and career motivations section, are most important for the youngest age group: 22%, in comparison to 3% and 7% of the middle and oldest age group, said that the desire to see the world is a very important motivator for an assignment. 25%, in comparison to 16% and 3% of the middle and oldest age group, rate professional challenge and potential for skill development very important. The middle age group rated monetary and non-monetary incentives, namely the expat package, and family and educational considerations more important in comparison to the other generations.

The results are not very surprising. Younger people tend to be more adventurous in comparison to the generations above them. This older generation often faces an at least temporary shift of priorities when families grow. Interesting is that late stage career candidates become more adventurous again. One trend which is intergenerational is the search for sense, fulfillment and career progression during the assignment (Dickmann 2017).

The implications and challenges for Global Mobility can be to tailor assignment policies in order to satisfy the motivating factors very well and downgrade those parts which are less important to the target group. An example could be to set up a rotation for the younger generation so that they see multiple countries during their assignment but reduce the monetary and non-monetary package at the same time.

One aspect of the late stage career individuals has not been explicitly analyzed in the RES report 2017: the portion of assignees who are very close to retirement age and who might reach retirement age during or at the end of their assignment. The goals, requirements and challenges are expected to be greatly different. Older assignees do not have the greatest desire to further their career through the assignment and have reached a certain degree of financial stability. They also bring life experience into the assignment, which can help them with integration and in interpersonal conflicts. Some companies use those skills for "inter-generation coaching", where the older generations share their abilities in interpersonal competencies and market experience with younger workers. The latter in return provide training in digital skills. Another aspect which needs to be considered is the changed family set-up: instead of caring for children, older assignees may need to care for elderly parents. Traditional Global Mobility policies are not flexible enough to cater those needs and need to

be revised. And finally, hot topics which might need to be considered are retirement provisions and healthcare issues (Renaud, Meier at Mercer Mobility Exchange).

'Age' as a diversity category forces Global Mobility professionals and business leaders to check their biases about assignee candidates and to help build policies which act as integrators rather than as selectors. Every generation of workers can bring benefits for an assignment and in the end for the business. But there are still differences which are shown in the RES report 2017: the biggest deviation between generations was in the area of facilitating knowledge transfer: mid-peak careerists are said to do this better than early-mid stage or late stage careerists. The first finding is not surprising since the younger generations mostly go on developmental assignments and are less experienced than the mid-peak careerists. But the second finding is not so intuitive. The data implies several proposals for action: developmental assignments could be the best way to use and develop resources from the early-mid peak generation; knowledge transfer assignments could be best for mid-peak generations, and control and coordination assignments could be the best for late stage generations (Dickmann 2017). But generalizations or even worse stereotyping should only be used carefully. Multinational enterprises should also take a closer look at how they can cater to the varying needs of a multigenerational workforce. In the times of the 'war for talent' (Chambers et al. 1998), talent from all age groups needs to be kept engaged in order to stay with their employer and be a valuable part of the value chain. Making Global Mobility policies more flexible in catering for the needs of different age groups can be one of the steps closer to becoming an employer of choice.

The focus of this chapter was put on exploring the impact of diversity on Global Mobility. Diversity manifests in groups of non-traditional employees being sent abroad with the support of Global Mobility Management. Those groups of assignees have a big impact on the processes of international assignments and pose certain challenges. Those challenges, before, during and after the assignment need to be carried by the expats and facilitated by the employer. Despite those challenges, it is not an option to revert to past standards and to de-diversify international assignments. On the contrary: it is imperative that the global workforce becomes even more diverse. It is not only because of a company's self-set diversity goals, or legal requirement or even the fact that greater diversity makes business sense. It is also because of the desired advancement of employees who are highly qualified and ready to progress in their career and who happen to be a member of a minority group. In the next chapter, the focus will be on how Global Mobility can have an impact on the business in terms of making the business more diverse. Once the impact which Global Mobility can have on diversity and talent management is shown, the aspiration of Global Mobility to become a strategic partner of the business can become a reality.

