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ASSESSING THE STATE OF CROSS CULTURAL MENTORING RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

There is increased attention to examining cross-cultural mentoring due to increased internationalization of the firm and the rise of the Multinational Corporation (MNC). New contexts for mentoring relationships will require new theoretical lenses and a variety of research designs in the coming years. We provide an overview of the literature that touches on various aspects of Cross Cultural Mentoring Research (CCMR) and develop a framework to categorize emergent streams of research. These streams are the diversity/diversified mentoring perspective, the cross-cultural mentoring perspective, and the expatriate mentoring perspective. All three approaches examine cross-cultural mentoring; however, we develop an integrative framework that may help guide future research in these developing areas of inquiry. We provide examples of research that illustrate these three perspectives and develop an integrative approach that will facilitate new research questions. We discuss the breadth of research designs and approaches that might address these questions.

A recent burgeoning of interest in examining international aspects of organizational research has advanced the budding field of cross cultural mentoring research (CCRM). This emerging field has led to some interesting findings and also some controversies. For example, research on international mentoring remains sparse, while there is much theory and research on diversified mentoring relationships in domestic (U.S.) settings. There is increasing interest in examining mentoring in other cultural settings and in comparing across cultures. However, there is conceptual ambiguity regarding differences between cross-cultural mentoring, diversified mentoring, international mentoring, and expatriate mentoring. In addition to the need for more research on cross-cultural mentoring, there is a need to have a broader array of appropriate research designs and methodologies brought to bear on this topic.

Given these issues, we will examine the state of cross cultural mentoring research, with particular attention to applying these issues to international mentoring in Multinational Corporations (MNC). At this point in the development of research on CCMR it is important to take stock of the knowledge base in the field and to develop an organizing framework to guide future theory and research. In this paper, we will discuss CCMR as an umbrella framework that can integrate various research streams in this arena. In 2007, two handbooks on mentoring were published by Eby and Allen and by Ragins and Kram. Both mentoring handbooks devote chapters to diversity in mentoring relationships. These perspectives on diversity offer rich theoretical work and empirical results which may inform and advance both international mentoring and expatriate mentoring research. Clearly, cross-cultural mentoring relationships are diverse ones, and fortunately, there is a rich theoretical and empirical base to draw upon for the development of cross-cultural mentoring research. The Ragins and Kram handbook's chapter on

international mentoring by Clutterback (2007) describes the development of mentoring outside of the U.S. context (Europe specifically). Among the conclusions in this chapter, Clutterback identifies "...many unanswered or partially answered questions relating to cross-cultural mentoring" (p. 648). These include skills needed for cross-cultural mentoring, whether culture makes electronic mentoring more difficult, identification of outcomes of cross-cultural mentoring, and how cultural differences affect mentoring relationship dynamics. These issues are critical, and we agree each warrants much more research attention. Thus, we will review perspectives on cross-cultural mentoring and discuss similarities and differences across these various perspectives. We hope this attention will help encourage future theoretical development and empirical research on CCMR, and help develop a more sophisticated lens for viewing future research in this area.

Based upon our review of the literature, we suggest there are three broad streams of research related to CCMR that can be articulated to organize this body of literature. These streams are 1) diversity/diversified mentoring relationships, 2) cross-cultural mentoring relationships, and 3) expatriate mentoring relationships. While we will discuss each research stream separately, there are clearly interactions between and among them. For example, expatriate mentoring relationships are diverse and involve cross-cultural issues. However, we believe it important to first discuss key aspects of each line of research and provide an overview of variables studied and research findings. We will then discuss an overall framework for future study of CCMR that incorporates these three literatures with the goal of providing a more comprehensive view of international mentoring research. Research will no doubt continue along these three separate lines, however, it is important to recognize related literatures and how these three streams might inform one another.

