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A needs-driven approach to expatriate adjustment and career development: a multiple mentoring perspective

John M Mezias and
Terri A Scandura

School of Business Administration, University of Miami, Coral Gables, USA

Correspondence:
JM Mezias, School of Business Administration, University of Miami, 414 Jenkins Building, 5250 University Drive, Coral Gables, FL 33146-9145, USA.
Tel: +1 305 284 1073;
E-mail: jmezias@miami.edu

Abstract
Although effective in improving socialization, development, and retention in the US domestic context, mentoring would likely benefit expatriates and their firms, but it remains theoretically underdeveloped in the international context. We develop a theory of international mentoring by integrating current perspectives on protean and boundaryless careers with the literature on mentoring and expatriates. Expatriates need multiple mentors to assist their adjustment and development during the pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation stages of international assignments. We discuss both hierarchical and peer, and formal and informal, mentoring relationships to delineate which relationships best address specific expatriate needs. International mentoring may improve expatriate adjustment, development, and retention, and thus may affect outcomes of international strategy. We conclude by discussing implications and avenues for future research.
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Introduction

With increasing globalization, expatriate adjustment, development, and retention are now more significant determinants of international business success (Dowling *et al.*, 1994; Tung, 1998). Assimilating and transferring knowledge across countries is the primary task of a multinational corporation (MNC) (Buckley and Casson, 1976; Hymer, 1976). However, this depends on expatriates overcoming the 'tacitness' of knowledge resources, which reside in different organizational units (Solomon, 1997). Expatriates face the added challenge of trying to gain an understanding of tacit knowledge while adjusting to living and working in a foreign country with a different social and cultural context (Feldman and Tompson, 1993). Their adjustment and development are critical to developing competitive advantage through knowledge transfer. Through the international assignment, the most important experience affecting an expatriate's career and global mindset (Black *et al.*, 1999), successful expatriates gain enhanced understanding of other business environments, cultures, and societies as well as a broader picture of global operations. Firms benefit by increasing the pool of

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potential global leaders, which reduces liabilities of foreignness from operating in different countries (Hymer, 1976; Zaheer, 1995; Mezias, 2002) and is a key source of competitive advantage (Stroh and Caligiuri, 1997; Carpenter *et al.*, 2001).

Realizing these potential benefits is difficult because international assignments are so challenging. Premature departure and unsuccessful repatriation thwart knowledge transfer, decrease local managers' confidence in headquarters' competence, and discourage others from accepting international assignments. Although some have estimated expatriate failure rates as high as 40% (e.g. Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985), scholars disagree on what constitutes failure and its rate. Leaving an assignment early is an accepted measure of failure, and more recent reports estimate premature departures between 8 and 12% (Harzing, 1995; Forster, 1997; Daniels and Insch, 1998). Additionally, 10% of expatriates leave their firm shortly after completing assignments, and another 14% leave between 2 and 3 years of their return (Dolins, 1999). For MNCs in the United States (US), expatriate failure costs now reach $1 million per failure (Torbiorn, 1994; Shannonhouse, 1996), and total economic costs of failure range between $2 and $2.5 billion (Harrison, 1994; Kotabe and Helsen, 1998). These estimates exclude intangible costs such as psychological effects on expatriates and decreased productivity (Forster, 1997), as well as lost opportunities to transfer knowledge, develop markets, and develop global managers (Harrison, 1994). Underutilizing repatriates also prevents firms from realizing expatriation benefits.

Compounding these problems, international assignments are significantly increasing: expatriate use rose by 30% in 1993, and 71% of respondents to Windham International's prestigious survey expected further growth (Windham International, 1994). Andersen Consulting (1997) estimated there are 150,000 US expatriates and 83,000 expatriates working in the US, and these numbers are expected to increase (Windham International, 2000). Benefits and risks posed by these assignments highlight their importance to global competition (Kobrin, 1988; Dowling *et al.*, 1994). Accordingly, scholars have devoted considerable attention to expatriates' recruitment and selection (Kealey, 1996; Tung, 1998), training (Black *et al.*, 1991; Cavusgil *et al.*, 1992), adjustment (Nicholson, 1984; Black *et al.*, 1992), and repatriation (Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Feldman and Bolino, 1999). Since mentoring has helped the socialization, development, and retention of US employees, some have advocated using mentors to help expatriates (Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Harvey and Wiese, 1998). However, the specific role of mentors in the international context remains theoretically underdeveloped (Allen *et al.*, 2004). Recognizing this gap in the literature, Scandura and Von Glinow (1997: 97) called for more attention to the role of mentoring in expatriate development:

> We believe that it is time to bring domestic research, theory, and practice on mentoring into the international arena, where there are problematic disconnects in the practices of expatriation, international assignments abroad, and repatriation. Mentoring can address these disconnects by providing the coaching and support necessary for the success of international executives abroad.

Shumsky (1993) reported that expatriates receive little mentoring or career advice, indicating that firms also largely ignore expatriate mentoring. Sparse academic and practitioner attention to mentoring in international assignments raises a fundamental question: Are different mentoring relationships better suited for different expatriate adjustment and development needs?

The next section examines how the boundaryless and protean careers literature relates to the expatriate assignment. We then briefly review the mentoring literature to provide background for discussing how mentoring relationships may aid expatriates. The following section integrates literatures on international assignments and mentorship to develop a framework proposing what types of mentoring relationship best address specific adjustment and developmental needs of expatriates during each international assignment stage: predeparture, expatriation, and repatriation. We conclude by discussing practical and empirical implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

Expatriate assignments: boundaryless and protean

DeFillippi and Arthur (1996) defined boundaryless careers as 'sequences of job opportunities that go beyond the boundaries of single employment settings'. Eby *et al.* (2003: 689) further specified the boundaryless career:

> A hallmark of the boundaryless career is that it is not bounded to a single organization. Rather, it transcends organizational memberships and consists of sequences of experiences across both organizations and jobs.

The expatriate assignment fits many criteria for a boundaryless career experience. It is high on the

career dimensions of identity change, accumulation of knowledge, and multiple employers (Baker and Aldrich, 1996). Expatriates undergo a socialization and acculturation process that affects their career identities. They must learn new ways of thinking and acting, and accumulate knowledge in both task and cultural contexts. Although the expatriate works for the same employer, the assignment country may be so different from the home office that it represents a new employment situation and psychological contract. As noted by Mirvis and Hall (1996), boundaryless careers differ from traditional careers in that they require 'periodic cycles of reskilling' (p 240). The expatriate assignment (pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation) requires such cycles of reskilling for the expatriate to make necessary adjustments to the host country, and home-country readjustments upon return. Sanchez *et al.* (2000) present a model of coping responses to the expatriate assignment by developmental stages. These stages include pre-arrival issues, transitional issues, and repatriation concerns. They suggest that organizations develop culturally sensitive policies for expatriates, such as the ability to keep in touch with co-workers in the host country, and to encourage host country managers to provide assistance and support. These coping needs vary by individual, and are consistent with a needs-driven approach to career development, such as the protean career concept.