4. Impacts of Global Mobility on Diversity

4.1 General Considerations

As seen in the previous chapter, diversity has a great impact on Global Mobility and continues to grow in importance in all parts of the business. Diversity poses benefits and challenges which have to be mastered by Global Mobility managers in cooperation with their assignees and in line with the general business strategy. In this chapter, the focus will be on the reverse relationship: how does and can Global Mobility affect diversity? The question fits into the framework of Global Mobility departments reaching beyond their traditionally operational and compliance-oriented position within organizations in order to become strategic advisors. One path towards becoming a strategic partner to the business is to show the added value of strategic global mobility planning in comparison to just following and supporting business needs (KPMG *Inclusion and Diversity* 2018). If Global Mobility departments are actively included in international personnel planning, the goals of the business can be met even better. The right person can be at the right place at the right time with the proper preparation, documentation and set-up.

But even without being explicitly recognized as strategic partners, Global Mobility can support the business beyond the operational execution of assignments. The results of *The Global Mobility Survey 2018* conducted by SantaFe are encouraging: 96% of the interviewed business leaders stated that their Global Mobility teams are aligned with overall business objectives. Although the number seems indisputably high and clear in message, the answers of Global Mobility professionals paint a different picture: only 49% of the respondents said that their teams are very closely aligned with overall business objectives and 47% even said that their teams were only quite closely aligned with overall business objectives. This discrepancy in the assessment of the work of Global Mobility departments is striking. Either the Global Mobility side is not aware of their strategic alignment or if they seem to be aligned only when looking from the outside into their activities, they maybe focus on tactical delivery (SantaFe *The Global Mobility Survey 2018* 2019).

Despite the acknowledgment that Global Mobility still needs to pass some hurdles until it will be officially recognized as a strategic partner, Global Mobility already has a significant impact on one of businesses' strategic core issues – diversity. If played well, this angle on business strategy can catapult Global Mobility into the focus of business leaders as a driver of company strategy and as such as a valuable strategic partner. Talent management departments have often already established themselves as strategic partners. As such they are given the task to work on strategies how the workforce can become more diverse throughout all the hierarchy levels. But Global Mobility, even without receiving the official mandate, is generating more diversity and supporting talent management by following

through with their regular processes: sending employees on international assignments is one opportunity to help minorities up the career ladder. According to the *RES Forum 2019 Annual report*, 36% of returning assignees' careers unfold better than their non-expatriated peers. 30% have a similar career to their non-expatriated peers. 34% of the participants were unsure about the effects. And even better: 0% think that the assignment had a negative effect on the career of a returnee (Dickmann 2019). The numbers apply to all international assignees but of course also are applicable to minorities: Global Mobility can have a positive impact on career progression. This is emphasized again by the results from *The Global Mobility Survey 2018* by SantaFe. They asked Business Leaders and Global Mobility professionals how important international assignments are for career progression, 89% of the former and 88% of the latter stated that it is either critical or important to go on assignment. The efforts of Global Mobility do therefore indeed have an impact on diversity: sending a more diverse clientele abroad leads to a broader base of employees who can proceed on the career ladder and as a result to a business advantage for organizations in times of talent shortage. But in order to properly align with business goals and to make the most of their unique talents, Global Mobility departments must actively work on promoting a more diverse internationally mobile workforce by aligning their efforts with talent management.

Having a diverse internationally mobile workforce should not be an end in itself but should have the ultimate goal of building a leadership pipeline so that diversity at the top managerial level can be reached. The prerequisites for reaching this top managerial level vary from organization to organization. But still, general career progression drivers which generally apply can be identified. Meier describes three prerequisites for the diverse workforce to be able to climb up the career ladder. Naturally, Global Mobility can assist talent in meeting those requirements. A promising employee needs the right job, the right skills and the right network that will catapult him/her to the top: The right job of the category 'career accelerator' can be held abroad. Access to it can be facilitated by Global Mobility. The right skills, for example international management, can be developed while being on assignment. The right network, the people a talent meets during their career and who can make an impact on the talent's career, can not only be found nationally, but also abroad (Meier at Mercer Mobility Exchange).

