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Performance Interventions That Assist Chinese Expatriates' Adjustment and Performance: Toward a Conceptual Approach

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Abstract

China continues to rapidly grow globally. As China's global presence continues to grow, the use of Chinese expatriates around the world will seemingly grow as well. However, little attention is paid to Chinese multinational corporations and their use of expatriates in the literature, while a growing collection of literature focusing on Western expatriates exists. This is a conceptual article that examines the extant literature on any performance interventions designed to improve the adjustment and performance of Chinese expatriates. The article synthesizes the existing literature, concluding with a series of propositions, an initial framework of performance interventions across the phases of the expatriate assignment, and a research agenda designed to move the literature forward.

Keywords

China, expatriates, performance, adjustment, interventions, research agenda

Transportation and digital communication have helped to make the world seem smaller, creating an environment for increased globalization. China is one country that continues to grow globally, with 2006 annual GDP growth of 10.7%, which is up from 8.4% in 2000 (World Bank, 2008). Along with the rise in China's GDP, China's exports have also grown rapidly. Exports accounted for 40% of China's GDP in 2006, which is up from 23% in 2000 (World Bank, 2008). China's trade surplus with the United States

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grew to \$103 billion in 2002, while lending \$150 billion to the United States (Lampton, 2003), further documenting China's role in the global economy.

The increase in globalization results in a highly competitive environment for multinational organizations (Adler, 2002; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005). To manage global operations, organizations often use expatriates (Black & Gregersen, 1999). Organizational success is dependent on these global managers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2001). However, little attention seems to be paid to Chinese multinational corporations and their use of expatriates in the literature. Most of the literature seems to focus on North Americans and Western Europeans. Yet as China's presence continues to grow globally, the use of Chinese expatriates around the world will seemingly grow as well. The purpose of this article is to examine what we know from the literature regarding performance interventions that assist Chinese expatriates in their adjustment and performance, with the ultimate goal of developing a series of propositions for future empirical examination.

Although the literature regarding the use and performance of Chinese expatriates seems to be relatively new compared to the literature related to Western expatriates, the literature does indicate that a more modern form of human resources management is developing in China (Child, 1994; Warner, 1995). Zhu and Warner (2003) note a possible convergence in human resources management across all Asian countries resulting from environmental factors relating to the growth in globalization. As part of the development of human resources management practices and the increased globalization of Chinese multinational firms, a need for strong international human resources management practices, including performance interventions for expatriates, seems to exist.

Like all expatriates, the Chinese expatriates will face complex assignments that will require flexibility and an ability to adapt managerial practices to the environment (Feldman & Bolino, 1999; Tung, 1998). The cultural context of expatriate assignments dictates certain actions, because practices in one context may not work well in other contexts (Black & Porter, 1991; Ralston, Terpstra, Cunniff, & Gustafson, 1995). Despite the complexity facing expatriates, few companies consistently provide cross-cultural training. According to the 2006 GMAC Global Relocation Trends report, 80% of the companies surveyed provided cross-cultural training to some expatriates, but only 34% provide the cross-cultural training on all assignments (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2007). It is important to note that only 3% of the firms responding to the 2006 GMAC Global Relocation Trends survey were from the Asia-Pacific region (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2007). Thus, it is theoretically possible that the rate of cross-cultural training in China could be higher, but country- or region-specific data are not available.

Numerous studies conclude that expatriates' difficulties adjusting and poor performance are costly, lead to low productivity, and may result in early termination of assignments (Black, 1988; Kaye & Taylor, 1997; Storti, 2001; Tung, 1987). In a longitudinal study, Takeuchi, Wang, and Marinova (2005) found that expatriates' work adjustment is strongly correlated to their performance. This is consistent with other research that has found a positive relationship between expatriate adjustment and

performance (Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Kraimer et al. (2001) determined that expatriates who are well adjusted and interact well with host nationals receive high performance ratings from supervisors on task and contextual performance.