Diversified Mentoring

There is no question that literature on diversity and diversified relationships is the most developed of the three streams of research we reviewed. Ragins (2007) defines diversified mentoring relationships as "... mentors and protégés who differ on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, socioeconomic class, or other group memberships *associated with power in organizations*" (p. 282, original emphasis). Cross-cultural mentoring relationships are diversified on at least one of these dimensions, race, however, there may be additional variables that add diversity (for example, a mentor-protégé relationship that is both cross-race and cross-gender). A comprehensive review of the literature on diversity in mentoring relationships (specifically discussing race) is beyond the scope of this paper, and such reviews have recently been published (cf., Blake-Beard, Murrell & Thomas, 2007; Ragins, 2007). However, this literature clearly speaks to the importance of examining cross-race differences in mentoring relationships, particularly when there are power differentials. Also, the patterns of cross-race interactions have been an important consideration in both theory and research both within the mentoring dyad and in networks (Ibarra, 1993). Blake-Beard et al. (2007) note that understanding the dynamics of cross-race interactions has been essential in this line of research, and these dynamics affect both mentor and protégé. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that these dynamics will matter in cross-cultural mentoring relationships and research in this new area of research should incorporate findings from the diversity literature.

In addition, there has been attention to differences in outcomes of cross-race mentoring relationships when compared with same-race relationships. Dreher and Cox (1996) found that compensation differed in cross-gender and cross-race relationships even when mentoring

relationships were established. It will be important to examine outcomes of cross-cultural mentoring relationships as well. Traditional outcomes studied in the mentoring literature include salary, promotions, and performance appraisal (Scandura, 1992). In addition, socialization, stress, and learning have been studied as outcomes of mentoring (for a comprehensive review and meta-analysis of career benefits associated with mentoring, see Allen et al., 2004). It stands to reason that outcomes of cross-cultural mentoring relationships should include the outcomes traditionally studied in the diversified mentoring literature as well as additional outcomes related to cross-cultural learning and adjustment.

The literature on relational demography may be applied to CCMR to examine mentoring dyads in which parties belong to different cultural groups. Relational demography refers to the “...similarities or differences between an individual and others on such factors as age, gender, race, religion, education, and occupation” (Farh, Tsui, Xin & Cheng, 1998: 471). Farh et al. examined the influence of relational demography and trust in supervisors of vertical dyads (i.e., supervisor-subordinate in Chinese and Taiwanese organizations). Relational demography has also been examined in work groups and found to impact both process and outcomes (Tsui, Egan & O’Reilly, 1992; Riordan & Shore, 1997). Goldberg, Riordan and Shaeffer (2010) argue that social identity theory underlies relational demography, and they provide a new theoretical lens from which to view demography effects on interpersonal processes. Hogg & Terry (2000) discussed social identity theory in organizational contexts. Social identity is derived from a self-categorization process in which a person identifies with a social group and derives their individual identity from this group. This theory explains why many people identify with their national culture and country of origin. Membership in social groups is proposed to reduce uncertainty and enhance self esteem. Both of these processes are of particular relevance to

CCMR since self esteem may be threatened in interactions with a mentor (or protégé) from another culture. Uncertainty reduction is a primary human motive (Hogg, 2001) and Goldberg et al. found that uncertainty reduction was a moderator of the relationship between relational demography (differences in race, specifically) and cohesion. Uncertainty reduction is also an important variable in cross-cultural mentoring dyads since the mentoring process may activate the need to reduce uncertainty.

Cross-Cultural Mentoring

Recent research on mentoring has begun to examine the impact of cultural variables on mentoring relationships. These survey research studies draw upon the research on cultural values in societies (Hofstede, 1980; 2001). The path-breaking work of Hofstede identified cultural values which may impact interpersonal processes in cross-cultural contexts. These cultural values include power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity, and long-term orientation. Hofstede's research profiles 74 countries and regions and is perhaps the most-cited work in the area of cross-cultural comparisons. A comprehensive review of management research that has employed the Hofstede framework may be found in Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson (2006). Following this general approach, House and his colleagues studied cultural differences in leadership, Project GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organization Behavior Effectiveness) (House et al. 2004). In an ambitious cross-cultural project, House and 170 collaborators collected data from 62 distinct countries and regions from over 18,000 middle managers from 1,000 organizations. This research identified the following leadership behaviors which are believed to be universal: Charismatic/value-based leadership, team-oriented leadership, participative leadership, humane-oriented leadership, autonomous leadership, and

self-protective leadership. In addition, the GLOBE project in a later publication (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007) discussed nine cultural dimensions which include performance orientation, uncertainty avoidance, humane orientation, institutional collectivism, in-group collectivism, assertiveness, gender egalitarianism, future orientation, and power distance. Some of these cultural dimensions overlap with Hofstede dimensions, and the scope of the GLOBE project is enormous. Thus a discussion and comparison of cultural values is beyond the scope of this paper. However, this work examining cultural values appears to be another potentially important line of research that the cross-cultural perspective on mentoring can draw upon.