The elaborations in the last paragraphs point towards ways for global mobility departments to become a strategic partner of the business: by integrating diversity goals into their processes and policies, by interacting closely with diversity departments and by making a conscious effort to take an active part in talent management. Global Mobility departments need to step into the limelight and take ownership of the strategic topics of Diversity and talent management. It is important to internally raise awareness of the opportunities strategic Global Mobility can provide and gain advocates in the businesses' leadership who will raise the topic

within top management. This will help significantly for advancing the case for getting a seat at the table. In the next chapter, another angle for proving Global Mobility's right to a seat at the table is shown by integrating Global Mobility contents into Talent Management's efforts to generate more diversity. Those elaborations show possibilities how global mobility can impact diversity along the talent management cycle. They also illustrate opportunities for Global Mobility departments to get active and become a conscious part of two topics which are positioned at the core of business strategy: diversity and talent management.

4.2 Global Mobility, Diversity and Talent Management

The benefits of incorporating a diversity and inclusion strategy into the general company strategy have been discussed above. Talent management is another topic which has a direct connection with many challenges businesses encounter: in order to expand business, organizations need more talent with diverse competencies in order to gain competitive advantages (Schuler, Jackson, Tarique 2010). But in times of the 'war for talent' (Chambers et al. 1998), organizations need to establish new approaches on how to attract, recruit, develop and retain top talent. One possibility can be to integrate diversity and inclusion, global mobility and talent management. Suggestions for such an integrated approach are being presented in this chapter. The question which shall be answered is: "How can Global Mobility help advance Diversity in Talent Management?" To this end, ideas regarding the integration of diversity in talent management were selected from literature. Those ideas were then further developed and matched to actions which global mobility departments could take in order to prove their added strategic value to the business. The ideas are meant to be pointers for a practical approach and are non-exhaustive. Global mobility could take another step in the direction of their future as a strategic advisor to the business by consciously aiding the process of talent management which, according to a PWC survey, will define "(...) the [corporate] winners and the losers of the next decade" (Talent Mobility 2020. PWC).



Fig.3: Integration of Global Mobility, Diversity and Talent Management
Source: Author's Depiction

The talent attraction phase is the phase in which the candidate is becoming aware of an organization in its role as a prospective employer. It is therefore important to formulate a well-defined and attractive employer brand in order to be recognized as an employer of choice (Bickham 2015). In order to attract diverse talent, organizations need to integrate their diversity statements into all attraction activities: job postings can emphasize the corporate strategy by including diversity and inclusion statements or priorities; the recruiting channels and mediums can be consciously chosen so that diverse talent is being addressed; but most importantly, organizations need to work on a diverse employer brand (Derven 2015). In addition to these activities, Global Mobility can participate actively in creating this diverse employer brand: it can act as an “attractor” for diverse talent. As previously shown, the wish to go on an international assignment is present in many talent categories. Organizations can use the attraction phase to, for example, show that Global Mobility policies are formulated with special regard to diversity (Klaschka 2018). Another idea could be to send diverse veteran expatriates to recruiting events or to use blog entries in social media as a possibility to give diverse expats a stage to talk about their assignments. In this way, Global Mobility can come to the forefront and start showing the talent management support it can provide.

The second stage in the Talent Management Cycle is recruitment. In this stage, the candidate applies at the organization or is being sourced actively by a prospective employer. After this, the selection process ensues. During this selection process, the employer can again emphasize the importance of diversity by introducing the key concepts of said organization’s diversity strategy. Diverse applicants will then be able to recognize whether their needs are considered. But employers should also take care to find out whether a candidate fits into the organization: interview questions can be designed to identify diversity and cultural competences and emotional intelligence. These traits are important for the cooperation with the diverse members of the workforce (Derven 2015). The specific contents for the questions can be borrowed from intercultural training sessions which are being held within the international assignment preparation regime of Global Mobility departments. Global mobility specialists could also be integrated in the selection process. One of the benefits can be, especially when recruiting for top positions, that Global Mobility professionals can identify talent suited for international careers based on their experiences in the field.

After successful recruitment follows the onboarding stage. It starts with the first day of employment and aims at employee engagement. Successful onboarding helps new recruits understand the company culture and performance expectations. New employees should also know how to access employee networks and get insightful feedback from their leaders (Bickham 2015). Diversity goals should be that all employees feel welcome and that they are aware of resources which are available to support them. Another emphasis should be on explaining flexible policies and benefits which are aimed at meeting the needs of a diverse

workforce (Derven 2015). In addition to this, Global Mobility can deliver input on the flexibilization of Global Mobility policies which allow non-traditional assignees to be chosen for international work experience and which help to improve the assignment experience in general.