Cavusgil, Yavas, and Bykowicz (1992) suggest that many expatriates who do not terminate their assignment early may still struggle adapting to the culture, causing them to operate at a decreased performance level. Feldman and Tompson (1992) indicate that expatriates may face many more obstacles to good performance on assignment than domestic employees face. A relationship between expatriate adjustment and turnover has also been documented in the literature (Black & Stephens, 1989). Furthermore, Gregersen and Black's (1990) well-cited work shows that the expatriates' adjustment to work is a predictor of commitment to the organization. Similarly, Shaffer and Harrison (1998) found that job satisfaction is predicted by expatriate adjustment.

Poor expatriate performance and expatriate failures result in significant costs for organizations (Yavas & Bodur, 1999). Furthermore, the literature seems to indicate that expatriate adjustment is a critical aspect of the expatriates' ability to meet their organizations' goals and objectives (Caligiuri, 2000; Kraimer et al., 2001; Nicholson & Imaizumi, 1993). The increasing use and need for expatriates in multinational organizations creates an apparent need for continued research on expatriates' performance (Thomas, 1998). As Brewster (1997) highlighted, examination of the variables affecting the success of expatriates is logical.

The focus of this article is on the performance interventions designed to improve expatriate adjustment and performance for Chinese expatriates. Beyond training, several variables affecting expatriate adjustment and performance exist, such as compensation and performance reviews. However, Feldman and Tompson (1993) noted that the existing research studies have examined the variety of job factors affecting expatriate performance in isolation rather than as a set of interrelated variables. This article examines the extant literature related to any performance interventions designed to improve the adjustment and performance of Chinese expatriates in order to develop a series of propositions to guide both practitioners and future researchers.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework driving this article is trifold: Expatriate adjustment is a multidimensional concept, expatriate adjustment and performance follows a U-curve, and the concept of *guanxi* plays a role in managing Chinese staff. Although these three frameworks do not directly drive the review conducted, these frameworks do provide the lenses through which the literature was viewed. Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991) introduced the theory that expatriate adjustment is a multidimensional concept rather than a singular incident as previously understood (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962; Oberg, 1960). Black et al.'s (1991) theory proposes that expatriate adjustment has three distinct dimensions: work adjustment, interaction adjustment with host nationals, and general adjustment to the nonwork environment. Many studies find support

for the three distinct dimensions of expatriate adjustment (Black, 1988; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999). Morley and Flynn (2003) empirically found that the concept of adjustment is multidimensional, and they suggest there is value in “unpacking the concept of adjustment and presenting it as a multi-dimensional concept” (p. 53). The multidimensional construct of adjustment has not been empirically tested with Chinese expatriates though. The authors believe the construct would be found to hold with a sample of Chinese expatriates but that the interactions between the various dimensions of adjustment might be different because of cultural differences. The way the three dimensions of adjustment interact with each other with Chinese expatriates is outside the scope of this article, but it seems important to highlight the possibility.

In conjunction with the multidimensional concept of expatriate adjustment, the hypothesized U-curve framework developed by Lysgaard (1955) and referenced by numerous scholars is used (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The U-curve depicts the adjustment process along a time continuum, moving from a honeymoon period, to a state of culture shock, to an acceptance of reality in the host culture, to a mastery stage where the expatriate is able to function effectively within the host culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). Figure 1 provides a diagram depicting one view of how the U-curve adjustment framework and the multidimensional concept of adjustment might conceptually fit together. The U-curve framework suggests that expatriates adjust their knowledge, understanding, and acceptance of the host culture over a period of transition from home country to host country. In the honeymoon period, expatriates are absorbed with the excitement related to the newness of the assignment and culture that they are not affected by difficulties associated with the adjustment process. As expatriates are faced with the reality of living and working in the host culture regularly, the culture shock phase begins. After the culture shock phase, expatriates begin to accept reality as they start functioning more effectively, resulting from a more accurate view of the host culture. Expatriates eventually develop a master ability to operate within the host culture. The hypothesized U-curve framework is not fully examined in the literature though, and Black and Mendenhall (1991) suggest it may be best understood in light of social learning theory. Furthermore, the literature does not currently examine the relationship between the multiple dimensions of adjustment along the U-curve time continuum. However, this article uses the U-curve as a lens through which the literature is reviewed.