An example of a study that typifies the cross-cultural mentoring perspective was conducted by Gentry, Weber & Sadri (2007). In this study, direct report of managers' vocational (career) mentoring were rated by protégés. The cultural background of the manager was examined as a moderator of career mentoring and the performance of the protégé (as rated by the manager). Managers who provided more career mentoring were rated higher in terms of performance. In addition, this study found that the GLOBE dimension, Performance Orientation, was a cross-level moderator of the mentoring-performance relationship.

Expatriate Mentoring

There has been recent interest in expansion of the expatriate mentoring literature and how it contributes to our understanding of international mentoring in the broader context of CCMR. Mezas & Scandura (2005) were among the first to explicitly tie mentoring to expatriate needs; one approach to internationalizing mentoring research. Their theoretical model recognized that expatriates need multiple mentors to assist their adjustment and development during the pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation stages of international assignments. Additionally,

multiple mentors from different cultures are needed to assist expatriate adjustment to host countries, new work roles, and different office cultures. Increasingly in organizations, both the context for mentoring and the mentor-protégée dyads are multicultural. Thus, a specific contribution of their study to CCMR is providing a theoretical model for using multiple mentors to manage international expatriate needs in increasingly multicultural contexts.

Mezias & Scandura's theoretical model has helped undergird recent empirical work on cross-cultural mentoring. These pioneering empirical investigations have yielded both common and conflicting findings. For example, Carraher, Sullivan & Crocitto (2008) tested effects of both home- and host-country mentors on expatriate adjustment and performance. They found that expatriates derived differing benefits from these two types of mentors. Similarly, Litrell (2007) found that home- and host-country mentors provided different and unique functions that predicted expatriate outcomes on overseas assignments. However, she did not find that the number or diversity of mentors significantly affected expatriate outcomes. Taken together, these findings do not provide a unified picture of the benefits of multiple or multicultural mentors. Clearly more research is warranted in this nascent research stream. While advocating for more research, we also wish to encourage a broadening of approaches to more holistically address mentoring needs of different types of MNC employees.

Although the dominant focus of much international research on MNC employees has been parent country nationals (PCNs) working abroad, this approach is limiting because it ignores other important types of MNC employees. Indeed, disproportionate attention devoted to PCNs serving as expatriate managers at foreign subsidiaries has been a major limitation on the development of expatriate research, and this bias has persisted for decades (e.g., Daniels 1974; Reynolds 1997; Tarique, Schuler and Gong 2006). The roles of third-country nationals (TCNs),

who work for the MNC, but are not citizens of either the parent or host country in which they work, have received relatively scant attention. In fact, most expatriate studies acknowledging TCNs simply classified them in a single category of expatriate along with PCNs. However, it is unlikely that PCN and TCN expatriates have such similar needs that a ‘one-size-fits-all’ international mentoring approach would work for these distinct groups. It is likely that, mentoring needs of these different types of expatriates differ substantially across each stage of the expatriate assignment. Some TCNs become impatriates (non home-country employees working in the MNC parent country). We believe TCN needs will be different if they are assigned to parent country headquarters rather than to a host-country affiliated operation. So investigating differences in success of mentoring approaches for these specific contexts could be informative.

Additionally, host-country nationals (HCNs) working for a foreign subsidiary in their home country comprise an increasing percentage of MNC employees. Increasing understanding of CCMR will require expanding focus beyond PCNs and even TCNs to include assessing the needs of HCNs. Future research designs could investigate how mentoring needs of HCNs differ from the needs of PCNs and TCNs. Such broadening of the CCMR focus is essential to identifying advantages and disadvantages of different cultural approaches to mentoring in different contexts, including the different stages in the expatriate assignment and the different types of MNC employees. Indeed, understanding effectiveness of different cultural approaches to mentoring may help identify best practices for each context and generalizability of cross cultural approaches, which could be the first step in developing a model for ‘multicultural’ mentoring. An integrated multicultural approach to mentoring not only holds the promise of

improving adjustment, satisfaction, and productivity of all types of MNC employees, but it could lead to more geocentric utilization of employees across the global network of MNC operations.