> Some years ago, Hall (1976, 201) defined a protean career as a process which the person, not the organization, is managing. It consists of all the person's varied experiences in education, training, work in several organizations, changes in occupational field, etc. The protean career is not what happens to the person in any one organization...

Expatriate assignments may also be viewed as protean. This term comes from the Greek god Proteus, who could change into any form. Thus, expatriates must change their form to fit the local circumstances and demands of the task and culture they find themselves encountering. The protean career concept lifts the restrictions on the way we think about careers (Hall, 1996). It shifts the responsibility for planning a career from the organization to the individual. Given recent developments in the literature on careers, we suggest a new way to look at the role of mentoring in the expatriate career process. Protean expatriates shape their own careers, identify their developmental needs, and seek multiple mentoring relationships to meet these needs. As noted by Yan *et al.* (2002), in the protean career 'the person's own personal values and needs are the driving forces, and the criterion of success is internal (psychological success) not external' (p 375). We suggest a 'needs-driven' approach to mentoring for expatriates in boundaryless career experiences. After reviewing recent theories of multiple mentoring, we develop a needs-driven framework for expatriate mentoring.

Mentoring: a brief overview of the literature

Early mentoring research focused almost exclusively on dyadic relationships between mentor and protégé, but researchers are beginning to expand the mentoring construct to recognize explicitly that protégés may add new mentoring relationships over time (e.g. Higgins and Kram, 2001). Kram (1985) suggested that people might receive mentoring from more than one person because career development stages may require mentors with different skills and knowledge. Despite this early suggestion, it was not until Higgins and Kram (2001) conceptualized mentoring as a network of relationships spanning a protégé's entire career that multiple mentoring developed into a research agenda. This perspective argues that central issues of network diversity and strength of relational ties affect career outcomes, and mentoring relationships developed in networks facilitate protégé development (Lankau and Scandura, 2002). Although Scandura and Von Glinow (1997, 110) discussed only dyadic (one-on-one) relationships, they acknowledged that 'the international manager must treat the development of a mentoring network as a creative task and be open to learning from a variety of sources'. However, they did not fully develop expatriate mentoring as a network of relationships.

Despite this interest, there is a paucity of research discussing or examining multiple mentoring relationships. Higgins and Kram (2001) expanded mentoring theory to encompass multiple relationships by focusing on new relationships emerging over time in the network. However, they recognized the need for more research examining concurrent developmental relationships. As employment stress, uncertainty, and responsibilities increase, so do employees' socialization and developmental needs. However, a mentor's influence and expertise likely overlap with a smaller percentage of protégés' increasing and changing needs. These new organizational realities may require employees to develop *simultaneously* more than one mentoring relationship to meet their vocational and psychosocial

needs. De Janasz *et al.* (2003) argued that turbulence in careers makes mentoring networks more important, and one mentor can no longer single-handedly meet protégés' needs, especially the global dynamics in 'boundaryless' work arrangements. The study of mentoring relationships must begin to address the issue of how managers can gain needed coaching and career assistance to develop the intellectual capital of the MNC.

We believe using multiple mentors enhances employee development (Baugh and Scandura, 2000). Expatriates provide an excellent example of employees facing increasing ambiguity, uncertainty, and pressure stemming from challenges of international assignments. Thus, they are more likely to need multiple, simultaneous mentoring relationships than other employees because a single mentor is unlikely to possess the broad-based experience to help expatriates cope with the challenges and pressures posed by their international assignment. These challenges require mentors with different skills and experiences to assist expatriates while preparing for, working in, and returning from diverse operating environments. Although information technology minimizes the need for personal contact, relying on one mentor for all international assignment stages may not sufficiently address all of an expatriate's developmental needs.

Kamoche's (2000) research on personal networks of expatriates indicates that mentoring is an effective human resource practice for helping expatriates overcome international assignment challenges. His interview study of 25 managers in an MNC found that mentors in networks gave advice, transmitted organizational culture, and helped expatriates realize their role in the firm. Networks gave expatriates more visibility, and advanced their careers. In the next section, we discuss mentoring functions to provide background for developing propositions on the types of mentoring relationship best suited to address expatriates' adjustment and developmental needs during different stages of international assignments.

Mentoring functions

Kram's (1985) analysis of mentor–protégé pairs identified two primary dimensions of mentoring functions: career coaching (vocational) and social support (psychosocial). Vocational support enhances protégé career advancement as the mentor provides opportunities for visibility, coaching, protection, sponsorship, and challenging assignments (Kram, 1985). Psychosocial support involves acceptance and confirmation, counseling, and personal friendship (Kram, 1985). Psychosocial support may also help protégés cope with stress and develop a stronger sense of identity (Baugh *et al.*, 1996). Research in various occupational settings supports the existence of these mentoring functions (Douglas and Schoorman, 1988; Noe, 1988; Dreher and Ash, 1990; Scandura, 1992, 1998; Allen *et al.*, 1997b). Most mentoring research focuses on mentoring functions or career and attitudinal responses (Noe, 1988; Chao *et al.*, 1992; Ragins *et al.*, 2000). Research supports the efficacy of protégés initiating mentoring relationships with hierarchical mentors (Scandura and Williams, 1998). Thus, protégés could initiate relationships with multiple mentors based on their needs. Organizations may assign formal mentors, yet other relationships may be informal.

Formal *vs* informal mentoring

Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal, and this distinction significantly affects various aspects of the relationship and its outcomes. Formal relationships are organization-initiated programs in which program administrators, after assessing needs, competencies, and compatibilities, pair available mentors with protégés (Gaskill, 1993; Douglas, 1997). Informal relationships develop spontaneously based on mutually perceived competence and interpersonal comfort (Kram, 1983, 1985; Allen *et al.*, 1997a). Formal relationships tend to meet at prescribed times and are more short-term than informal relationships (Kram, 1985; Murray, 1991). Mentors and protégés in informal relationships meet when desired and tend to have more time to cultivate trust and engage in psychosocial functions. The formal nature of organization-initiated relationships may cause mentors and protégés to view time together as required and their relationship as temporary, which may inhibit development of trust and emotional closeness. Consequently, formal relationships focus on short-term protégé needs (Murray, 1991; Geiger-Dumond and Boyle, 1995), and mentors seldom use their influence to benefit protégés' careers (Kram, 1985). Conversely, informal relationships focus on longer-term goals, and mentors may even place protégés' interests above their organization's interests.

Many firms initiate mentoring programs to maintain more control over who provides and receives mentoring, as well as to ensure that content supports organizational goals (Lindenberger and

Zachary, 1999). From an HR perspective, these programs provide access to mentors and improve new member socialization. Although mentoring research suggests that protégés prefer informal relationships (Ragins *et al.*, 2000), research reports mixed results with respect to outcomes of formal and informal mentoring (Scandura and Williams, 2002). Recognizing potential for differences in outcomes, Noe (1988) argued that organizations should not expect formal and informal mentoring relationships to deliver the same benefits. He studied protégés in a formal mentoring program in a school district, and his results indicated that protégé job and career attitudes were not related to the time spent with the mentor or to the quality of the relationship. Chao *et al.* (1992) studied three groups: protégés in informally developed mentoring relationships, protégés in formal mentorship programs, and a group of individuals who did not have mentors. Their findings indicated that protégés in informal mentoring relationships reported higher levels of organizational socialization, job satisfaction, and salary. Ragins *et al.* (2000) found that some formal mentoring relationships may become 'marginal', and reported that having no mentor might be better in some cases than a poor formal mentoring relationship. Scandura and Williams (2002) reviewed research on formal mentoring and called for more research investigating outcomes of formal and informal relationships to determine under what conditions each is likely to meet different protégé needs.