In addition to the multidimensional concept of adjustment and the U-curve adjustment framework, *guanxi* seems to provide an important framework for understanding interactions with Chinese staff. Xin and Pearce (1996) defined *guanxi* as a simple connection between a person and others who are valuable for solving day-to-day problems and for developing long-term career success. Many authors have argued that *guanxi* plays an important role in managing Chinese staff. For example, Yg and Huo (1993) noted that the overlap between work and social relations is much more pervasive in China compared with that in America. One empirical study identified the importance of the supervisor–subordinate *guanxi* in Chinese relationships (Law, Wong, Wang, &

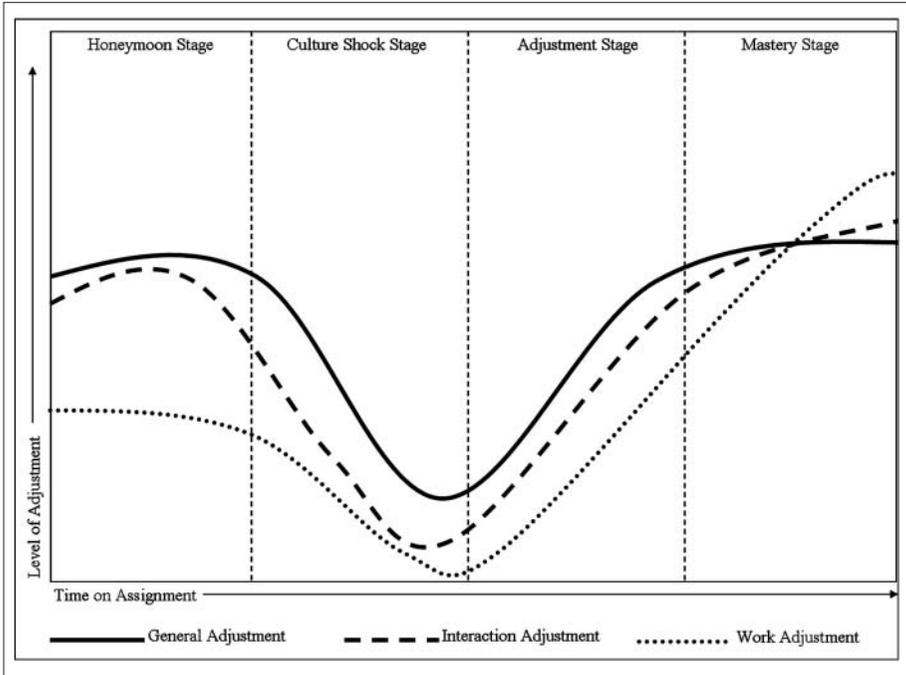


Figure 1. Multidimensional concept of adjustment along the U-curve adjustment framework

Wang, 2000). The authors (Law et al., 2000) showed the concept of *guanxi* to be different and unique from similar concepts such as leader member exchange in Western literature. These relationships become evident in areas such as performance appraisals. Easterby-Smith, Malina, and Lu (1995) found the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships during performance appraisals to be greater in Chinese enterprises than in British enterprises. Consideration of these relationships and how they are affected during expatriation may be important in understanding Chinese expatriates' adjustment and performance to international assignments.

Literature Review

As previously noted, the focus of this article is on performance interventions designed to improve Chinese expatriate adjustment and performance. The literature review includes both conceptual and empirical studies. Furthermore, the review is focused on expatriates in for-profit organizations only, based on an assumption that the motives influencing the expatriate assignments in nonprofit and governmental organizations are different.