Employee development as the fourth stage of the talent management cycle can be connected even closer to Global Mobility. International assignments in themselves can be regarded as a measure of talent management. The selection for assignments should optimally be done by a gremium of representatives from the global mobility, talent management and diversity departments in order to guarantee equal treatment (Derven 2015). Another possibility is to purposefully including diversity as a topic into cultural trainings and have a representative from business be responsible for diversity and inclusion (KPMG *International Global Mobility Services Inclusion & Diversity Opinion Survey 2018*).

The last stage of the talent management lifecycle before an employee leaves an organization is the retention stage. Retention includes all the efforts of an employer which aim at keeping the employee with said employer. The measures which are taken mainly include policies and practices which are aimed at the changing needs of an employee (Zeuch 2016). From a Global Mobility perspective, employees, in this stage, often are on assignment or have already returned from assignment. It is mandatory that Global Mobility departments understand their role as a continuous support system of expatriate even beyond the assignment. Successful repatriation plans are the most efficient possibility for Global Mobility to ensure retention and diversity: the veteran assignee returns with a divers mindset which can help foster diversity if the employer manages to keep him/her engaged with the organization (Dickmann 2018).

The previous elaborations are evidence for the value that global mobility can bring to the strategic topics of diversity and talent management. The integration of the three disciplines should be a goal for organizations. The “silo thinking” approach – every department for itself without sharing information and knowledge - from the past is not working for the challenges of today’s global enterprises. Joining forces and accepting new partners, like Global Mobility, to the strategic round table should be the way forward. But in order to be welcomed to the strategic roundtable, new partners need to prove themselves valuable. This can be best done by showing the value of participation in strategic topics. Global Mobility departments can start to prove their right to the table by generating data and numbers on how the interdependences between and integration of Global Mobility, Diversity and Talent Management foster business growth. In practice, global mobility departments can share their experiences and expertise from the operational side of assignments. They have direct encounters with assignees, their diversity and the challenges or successes derived from their unique situation. Those experiences qualify Global Mobility professionals to take ownership

of the change which organizations need to attract, develop and retain diverse talent and to finally be regarded as a strategic partner of the business.

5. Conclusion

At the beginning of this paper, the three major concepts relevant for this paper, global mobility, diversity and talent management were defined and put in relation to each other. In today's world it is not possible to look at one of the concepts without considering implications from the other concepts. This is great progress and helps the three departments to get a louder voice and be heard better. It is important that businesses integrate those three departments into strategic decisions because the core resource of a business is its employees – and global mobility, diversity and talent management can support the business with this core resource.

Diversity affects global mobility greatly. The impacts and challenges which diversity poses to global mobility management were shown in the third chapter. Four exemplary diverse dimensions – gender, sexual orientation, non-traditional families and age - were chosen for illustration. The challenges can arise from inside an organization but also from the outside. Global mobility needs to react and mitigate the risks for their diverse globally mobile workforce.

The relationship of diversity and global mobility and the resulting implications can also be reversed: global mobility can affect diversity greatly in a positive way. International assignments can be seen as part of talent management. As such, one of the goals is to promote diversity throughout all the levels in a company. Global mobility can foster diversity by being integrated in the stages of the talent management lifecycle – attraction, recruiting, onboarding, development and retention. Three of the biggest changes global mobility departments can consciously bring to the table is to bring flexibility into their policies; to check for unconscious biases and provide trainings; and to have a positive impact on a diverse company culture. So the question whether the interdependences between global mobility and diversity and their impact on talent management can help global mobility to become a more strategic partner of the business can be answered with an enthusiastic 'yes, they can'.

The scope of this paper was limited but could be extended in the future. The data being used was not sourced by the author and not sourced specifically with the research questions in mind. This could be an idea for the future: to make quantitative surveys with a larger sample size regarding the integration of global mobility, diversity and talent management. Or to develop qualitative interview questions for global mobility specialists and also their diverse assignees in order to find out more about present challenges and future changes.

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