Lateral *vs* hierarchical mentoring

The status difference between mentors and protégés is another important distinction in mentoring relationships. The traditional definition of mentoring describes a hierarchical relationship between a senior, more experienced organizational member and a younger, junior organizational member. Eby (1997) noted that this narrow conceptualization does not encompass alternative forms of mentoring that actually emerge in organizational settings. For example, lateral or peer mentoring relationships pair individuals at similar organizational levels, and may increase in importance as organizations downsize and reduce hierarchical layers. Peer mentoring could pair individuals in different organizations. Viewed as an important developmental work relationship, peer mentoring offers a supplement for traditional hierarchical relationships (Kram and Isabella, 1985; Miller and Jablin, 1991; Morrison, 1993).

Kram (1985) and Kram and Isabella (1985) identified differences in developmental functions of peer and hierarchical mentoring relationships. With respect to vocational functions, traditional hierarchical mentors provide protégés with more sponsorship, coaching, exposure, and protection. With respect to psychosocial functions, traditional mentors provide protégés with more counseling and acceptance, whereas peer mentors provide more psychosocial support, personal feedback, and information. Douglas and Schoorman (1988) investigated differences in hierarchical and peer mentoring, and found that hierarchical mentors provide more vocational support than psychosocial support, and peer relationships may better promote on-the-job learning.

More recent research (Allen *et al.*, 1997b, 1999; Ensher *et al.*, 2001) found that peer relationships provided valuable psychosocial support. Faced with increased stress and uncertainty, individuals place added value on the psychosocial aspects of mentoring. Indeed, peer mentoring tends to increase with uncertainty, and may substitute for traditional hierarchical mentoring during stressful events such as mergers (Scandura and Siegel, 1995). Siegel (2000) also found that peer relationships reduced stress at all professional levels, and protégés preferred psychosocial support from peers during and after mergers.

A 'needs-driven' approach to expatriate mentoring

Protean careers are considered to be driven by the needs of the individual (Hall, 1996). Our framework contributes to mentoring theory by offering a 'needs-driven' approach to mentoring. Traditional mentoring theory placed the genesis of mentoring provided in the realm of the mentor: trusted, wise counselors understood protégé needs and when to provide assistance. We ground our dynamic framework in the developmental needs of expatriate protégés, so we focus on what type of mentoring best addresses these needs. The relatively fixed time boundaries of the expatriate assignment provide a unique context for examining how protégés' needs change during the assignment, and how innovative IHRM can meet these changing needs. Protégé needs drive the mentoring relationships before, during, and after the international assignment, and examining protégé-driven relationships could contribute to new ways of viewing mentoring relationships in domestic settings as well.

Many scholars have examined problems emerging during the three distinct stages of an international assignment: pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation. Some scholars detail prescriptions and programs designed to increase adjustment and decrease failure (Zahrly and Tosi, 1989; Forster, 1997), but these studies focus mostly on one international assignment stage. Napier and Peterson (1991) noted an almost exclusive focus on home-office mentors. Tung (1998) and Harvey and Wiese (1998) advocate incorporating the three stages of the international assignment when examining IHRM efforts. We heed these calls to assess all three stages when examining the potential benefits of mentoring relationships.

In addition to addressing international assignment stages, we address the critical socialization and development challenges that emerge during these stages. Cross-cultural adjustment receives much attention (Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Feldman and Tompson, 1993), but this is only one of three critical challenges facing expatriates. The socialization literature, which does not typically incorporate the international context, views work role mastery and group inclusion as the two key dimensions of newcomer socialization (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Chao *et al.*, 1994). Individuals working in a new office must quickly grasp changes in work process, structure, and role characteristics while trying to understand office culture and politics to determine appropriate behavior, which helps ensure acceptance.

Building on the socialization literature, Black (1988, 1990) and Black *et al.* (1991, 1992) argued that international assignments demand three dimensions of adjustment to host-country culture, work role, and group socialization. They found support for these three dimensions among American and Japanese expatriates. Shaffer *et al.* (1999) found support for these three dimensions in a more diverse sample of expatriates. Expatriates face distinct challenges on each dimension during each international assignment stage. Combining these adjustment dimensions with international assignment stages creates a framework for assessing specific socialization and development challenges emerging during each international assignment stage. We incorporate these arguments in Table 1, which depicts a 3×3 matrix of adjustment dimensions and international assignment stages.

We use this framework as a platform to discuss which types of mentoring relationship may help expatriates' adjustment and development during each international assignment stage. Mentoring relationships may provide critical assistance to expatriates facing greater uncertainty and increased pressure during pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation. This assistance may also prove essential for firms hoping to benefit from significant investments in expatriates. Developing a theory of international mentoring relationships complements and supplements research on expatriate training (Cavusgil *et al.*, 1992; Tung, 1998; Leiba-O'Sullivan, 1999), selection (Kealey, 1996; Tung, 1998; Caligiuri, 2000), family adjustment (Harvey, 1997; Caligiuri *et al.*, 1998), and repatriation (Harvey, 1989; Feldman, 1991; Allen and Alvarez, 1998). Adding mentoring to this portfolio of individual and organizational adjustment, development, and retention efforts may improve expatriate success, knowledge transfer, and the development of internationally experienced leaders. The potential benefits for both expatriates and firms should far outweigh the difficulties of establishing multiple mentoring relationships.

International assignments create more stress, uncertainty, and ambiguity than almost any other assignment, and they dramatically affect expatriate careers (Sanchez *et al.*, 2000). Many employees refuse this challenge for personal reasons, but also because they lack confidence in information received about the assignment and fear being passed over for promotion while expatriated. Realistic job previews have long been established as a way to stem turnover among new hires. As Wanous (1980, 48) noted some years ago: 'It should be clear that realistic recruitment is designed to increase job survival.' In the international context, Oddou (1991) warns that employees need realistic

Table 1 Expatriate needs during stages of international assignments

Pre-departure	*Pre-departure*	*Pre-departure*
Host-country adjustment	Work role adjustment	Host-country office culture
On-site	*On-site*	*On-site*
Host-country adjustment	Work role adjustment	Host-country office culture
Repatriation	*Repatriation*	*Repatriation*
Home-country readjustment	Work role adjustment	Home-country office culture

information on benefits, job expectations, support, compensation, and tax implications. However, a survey reported that two-thirds of expatriates do not believe they received a clear assignment preview (Light, 1997). This is especially problematic because realistic job previews contribute to higher performance and lower turnover (Phillips, 1998), and expatriates receiving realistic job previews are more successful (Feldman and Thomas, 1992).