The basis of the literature review is published research with clearly delineated samples or discussions focused on Chinese expatriates only. The focus on articles with a

clearly delineated sample or focus on Chinese expatriates only is important as many of the theoretical frameworks and measurement instruments have been found to be culturally bound (Boyacigiller & Adler, 1991). Reviewing studies that only sample or discuss Chinese expatriates helps to reduce the problem of bias resulting from mixing participants from widely varying cultures. Hofstede (1983) argues that nationality is important in management and that management is not becoming the same around the world. Thus, studies combining results from samples containing multiple nationalities of expatriates may have findings that are not beneficial. In a survey of 2,800 managers in 11 different countries, Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter (1963) found that where significant differences existed, managers clustered together within cultural groups, with each culture behaving differently. Similarly, culture and level of industrialization are found to be important to the values of managers (Whitely & England, 1977). Thus, the basis of the literature review is articles with a focus on Chinese expatriates only.

Although the search terms used in the two databases resulted in more than 500 articles, the abstract and article reviews only resulted in 14 articles that met all the criteria. The 14 articles ultimately included in the review were dated between 1996 and 2007. However, to even get 14 articles, the consideration of who is a Chinese expatriate was expanded. A few articles in the review examined issues of mainland Chinese working in Hong Kong and vice versa because of the dramatic cultural differences between the mainland and Hong Kong. Although including mainland Chinese in Hong Kong and vice versa introduces some unique situations compared to Chinese expatriates in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the need to expand the breadth of the narrow literature seemed too great to ignore. In addition, where concepts from literature using samples of Western expatriates seemed in line with the conceptual framework, that literature was drawn on in the formation of the propositions.

As displayed in Table 1, the current published articles focusing on Chinese expatriates fall into six categories based on the studies having at least some coverage of the category. The categories seem to represent broad coverage of various performance interventions for Chinese expatriates. However, the literature related to performance interventions for Chinese expatriates is lacking. Table 1 outlines the number of articles in each category, with very few articles covering most subjects. Furthermore, of the 14 articles identified that met the criteria, only six different first authors had published articles. This is part of the lack of both depth and breadth of coverage in the literature. With the rapid growth in China's economy, it is surprising that more examination of performance interventions for expatriates was not found. There seemed to be a large and growing body of literature related to both expatriates and nationals working within China. There also seems to be an increasing body of literature related to Chinese students abroad. However, that is not the case for Chinese expatriates working outside of China. For instance, compensation and rewards are only loosely addressed in two of the studies. In addition to the scarcity of the literature, many of the existing studies are exploratory in nature. The literature lacks depth in empirical studies that examine critical practices for practitioners working with Chinese expatriates and scholars studying Chinese expatriates.

Table I. Articles Contained in Review by Category and Date

Category	Year	Number of Articles ^a
Training		6
Shi-xu	1996	
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000a	
Selmer	2002a	
Selmer	2002b	
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	
Shen & Darby	2006	
Wang	2007	
Spouse and family support		7
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000a	
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000c	
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2002	
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	
Shen & Darby	2006	
Shen & Edwards	2004	
Wang	2007	
Performance management		4
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2000b	
Shen & Edwards	2004	
Chen, Tjosvold, & Fang	2005	
Wang	2007	
Corporate office communication		3
Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao	2002	
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	
Shen & Edwards	2004	
Socialization		3
Nyiri	2001	
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	
Wang	2007	
Compensation and rewards		2
Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon	2003	
Shen & Edwards	2004	

^aRepresents number of articles represented in the category.

Training

Since Tung (1982) introduced the contingency framework for developing training programs for expatriates, predeparture training for expatriates has been identified as critical to expatriate adjustment. This seems to be important for Chinese expatriates as well. In a study comparing mainland Chinese expatriates in Hong Kong to Western expatriates in Hong Kong, Chinese expatriates were found to adjust significantly differently on all adjustment variables than their Western counterparts (Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao, 2000a). The assumption in Selmer et al. (2000a) is that mainland Chinese