Integrating CCMR Research

Examples from the literature illustrate how these various perspectives can be integrated to inform other perspectives. Feldman, Folks, and Turnley (1999) examined demographic diversity in international mentoring dyads in which respondents were 138 interns on international assignments. They found that interns who were different than their mentors in terms of gender and race were less likely to receive task, social, and career support from their mentors. In addition, poorer socialization, learning, and expectations of job offers were reported for these interns. This article adopted a diversity perspective, but it also dealt with expatriate issues and mentoring across cultures. Thus, the results of this study have implications for all three areas of CCMR.

Next, we will discuss how incorporation of the diversity and expatriate perspectives might contribute to developing a line of research on cross-cultural mentoring. The Gentry et al. (2008) study employed a large sample of 30,365 managers from 33 different countries in over 4000 companies. It is interesting to note that race/ethnicity was not available for their study because countries limited certain types of data being collected. This poses an interesting issue for cross-cultural mentoring research since an assumption had to be made that respondents reflected the country of origin. However, it is possible that a manager could be an expatriate from a different country than where the data were collected from. This is an example of where the expatriate literature, with its careful attention to whether a respondent is a PCN, TCN, or HCN might have informed their study. Also, the diversity perspective would have provided

insight into interesting relationships indicated in the study findings. Their results indicated that mentoring is particularly important in high performance orientation cultures (performance orientation was not measured directly but was rather ascribed based upon the GLOBE study). Understanding how performance orientation is related to social identity (the relational demography approach) might be an interesting area for future research.

Relational demography could be incorporated into future studies in CCMR, demographic data is typically collected as part of research investigations. Thus, a study of expatriate networks might examine the degree of network heterogeneity and how this influences both the interpersonal process and outcomes of mentoring networks. Capturing network characteristics of mentoring relationships has been an important direction in mentoring theory and research (Higgins & Kram, 2001). There is a clear need for more research using the network perspective, which may be especially important in the international context.

Bozionelos (2006) examined mentoring and networks among Greek banking employees. This single-country international mentoring study represents another variation on the cross-cultural mentoring perspective. Their results suggest that mentoring network resources may be related to intrinsic career success, but these were also related to emotional exhaustion. They challenge the transferability of mentoring to other cultures, pointing out that certain outcomes (i.e., less stress) may be influenced by culture. This is in contrast to the findings of U.S. based studies that show an inverse relationship between mentoring and stress (Allen, McManus, & Russell, 1999; Sosik & Godshalk, 2000). This study would have benefited from the direct measurement of cultural values as done in the GLOBE study. However, it does point out that mentoring theory has emerged as a predominantly U.S. – based perspective, and the assumption that it will transfer to the international context must be examined.

Thus, we not only strongly encourage further CCMR, but also a broadening of research designs used in this emerging research. In particular, we feel that there is a need for qualitative research at this juncture to increase understanding of differences in the streams of research on mentoring, and to develop stronger integration across these streams. Survey research comparing cultural values as moderators of the relationship between mentoring and career outcomes appears to be inevitable as this line of research develops. There is also potential for carefully constructed laboratory studies which examine social identity, cultural values, and the intent to mentor others and/or mentoring or coaching behaviors. We also encourage relational demography approaches to study CCMR with the theoretical lens of social identity theory to guide theoretical development. In addition, network analysis would be a useful methodological tool to examine needs-driven mentoring in the expatriate mentoring stream. It is our hope that presenting an integrative model to guide future research, and discussing current challenges facing expatriate mentoring research in the context of CCMR will encourage such further research.

In reviewing the literature on CCMR, two things are clear. There is a paucity of research on cross-cultural mentoring, and limited research on expatriate mentoring. Second, the three streams of research most related to CCMR have not been leveraged well to inform one another and advance theory and research in this area. We reviewed three streams of research: diversity, cross-cultural and expatriate mentoring, and provided examples from the literature for each of these perspectives. A critical review of this literature indicates that consideration of other perspectives might have enhanced these studies, and will lead to interesting new research directions. Researchers on CCMR need to select research designs that are appropriate. Fortunately there is a clear indication that a variety of research designs may be employed in this field, ranging from qualitative interview studies to understand dynamics in cross-cultural

mentoring dyads to experimental studies that examine the impact of relational demography and social identity. It is our hope that research on CCMR will continue to blossom and will be guided by careful consideration of the theoretical perspective chosen and the appropriate research design employed.

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