A potential expatriate who has a mentor should seek his or her advice before accepting an international assignment. In an existing relationship, a mentor may ensure that the protégé receives a more realistic assignment preview. This existing mentor could be the expatriate's primary sponsor by providing assistance throughout the assignment, especially during repatriation, by helping ensure a reassignment commensurate with increased experience. An informal relationship may be better for this sponsor role, because firm-initiated relationships tend to focus on short-term needs (Murray, 1991; Geiger-Dumond and Boyle, 1995). Higher status helps hierarchical mentors provide increased visibility and advocacy (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Douglas and Schoorman, 1988). This vocational support should reduce expatriates' fear of being passed over for promotion while on assignment. Thus, we expect that expatriates in existing informal hierarchical relationships who seek their mentors' advice before accepting international assignments will be more likely to report objective and subjective career success indicators. Objective career success refers to traditional markers of managerial progress, such as salary growth and promotion rate. Subjective career success refers to managers' feelings of career satisfaction. Both are important measures of managerial career success (Schein, 1971).

P1: Expatriates who involve informal hierarchical mentors in decisions to accept international assignments are more likely to report objective and subjective career success.

We argue that seeking advice of an established informal, hierarchical mentor before accepting an international assignment benefits expatriates, and this mentor could offer assistance throughout the international assignment. However, each stage presents distinct challenges, and it is highly unlikely that one person has the experience and skills to address the varied adjustment and development needs emerging in different international assignment stages. Therefore, a single dyadic relationship cannot meet all the expatriate protégé's needs for the entire international assignment. Consequently, expatriates must seek multiple mentoring relationships to help provide adjustment and developmental assistance to overcome the distinct challenges emerging during each international assignment stage. We expect that several of these mentoring relationships will be simultaneous. Our proposition development sections discuss theoretical justifications for establishing one particular type of mentoring relationship in each of the nine areas outlined in Table 1. However, in many cases some form of mentoring may be better than no mentoring – except dysfunctional relationships (Scandura, 1998). Additionally, during each international assignment stage, expatriates enter new mentoring relationships, but they may benefit from maintaining existing mentoring relationships established in other international assignment stages.

It is important to note that three-quarters of expatriates are married (Windham International, 1997), and expatriates' spouses would likely benefit from mentoring. Although family difficulties contribute to expatriate failure (Bauer and Taylor, 2001), family mentoring is beyond the scope of this paper.[1] Next, we discuss how mentoring relationships may help protégés' pre-departure preparations.

Pre-departure adjustment needs

Black *et al.* (1991) argued that expatriates need predeparture assistance for host-country, work role, and host-country office culture adjustment, and McDonald (1993) cautioned firms to provide adequate preparation time before transfer. Despite such recommendations, and evidence that expatriate selection and training programs affect performance (e.g., Tung, 1998), a survey by Windham International (1997) reported that one-third of American expatriates receive no additional training or preparation, and of the two-thirds who did, 70% believed training and preparation were inadequate. Reactionary approaches to international staffing, such as hastily sending whoever is available to fill staffing needs, create intense time pressure that minimizes pre-departure selection, training, and preparation efforts, which is especially problematic because expatriates need more preparation than other employees do (Nicholson and West, 1989).

We believe mentoring complements rather than substitutes for selection and training efforts, but it

takes on added importance when pre-departure preparations are lacking. Short pre-departure periods complicate pre-departure mentoring efforts in two important ways. First, they make it difficult for expatriates to identify and establish relationships with different mentors who possess the specific experience they need. Second, compressed timeframes may severely limit the chances of establishing informal mentoring relationships, which require more time to develop (Kram, 1985; Allen *et al.*, 1997b). Thus, firm-initiated relationships are the most feasible way to ensure that expatriates receive pre-departure mentoring assistance in all three adjustment dimensions. A brief pre-departure timeframe may make firm-initiated relationships preferable because their short-term focus is all that is required (Murray, 1991; Geiger-Dumond and Boyle, 1995). Thus we believe that all pre-departure relationships should be firm-initiated programs, because firms can better identify qualified mentors in the time allowed, especially if this is the expatriate's first international assignment or first to that country. We next separately discuss each adjustment dimension to assess whether peer or hierarchical relationships may address specific expatriate needs more effectively. Although we focus on matching types of mentoring relationship with expatriate needs, we address demographic, relational, and organizational factors that might influence expatriate adjustment in our discussion section.

Pre-departure host-country adjustment

Similarity between home and host cultures, and the ability to understand culture-driven behavioral differences, affect host-country adjustment, but so do self-esteem and confidence (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). Selection processes can minimize cultural differences, and training programs can identify behavioral differences, but mentors may help expatriates build self-esteem and confidence before departure. Besides a psychosocial need for confidence-building, expatriates also require specific host-country information to minimize stress caused by the uncertainty and ambiguity associated with living abroad (Brett, 1980; Black, 1988). Peer relationships tend to provide better psychosocial support than hierarchical relationships, and peer mentors may better fulfill protégés' informational needs while providing support and reassurance (Kram, 1985; Allen *et al.*, 1997b). These arguments and pre-departure time pressure suggest that formal peer mentoring best assists expatriates' pre-departure, host-country adjustment needs.

> **P2:** Before departure, formal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' host-country adjustment needs.

Pre-departure work role adjustment needs

Black *et al.* (1999) estimated that MNCs select 95% of expatriates based on technical skills, but this does not negate the need for work role mentors. Expatriates must learn different host-country work routines and processes, and understand how these differences affect global strategy. Superiors, because they are higher status than peers, may better understand and explain strategic issues related to international assignments and global strategy. As expatriates prepare to embark on this significant career phase, career coaching and sponsorship may prove most beneficial. Hierarchical mentors provide more coaching and vocational support (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Douglas and Schoorman, 1988). These arguments and pre-departure time pressure suggest that a formal hierarchical relationship may best assist expatriates' pre-departure work role adjustment needs.

> **P3:** Before departure, formal hierarchical mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' work role adjustment needs.

Pre-departure host-country office culture adjustment needs

Naumann's (1993) survey of expatriates in South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China found that both organizational characteristics and job characteristics relate significantly to intrinsic and extrinsic job satisfaction. Host-country office culture is an important organizational characteristic, and adjusting to office culture and politics is a source of stress for expatriates (Brett, 1980; Black, 1988; Roch, 2001). Roch (2001) argued that adjustment to host-country office culture and politics largely determines the extent of group inclusion and future career prospects. An initial understanding of host-country office culture will help expatriates understand co-worker behavior and determine how best to modify their behavior to fit local norms. Specific information about host-country office dynamics may minimize stress caused by uncertainty and ambiguity associated with unfamiliar office politics. Pre-departure

preparations for host-office culture adjustment should help reduce stress. As discussed, peer relationships may fulfill protégés' psychosocial and informational needs better than hierarchical relationships (Kram, 1985; Allen *et al.*, 1997b). These arguments and pre-departure time pressure suggest that a formal peer relationship may best assist expatriates' pre-departure, host-country office culture adjustment.