expatriates in Hong Kong would adjust better because of seemingly similar cultural backgrounds compared to Western expatriates. Using an ANCOVA to examine the data, Chinese expatriates had significantly lower scores than Western expatriates on all adjustment variables, which included general adjustment ($F = 6.92, p < .01$), interaction adjustment ($F = 8.86, p < .01$), work adjustment ($F = 40.68, p < .001$), and psychological adjustment ($F = 18.40, p < .001$). Selmer (2002a), in a similar study, identified “a very clear implication” that predeparture training could be useful for expatriate managers assigned to very different cultures and to those assigned to similar cultures. However, Selmer (2002a) indicated that the training for expatriates assigned to similar cultures should be very different from the training for those assigned to dissimilar cultures. Selmer’s (2002a) recommendation is that preparation for dissimilar cultures would include more cognitive elements, such as factual information about the country, versus more attitudinal elements included in the preparation for similar cultures. Regardless of the method and preparation, the literature seems to indicate that cross-cultural training will facilitate a greater adjustment along the three dimensions of adjustment.

One major challenge Chinese expatriates working in the United States confronted was the learning curve related to operating a free enterprise in a market-driven economy environment (Wang, 2007). In his dissertation, Wang (2007) noted that Sinochem, a Chinese multinational corporation, sent expatriates to work in its wholly owned subsidiary, USAC Holdings, Inc., in the United States as a means of training future Sinochem executives on how to operate a free enterprise. Although training was an objective of the assignment, the learning curve to operate in that environment was still steep, seemingly requiring additional learning opportunities. Beyond the macro-level learning curve, each expatriate interviewed expressed a steep learning curve in their individual professional areas as well (Wang, 2007). Not only did the Chinese expatriates need to learn new methods, tools, and processes but they also needed to learn new ways of thinking and planning within the context of an American free enterprise. Wang (2007) noted that even Wang (2007) noted that even “for a less technical area such as Human Resources” required many hours to learn local labor laws and other policies (p. 328). Wang’s study did not examine the training provided. However, the study clearly indicates the broader need for training beyond the typically studied cross-cultural training. This type of training would seem to enhance work adjustment in particular.

In a separate study, Selmer (2002b) indicated the need for expatriates to receive training about the use of effective problem-focused coping strategies compared to the detrimental use of symptom-focused coping strategies. This is particularly important, as that same study indicated that Chinese expatriates tended to use more symptom-focused strategies than Western expatriates, who tended to use more problem-focused coping strategies. Despite the need for training, Chinese MNEs do not offer much training (Selmer, Ling, Shiu, & de Leon, 2003; Shen & Darby, 2006).

In a sociological study on the concepts of language in discourse, Shi-xu (1996) found that contextualizing language as a bridge to cross-cultural friendships between Chinese and people of other nationalities can help “speakers effectively explain away

the embedded problem of failure in close cross-cultural relationship” (p. 57). The idea here is not necessarily foreign-language training, as in this study both the Chinese and Dutch were speaking English. Rather, the idea is helping the Chinese understand the language concepts used as a means to better understand what is and is not being communicated. Although not focused on training, this study highlights one potentially important aspect of cross-cultural training.

None of these studies seemed to use any framework for considering the type of training provided. Tung’s (1982) contingency framework allows for the systematic analysis of specific environmental and task factors prior to the development of a training program for an expatriate, indicating that no one program fits for each situation. From the analysis, expatriates should be trained in a manner that makes them aware of the details of the cross-cultural adjustment process (Bennet, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000; Forster, 2000; Kealey & Protheroe, 1996). This approach will help expatriates prepare in advance for effects of culture shock (Selmer, Torbiorn, & de Leon, 1998).

Value could be gained by considering the integrated cross-cultural training concept that combines predeparture and postarrival training (Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001). In their study of integrated cross-cultural training, Eschbach et al. (2001) found that it reduces the time necessary for expatriates to perform effectively. At 2 months on assignment, expatriates receiving integrated cross-cultural training were shown to have significantly increased job satisfaction, increased adjustment to interacting with host nationals, increased general adjustment, and increased productivity and effectiveness (Eschbach et al., 2001). In addition, the expatriates receiving integrated cross-cultural training were shown to have significantly increased general adjustment and interaction adjustment at 9 months on assignment as well (Eschbach et al., 2001). The belief is that this integrated cross-cultural training will lead to increased adjustment along the three dimensions of adjustment, which will make the U-curve of adjustment more shallow, allowing expatriates to reach the mastery stage more rapidly. With the potential value of integrated cross-cultural training, greater attention and research in this area is needed (Eschbach et al., 2001), especially as it relates to Chinese expatriates. Table 2 depicts the rigorous cross-cultural training methodology studied by Eschbach et al. (2001).