P4: Before departure, formal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' host-country office culture adjustment needs.

Adjustment needs on assignment

Research on expatriate mentoring has focused almost exclusively on home-office mentors, and their primary role was to ensure that repatriates receive assignments commensurate with their increased experience and skills (Napier and Peterson, 1991). While on assignment, expatriates are away from their accustomed support networks, and they have a more pronounced need for mentors (Oddou, 1991; Heimann and Pittenger, 1996; Ragins, 1997). On-site mentoring relates positively to expatriate adjustment, which relates positively to job satisfaction, intention to finish assignments, and increased international business knowledge (Feldman and Bolino, 1999). This section examines how on-site mentoring relationships can help expatriates adjust to the host-country, new work role, and host-country office culture. Family adjustment is also critical to expatriate success (Nicholson and Imaizumi, 1993; Harvey and Wiese, 1998), but, as mentioned, we focus exclusively on mentoring relationships involving expatriate protégés. Although cultural dissimilarity between mentor and protégé could affect how well a mentoring relationship aids expatriates' adjustment (Ragins, 1997), we concentrate on identifying the type of mentoring relationship that is best suited to meeting specific needs of the expatriate. However, we shall address issues related to diversity between mentor and protégé in our discussion section.

On-site host-country adjustment needs

Adjusting to living in a foreign country increases expatriate comfort and reduces the stress that may jeopardize international assignments. Cross-cultural adjustment abilities vary based on openness, tolerance, flexibility, cognition, and experience. Selection processes could identify those best able to adjust, but 95% of expatriates are chosen for technical rather than cross-cultural adjustment abilities (Black *et al.*, 1999), which suggests that cultural adjustment abilities are largely ignored (Kealey, 1996). Technical abilities are important, but adjusting to host-country society and culture also affects expatriate success. Since cross-cultural adjustment abilities seldom drive expatriate selection, mentoring may provide valuable host-country adjustment assistance.

Host-country adjustment may start with identifying appropriate supermarkets, dry cleaners, entertainment venues, restaurants, and other services, but often extends to understanding country-specific norms and behavioral heuristics. Any level of adjustment requires reliable information, which is a critical first step in sense-making. Making sense of institutionalized, often tacit, socially and culturally embedded behavior is difficult, but an on-site mentor with host-country experience could help. Host-country adjustment requires more informational and psychosocial support than career or vocational support. Peer mentors provide better information flows, and tend to focus on psychosocial needs rather than vocational support (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985). As understanding social and cultural norms and behavior takes time, informal relationships might be preferable because these tend to last longer than formal relationships (Murray, 1991; Geiger-Dumond and Boyle, 1995). Host-country adjustment mentors could be fellow employees, another firm's expatriates, chamber of commerce or trade association members, or diplomats. When mentors lack common affiliation, using firm-initiated mentoring programs is more difficult. Thus, informal peer relationships may best assist expatriates' host-country adjustment.

P5: While on assignment, informal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' host-country adjustment needs.

On-site work role adjustment needs

Expatriates facilitate knowledge transfer within MNCs, but technical expertise and work practices vary across MNC sub-units because different inputs, manufacturing techniques, technology, and consumer preferences require adjustment of production and distribution procedures. Understanding production and distribution differences and their implications helps expatriates grasp tacit, embedded knowledge and local contributions to

global strategy (Birkinshaw and Hood, 1998). Mentoring plays a critical role in reducing newcomers' uncertainty about new assignments, which helps them learn and adjust to work roles quickly (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1993). Well-adjusted expatriates are more likely to complete assignments (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black *et al.*, 1992) and develop a fuller understanding of international business challenges (Feldman and Tompson, 1993), which both increase the likelihood of successful knowledge transfer. These benefits have led some to advocate assigning a mentor to inform and advise expatriates upon arrival (McDonald, 1993). Firm-initiated mentoring programs ensure that expatriates receive on-site work support, which may reduce stress, increase understanding of local practices, and accelerate the pace of contributions.

Expatriates' superiors likely have more experience and better understand the subsidiary's role in global strategy than their peers do. So hierarchical mentors may better explain work role differences, which significantly affect expatriate adjustment (Shaffer *et al.*, 1999). Since hierarchical mentors tend to provide more vocational support, such as coaching, sponsorship, and career advice (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985; Allen *et al.*, 1997b), they may more effectively illustrate how the assignment relates to long-term career plans (Nelson and Quick, 1991; Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Baker, 1995; Feldman and Bolino, 1999). Having superiors consider connections between an expatriate's current assignment and their longer-term career goals could help ensure repatriation utilizes increased knowledge and experience (McDonald, 1993). Thus, a formal hierarchical relationship may best assist expatriates' on-site work adjustment and development needs.

P6: While on assignment, formal hierarchical mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' work role adjustment and development needs.

On-site host-country office culture adjustment needs

As novelty with a new environment wears off, anxiety and frustration may occur as newcomers strive for group inclusion (Gullahorn and Gullahorn, 1963; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979; Chao *et al.*, 1994). Miller *et al.* (1981) argued that sociocultural characteristics determine work attitudes, and work conflicts stem from intercultural differences in behavior (Shaw, 1990). Expatriates receiving guidance to understand how sociocultural contexts determine work attitudes may more rapidly gain insight into host-country office culture and politics, which affects work performance and the rate of social inclusion. Well-adjusted expatriates tend to be more stable (Ratiu, 1983), but insiders are often unwilling to be candid and trusting of outsiders (Schein, 1971).

Mentoring relationships help expatriates assimilate host-country office culture, gain comfort with work groups (Morrison, 1993; Heimann and Pittenger, 1996), and increase commitment to subsidiaries (Nelson and Quick, 1991; Baker, 1995; Feldman and Bolino, 1999). Mentoring support relates positively with accepting firm values, perceiving organizational fit (Chatman, 1991), avoiding political pitfalls (Chao *et al.*, 1992), and transforming expatriates from outsiders to contributing organizational members (Feldman, 1976). However, Jackson *et al.*'s (1993) research on workgroup socialization suggested that dissimilar newcomers are unlikely to receive social support, so a firm-initiated program may be the only way to ensure that mentoring relationships are established.

Peer mentors provide better informational flows and more psychosocial support (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985), which may reduce stress related to seeking group inclusion. Interestingly, evidence from expatriate studies done in different timeframes suggests that expatriates may be more comfortable listening to peers, and that peers may contribute more to their adjustment. For example, Miller *et al.* (1981) found that both American and German expatriates expressed confidence in their peers' abilities, but felt unappreciated by superiors. Shaffer *et al.* (1999) found that peer support was the strongest influence on expatriate adjustment, and supervisor support was not significant. These findings, coupled with the often politically sensitive nature of information relating to office culture, suggest that expatriates might prefer seeking advice from peers on these issues. Thus, formal peer relationships may more effectively address host-country office culture adjustment.

P7: While on assignment, formal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address expatriates' host-country office culture adjustment needs.

Although this section has examined on-site adjustment and development needs, repatriation

efforts must also begin during this international assignment stage. Firms should notify expatriates about repatriate intentions, and help them start readjusting prior to their return (McDonald, 1993; Taylor and Napier, 1996). The home-country sponsoring mentor can ensure proper notification and that reassignment considers increased experience. The next section addresses which mentoring relationships best address repatriation adjustment and development needs, and we revisit the sponsor's role.

Repatriation adjustment needs

Few firms develop repatriation plans despite evidence that repatriates face challenges readjusting to their home country, new work roles, and home-office culture and politics (Harvey, 1989; Black *et al.*, 1992). Assignment length, social status, age, and housing conditions all affect repatriation adjustment (Feldman and Thomas, 1992), but this section examines how mentoring relationships may facilitate repatriation adjustment and development. Although scholars advocate mentoring to assist repatriation, specific types of relationship, mentoring function, and protégés' needs remain underdeveloped. We investigate which mentoring relationships best address home country, work role, and home-office culture readjustment needs. We also assess which needs a sponsoring mentor may best serve.

Repatriation home-country readjustment needs

Repatriates may experience uncertainty and culture shock (Adler, 1981; Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Zeira and Banai, 1987), especially those returning from long assignments. Although repatriates usually have family and friends in the home country, these people may not have experience living in a foreign country, and thus are unable to provide readjustment advice. Repatriating to a new home-country location may also limit repatriates' ability to utilize their previous network of family and friends. Mentors can help repatriates overcome any home-country 're-entry shock' (Zeira and Banai, 1987), but some may feel uncomfortable seeking help in adjusting to their own country. Early firm involvement would emphasize the importance of this readjustment, and a firm-initiated mentoring program may be the only way to ensure that repatriates receive home-country readjustment support.

Stress and culture shock caused by readjusting to home-country life can affect repatriates' work performance. To deal with this stress, and facilitate home-country readjustment, repatriates likely need more informational and psychosocial support than career or vocational support. Peer mentoring relationships tend to provide superior information flows and more psychosocial support than hierarchical relationships do (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985). Thus, formal peer relationships may more effectively address home-country readjustment needs.

P8: During repatriation, formal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address repatriates' home-country readjustment needs.

Repatriation work role adjustment needs

Providing career development support may decrease turnover and help ensure that repatriates stay long enough to transfer their newly acquired knowledge and international experience. Firms benefit from these transfers, which helps justify significant investments in international assignments. However, the Conference Board reports that only 31% of US firms have formal repatriation programs (Hauser, 1998). After investing up to a million dollars, many firms ignore repatriates, who often must wait for permanent new assignments (Harvey, 1989; Black *et al.*, 1992). Ineffective repatriation is a highly ineffective use of human capital, jeopardizes knowledge transfer, causes turnover, and discourages others from accepting international assignments (Allen and Alvarez, 1998; Feldman and Bolino, 1999). Indeed, Stroh *et al.* (1998) reported that returning expatriates were more likely to seek new employment than comparable executives working from the same firm were. They argued that expatriate investments yield returns only when firms integrate international assignments into global career development programs.

Mentoring may play a critical role in repatriate retention and career development (Feldman, 1991; Feldman and Thomas, 1992; Feldman and Tompson, 1993), and it helps ensure that new assignments are commensurate with enhanced human capital gained from international experience. Superiors typically have more experience and a better understanding of the firm's global strategy, so they, rather than peers, are better able to assess how best to utilize experience and knowledge gained from international assignments. Higher-status mentors facilitate advocacy efforts and increase expatriates' visibility and exposure.

Hierarchical mentors provide more coaching, career advice, and vocational support than peer mentors (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985). Ideally, the expatriates' sponsoring mentor (pre-existing informal, hierarchical mentor), by virtue of a long-term relationship, is best suited to providing work role adjustment and career development support during repatriation. If expatriates do not have a sponsor, then a firm-initiated mentoring program can ensure that repatriates receive work role adjustment and career development support. These arguments suggest this two-part proposition:

P9a: During repatriation, the sponsoring mentor most effectively addresses repatriates' work role adjustment and development needs.

P9b: During repatriation, formal hierarchical mentoring relationships more effectively address work role adjustment and development needs of repatriates without sponsors.

Repatriation home-country office culture adjustment needs

Protecting protégés from office politics is a primary role of traditional hierarchical mentors (Kram, 1985). This support is important for newcomers, but repatriates are likely unfamiliar with the current political landscape and office dynamics. Thus, they also need this support, and a mentor can help repatriates alleviate stress related to office politics and avoid missteps, especially when returning from long assignments (Feldman and Bolino, 1999). Ideally, the expatriates' sponsor (pre-existing informal, hierarchical mentor), by virtue of the long-term relationship and established trust between mentor and protégé, is best suited to assist repatriates' adjustment to changes in home-country office culture.

However, expatriates who do not have sponsors should try to develop a mentoring relationship to gain understanding of the current office culture. The somewhat sensitive nature of this information, and of the support needed to gain an understanding of current office culture, requires informal, candid exchanges. Thus firm-initiated programs, which tend to exert more control over content and ensure compliance with organizational goals (Lindenberger and Zachary, 1999), might prove ineffective for the sensitive adjustment to home-office culture and politics. An expatriate may be more comfortable exchanging sensitive information with a peer than with a superior. In addition to providing freer information flows than hierarchical mentors, peer mentors tend to provide more emotional support and personal feedback (Kram, 1985; Kram and Isabella, 1985). These arguments suggest a two-part proposition:

P10a: During repatriation, the sponsoring mentor most effectively addresses repatriates' home-country office culture adjustment needs.

P10b: During repatriation, informal peer mentoring relationships more effectively address home-country office culture adjustment needs of repatriates without sponsors.

Table 2 provides a holistic overview of our propositions by summarizing mentoring relationships designed to address protégés' needs during each international assignment stage. For each proposition we illustrate the international assignment stage, specific protégé needs, and type of mentoring relationship recommended (informal or formal; peer or hierarchical).

Discussion

Our framework examines how multiple mentoring relationships may help expatriate protégés adjust to their international assignment needs. We argue that careful development of specific types of mentoring relationship during each stage of the international assignment will create a supportive network of multiple mentors that can best meet expatriate protégés' needs. Potential expatriates should discuss the decision to accept an international assignment with hierarchical informal mentors. If there is a pre-existing relationship, then the mentor can help increase the success rates of expatriates by encouraging the right persons to take international assignments at the right time in their career development. This hierarchical mentor or sponsor can provide support throughout the international assignment. After accepting an assignment, a firm-initiated program can ensure that expatriates establish three pre-departure mentoring relationships to obtain realistic information regarding country adjustment, new work roles, and host-country office culture. Hierarchical mentors can help expatriates prepare for new work roles, while in some instances peer mentors help expatriates prepare for host-country and office culture adjustment. Next, we address some practical and empirical implications of implementing and testing our framework.