Proposition 1: Highly rigorous and integrated training, that includes extensive language training, will enhance Chinese expatriates’ adjustment on all three dimensions.

Proposition 2: Highly rigorous and integrated training, that includes cultural and task factors, will improve Chinese expatriates’ performance.

Spouse and Family Support

Issues related to Chinese expatriates’ spouse and family received the most attention in the literature. This seems appropriate, considering Selmer, Ebrahimi, and Mingtao (2000c) found that mainland Chinese expatriates in Hong Kong who were accompanied

Table 2. Eschbach, Parker, and Stoeberl's (2001) Cross-Cultural Training Methodologies

Time and Duration of Training	Cross-Cultural Training Methodology/ Approach	Rigor and Degree of Interaction
Predeparture Less than a week	Factual/cognitive Area briefing and cultural briefing; climate, housing, schools information Polite language phrases	Very low rigor Not integrated
Predeparture Week to 4 weeks	Affective/analytical Home and host cultural awareness, critical incidents, cultural assimilators, stress reduction	Moderate rigor Partially integrated
Predeparture and on-site Month or more	Experiential/behavioral Role-playing, simulations, field experiences, sensitivity training Extensive language training	High rigor Integrated (starts with factual and progresses through affective)

Source: Adapted from Eschbach et al. (2001), p. 275.

by their spouse adjusted significantly better on all adjustment variables—general, work, and psychological. Similarly, Selmer et al. (2000a) indicated that Western expatriates, who adjusted better than mainland Chinese expatriates, were accompanied by their spouses more frequently, suggesting that this might be a factor affecting adjustment. Furthermore, Selmer et al. (2000c) found that expatriates whose spouses were also working expatriates, adjusted significantly better in both work adjustment and psychological adjustment. At the same time, the married Chinese expatriates whose spouses joined them on assignment stated that not having their spouses with them would negatively affect their efficiency and motivation.

In Wang's (2007) dissertation, serious challenges related to expatriates' family members were identified. For example, many of the expatriates' spouses had successful careers back home in China. The expatriate assignment interrupted the spouses' careers, resulting in a difficult, and sometimes painful, transition of having a successful career in China to a full-time homemaker status, without much option as their visas did not permit working in the United States. Several of the spouses interviewed expressed feelings of isolation and helplessness as a result of being away from home and their careers, explaining that the feelings were more painful than learning the new language or local cultural norms (Wang, 2007). Although Wang (2007) identified the problem, the study's purpose was not focused on identifying means of support. However, the study clearly articulated a potential important area for supporting expatriates' spouses in the transition to the assignment.

Interestingly, and in contradiction to Wang's case study, Selmer, Ebrahimi, and Mingtao (2002) identified that families of mainland Chinese expatriates are generally not permitted to have their families accompany them. In that study, 88% of the

respondents stated that they were not permitted to bring their families on assignment, where almost all of them said they would bring their families if they could. Selmer et al. (2003) identified that all married Chinese expatriates, sticking with Chinese tradition, discussed the assignment with their families, and sought their agreement on the assignment. The nonworking spouses who did join the expatriates often faced loneliness, especially because of the lack of language skills (Selmer et al., 2003). Children also faced difficulty because of language barriers (Selmer et al., 2003). Shen and Edwards (2004) found that family-related issues were a contributing factor when Chinese expatriates failed. Despite the desire and impact of spouses and families on the Chinese expatriates' performance, Shen and Darby (2006) found that no case companies in their study provided training for spouses or families.