Table 2 Summary of needs-driven approach to mentoring relationships in expatriate assignment

Propositions	*Stage of international assignment*	*Expatriate protégé's developmental need*	*Formal or informal relationship*	*Hierarchical or peer mentor*
Proposition 1	Pre-departure	Advice on accepting assignment	Informal	Hierarchical
Proposition 2	Pre-departure	Host-country adjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 3	Pre-departure	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 4	Pre-departure	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 5	On-site	Host-country adjustment	Informal	Peer
Proposition 6	On-site	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 7	On-site	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 8	Repatriation	Home-country readjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 9a	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 9b	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 10a	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 10b	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	Informal	Peer

Practical considerations

Current costs associated with international assignments are significant, and expatriates, mentors, and MNCs all have strong vested interests in expatriate success (Birdseye and Hill, 1995). Implementing an international mentoring program would add to these costs. Here we separately discuss the additional costs facing expatriate protégés, mentors, and the MNC associated with using multiple mentors. The added responsibilities and commitments that expatriates assume from being in multiple mentoring relationships include more pre-departure training and the need to manage a network of mentoring relationships simultaneously. Since they have so much to gain in terms of adjustment, comfort, career advice, and advancement from multiple mentors (Higgins and Kram, 2001), expatriate protégés likely recognize that the potential benefits far outweigh these additional costs.

The costs and benefits to mentors in protégé-driven relationships may be different from those in traditional mentoring (for a review, see Ragins and Scandura, 1994). One potential hazard is that there may be diffused loyalty in mentoring networks. For example, mentors who are part of a network may be more likely to be replaced or betrayed by protégés (Halatin and Knotts, 1982), and their reputations may be hurt if others perceive that they give unfair advantages to their protégés (Myers and Humphreys, 1985). However, international mentoring also provides benefits to the mentor. Hall (1996: 2) considered the protean career to be relational, and emphasized that mentoring is a process of co-learning, 'because change is occurring so rapidly and junior parties to a relationship often are more expert in certain areas (such as technology) than are their seniors.' Thus, mentors may learn new skills from their protégés. Mentors of expatriates may gain information about international operations without having to go abroad, through continued contact with their expatriate protégés. Thus, expatriate protégés enhance mentors' social capital (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). Having a network of loyal expatriate protégés may thus enhance the power and influence of the mentor. Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) discussed the development of social capital in networks, which enhances the overall functioning of the organization through knowledge sharing. Such knowledge sharing should make the entire organization more effective. Research on expatriate careers is thus a new application of the protean and boundaryless career models, and will likely contribute to these growing research streams.

Developing expatriate mentor–protégé relationships may support organizational goals as well. Increased globalization places greater emphasis on expatriate assimilation and transfer of knowledge across the firm, which is becoming a key source of competitive advantage. International mentoring can greatly improve expatriate adjustment, knowledge assimilation, knowledge transfer, expatriate and mentor productivity, and repatriation success. Given these potential benefits of expatriate adjustment, many firms seriously consider ways to

improve expatriate success. The start-up costs of an international mentoring program are primarily human resource managers' development and coordination time, time for mentors and protégés to meet, and some additional travel expenses. Although not trivial, these initial costs are a fraction of the current costs of an international assignment, and are far less than the estimated costs of failure. Implementing an international mentoring program necessitates reconsidering and reorganizing IHRM efforts, which has the potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts. Once an international mentoring program is operational, variable costs would be lower than initial costs, especially as MNCs utilize mentors with previous experience and repatriated protégés to mentor expatriates.

Recruiting employees willing to be expatriates is the first step in developing future global leaders, but US MNCs report that this is their most difficult expatriation problem (Brett and Stroh, 1995; Tharenou, 2002). Providing greater support, improving adjustment, and meeting the needs of expatriates should increase expatriate productivity and reduce failures. Success may breed success, and helping current expatriates should make recruiting future expatriates easier. Improved recruiting helps HR managers address this toughest aspect of the international assignment. Thus, from an organizational standpoint, the cost of supporting a multiple mentoring program to meet the needs of expatriates is justifiable based on the likely benefits derived from recruiting, retention, and increased productivity. Although expensive, expatriates, mentors, and organizations should benefit substantially from these efforts.

Empirical considerations

Although we provide a detailed framework to investigate how multiple mentoring relationships help expatriate protégés adjust during each stage of their international assignment, we cannot address in detail every factor theoretically linked to international adjustment and mentoring outcomes. However, briefly discussing some of these other factors will help guide those interested in empirically testing our framework. We classify these factors as demographic, relational, or organizational. Mentor and protégé demographic factors that likely affect international adjustment and mentoring outcomes are age, disability, education, foreign language skills, gender, host-country experience, international experience, marital status, nationality, number of career interruptions, parental status, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background (e.g. Black *et al.*, 1991; Ragins, 1999).

Most of these demographic factors are often obvious choices for study variables and do not need explanation. However, it is important to discuss briefly nationality, which influences international adjustment and expatriate protégé success in several ways. First, it determines whether mentors or protégés are host-country, parent-country, or third-country nationals. Typically, an expatriate who is a host-country national has an advantage over an expatriate who is a parent-country or third-country national (Church, 1982). This status also affects cultural distance measures, which we discuss below. Second, nationality proxies for nationals' average cultural skills and expatriate expectations. This helps explain why researchers have found that nationality accounts for variance in premature departure rates (e.g. Tung, 1981), job satisfaction, and reported operational challenges (Dunbar, 1994). Third, MNCs often exhibit specific preferences for using host-country, parent-country, or third-country nationals (Dowling and Welch, 1988; Chiah-Liaw *et al.*, 2003).

Characteristics of the mentor–protégé dyad may affect international adjustment and mentoring outcomes. Demographic profiles of mentors and protégés determine diversity in mentoring relationships. For example, cross-gender, cross-nationality, and cross-race diversity in mentoring relationships may significantly affect mentoring outcomes (e.g. Ragins, 1997). Gender is increasingly important because American women are now almost 20% of American expatriates, up from 10% in 1993 (Windham International, 2000). While many empirical studies have focused on US expatriates with on-site mentors from the US, Feldman and Bolino (1999) found that expatriates were more likely to receive mentoring in small power distance, weak uncertainty avoidance, and individualistic cultures. Feldman and Thomas (1992) found that culture affected adjustment. Cultural diversity plays a role in the development of mentoring relationships (Ragins, 1997), and further theory and research should examine the role that culture may play in the development of mentoring in the international context. Other relational factors likely to affect international adjustment and mentoring outcomes are whether a mentor is a protégé's supervisor, and the number of prior mentoring relationships that

each mentor and protégé has had (e.g. Ragins and McFarlin, 1990; Chao *et al.*, 1992). In addition, relationship length is important because informal relationships tend to last longer than formal relationships, and contact time affects adjustment (Chao *et al.*, 1992). Theoretical links between these relational factors and international adjustment or mentoring outcomes strongly suggest that researchers consider these factors when investigating international mentoring.

Organizational factors that likely affect international adjustment and mentoring outcomes are organizational rank, organizational size, organizational tenure, and tenure in position. Thus, researchers should investigate the impact of these factors when examining international mentoring (Dreher and Ash, 1990; Black *et al.*, 1991; Douglas, 1997; Ragins, 1999). Additionally, the cultural distance between the MNC's home country and the expatriate's assigned country affects expatriate success (e.g. Black *et al.*, 1991; Manev and Stevenson, 2001). Therefore, it is important to examine cultural differences between organizational units (Hofstede, 2001) when assessing international adjustment and mentoring outcomes.

Directions for future research

Recent advances in mentoring theory provide new ways of examining mentoring in the expatriate context. Conceptualizing mentoring as networks (Higgins and Kram, 2001) is well suited to studying challenges facing expatriates, and our research extends mentoring theory by applying a network conceptualization to the international context. Utilizing a mentoring network can increase the success of expatriate adjustment and development, and knowledge assimilation and transfer. The key issue is not whether one has a mentor, but rather who the mentors are and what their roles are. With this new focus, we have developed 10 specific propositions regarding what types of mentor (i.e., hierarchical or peer, formal, or informal) can most effectively address the distinctly different expatriate adjustment and development needs during the different stages of an international assignment.

Our framework is consistent with recent mentoring theory that discusses alternative forms of mentoring within networks (Eby, 1997). The developmental relationships we discuss go beyond coaching. Mentors make significant investments in protégé career decisions, including the decision to become an expatriate. While on assignment, mentors provide coaching on task issues and are involved in protégés' career development as potential global managers. During repatriation, mentors invest in protégé retention and continue to provide vocational counseling. The Internet and information technology provide expatriate protégés with greater connectivity during these stages, but we still see a need for on-site mentoring relationships, which better transfer specific task and cultural knowledge. Investigating how the viability of alternative forms of mentoring, such as virtual mentoring, is a promising avenue for future research.[2]

Traditional measures of mentoring likely need refining for use in the international context. Conducting interviews with expatriates could determine what additional items to add to mentoring measures to better capture processes occurring in this context. For example, current mentoring measures do not reflect peers providing advice on host-country adjustment. Likewise, mentoring measures do not have item content related to repatriation and readjustment to the home office after an international assignment. We suggest creating new measures to reflect the specifics of mentoring for expatriates.

Mentoring internationally may minimize some negative or dysfunctional mentoring processes discussed in the mentoring literature (Scandura, 1998). Some relationships become dysfunctional in part because either the mentor or protégé is unwilling to recognize that it is time to change or end the relationship. We believe that focusing on the stages of the expatriate assignment more clearly delineates a beginning, middle, and end to the relationship. Clear definitions of the mentoring relationships corresponding to each international assignment stage lessen the potential for difficulty in terminating a mentoring relationship. For example, while the expatriate is on assignment, both mentor and protégé will expect the relationship to end when the expatriate returns to the home country. The issues of termination and sequentiality of multiple mentoring relationships are important directions for future research. We propose three stages, and assume that over these time periods mentoring relationships will terminate and new ones will begin. Additionally, the use of a multiple-mentor framework suggests that there will still be support within the system of developmental contacts for the protégé even if one mentoring relationship turns sour. Different mentors address different development needs, and more structured relationships can focus on specific expatriate needs (environmental, task, office culture, or general

career development). However, an interesting avenue for future research within our framework would be examining which types of mentoring relationship are more likely to become dysfunctional, and during what stages.

A number of research designs are applicable to study expatriate mentoring. Case study research might be an effective way to examine the networks of mentors that expatriates use, and how they contribute to the decision to take an international assignment, adjustment, development, and repatriation. Case studies can provide in-depth analyses of these critical processes that determine success in an international assignment. Cross-sectional research can examine within-stage differences (i.e., pre-departure, during assignment, and repatriation) to determine variations in expatriates' mentoring networks and how these differences contribute to objective and subjective career success, adjustment, development, and repatriation. Longitudinal research can examine the entire expatriate assignment and the role mentoring might play in alleviating stress and improving retention. Clearly, our framework is dynamic, and it will be important to capture the evolution of expatriate mentoring over time.

By clearly proposing which mentoring relationships best serve expatriates' adjustment and developmental needs, research can better address key issues in international strategic human resource management. Research needs to address the specific roles that mentors play during pre-departure, expatriation, and repatriation, and examine how these relationships affect expatriates' adjustment, development, and retention. Measures of career success (both objective and subjective) can be used to reflect the efficacy of the international mentoring process. For example, research can examine information provided by pre-departure peer mentors to assess how realistic host-country previews and office adjustment might improve effectiveness of the transition abroad. It would be interesting to compare relative contributions of pre- and during-assignment coaching by peers to adjustment on the job and to the host culture, and assess how work role needs may vary as a result of international context and expatriate job demands. Future research should elucidate what these needs are, and the role that hierarchical and peer mentors play in repatriation and retention.

Theories of both mentoring and international human resource management need to pay increased attention to the boundaryless and protean nature of careers. By adopting a 'needs-driven' approach to expatriate career development, we have articulated a new theoretical framework for studying expatriate mentoring. Expatriates are protean and must constantly adjust to both culture and task demands during international assignments, which have a boundaryless nature. Our propositions address the pre-departure, assignment, and repatriation development needs that cross both time and space in expatriate careers. Addressing these issues ensures effective development of the global managers that firms need to operate in an increasingly multinational environment. Instead of viewing mentoring as something 'nice to have' or 'filling gaps', it should be viewed as essential for developing human capital.

MNCs' success depends on transferring knowledge across countries, and expatriates are primarily responsible for knowledge transfer within MNCs. Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002) argue that successful international strategies depend more on human resources than on capital, and we try to clarify how mentoring can help IHRM efforts. However, developing global managers necessitates tough tests, and not all 'expatriate candidates' will 'graduate'. As the number of upper echelon global managers is limited, only expatriates who excel during the trials and tribulations of an expatriate assignment would rise to the ranks of global managers. Although failure may be costly, such weeding out may ensure that graduates are 'battle tested' and prepared for a career as global managers. Our framework of mentoring relationships can greatly assist expatriate adjustment and career development, thereby helping expatriates to succeed in their international assignments, which increases the pool of potential global managers with tested international experience. MNCs need such global managers to achieve competitive advantage.

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Notes

[1]For reviews of family issues, see Bauer and Taylor (2001), Caligiuri *et al.* (1998), and Harvey (1997).

[2]For a more detailed review, see Knouse (2001), Hamilton and Scandura (2003), and Perren (2003).

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About the authors

John M. Mezias is an Associate Professor with research interests in liabilities of foreignness, IHRM, and e-commerce strategies. He publishes in the *Strategic Management Journal, Harvard Business Review, Organization Science, Journal of Management, Journal of International Management, British Journal of Management, Long Range Planning,* and *Journal of Organizational Behavior.*

Terri A. Scandura's interests include leadership and mentorship. She publishes in numerous journals including *JAP, AMJ,* and *JIBS,* and has been a visiting scholar in the US, Japan, UK, Australia, Hong Kong, and China. She is a Departmental Editor for *JIBS* and Associate Editor for *Group & Organization Management.*

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