The lack of consideration, and often even inclusion, of the spouses was surprising. According to Hofstede's (2009) cultural dimensions, the Chinese rank lower than any other Asian country on the individualism ranking. This indicates that the culture values a close and committed group, typically the family and extended family. The society tends to foster strong relationships where members of the group take responsibility for each other. It would seem that either removing the spouse or not including the spouse, an integral member of the family group, during the expatriate's assignment would hinder the expatriate's sense of well-being. In studies with samples of other nationalities, all of which scored higher on the individualism dimension, the spouses' inability to adjust is the number one cause of expatriates' failure (Dowling & Welch, 2005). The belief is that spousal accompaniment, support, and adjustment will also help the expatriate adjust more quickly and thus reach the mastery stage on the U-curve more quickly.

Proposition 3: Expatriates accompanied by their spouse will adjust better and more quickly, leading to enhanced performance.

Proposition 4: Spouses receiving support from the organization in the form of cross-cultural training, language training, and facilitation of interactions with host-nationals will adjust better.

Proposition 5: Expatriates whose spouses adjust better will exhibit greater adjustment and increased performance.

Performance Management

The use of performance reviews is a common aspect examined related to performance management. Three fourths of mainland Chinese expatriates indicated that their employers used annual performance reviews (Selmer, Ebrahimi, & Mingtao, 2000b). Annual performance reviews were used more than twice as frequently as any other corporate career development activity (Selmer et al., 2000b). Objective, straight-forward performance appraisals may be a minor contributing factor to the fact that the Chinese expatriate failure rate that is much lower than U.S., Japanese, and some European expatriates (Shen & Edwards, 2004). However, this finding is subject to further review as it is a result of 10 case studies of Chinese multinational corporations

operating in the United Kingdom, with other key factors contributing to the low (4%) failure rate, including financial and promotion rewards for working hard on assignment and short expatriation periods. A key difference in international performance appraisals is that they were seen to be more objective, because they used more hard factors of achievement than soft factors (Shen & Edwards, 2004). Finally, the performance appraisals were also seen as more straightforward because they are conducted between individuals rather than involving others, such as peer opinions (Shen & Edwards, 2004).

Guanxi seems to provide an important concept to consider in relation to performance appraisals. Law et al. (2000) showed the significance of the supervisor-subordinate guanxi in Chinese relationships, which are particularly evident in the performance appraisal process. Easterby-Smith et al. (1995) found the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships during performance appraisals to be greater in Chinese enterprises than in British enterprises. Consideration of these relationships and how they are affected during expatriation may be important in understanding Chinese expatriates' adjustment and performance to international assignments. Greater research related to guanxi and the performance appraisal process is needed, as this is a unique distinction between Chinese expatriates and Western expatriates.

In the Western expatriate literature, a common performance appraisal factor studied relates to the use of home and host country raters. A positive relationship between the use of the host country supervisor and perceived accuracy was found (Gregersen, Hite, & Black, 1996). Furthermore, a balance between the use of home and host country raters exhibited a significant positive relationship with perceived accuracy (Gregersen et al., 1996). Of note is that the nationality of the raters did not relate to the perceived accuracy (Gregersen et al., 1996). However, the Western expatriate literature does not seem generalizable to Chinese expatriates as a result of the importance of guanxi.

In addition to the actual performance appraisals, a broader understanding of the performance management system seems needed. Wang's (2007) case study of USAC Holdings, Inc., the subsidiary of Sinochem, provides an example of potential differences affecting the performance management system. Although the production techniques and the management processes used were seen as common practices for Chinese or American workers, it was evident that these practices were understood and interpreted differently. The American workers saw the practices as a means of offering help to Chinese colleagues and owners, whereas the Chinese expatriates saw the practices as a contribution to their parent company and home market. Wang (2007) also noted that the Sinochem expatriates combined contemporary business ideology with traditional Chinese philosophy. Recognizing and accounting for these differences seems important to consider in the design of a performance management system for Chinese expatriates.

Chen, Tjosvold, and Fang (2005) studied foreign managers working with Chinese employees in China. However, their findings seem to fit well for Chinese expatriates working in foreign subsidiaries that are managed by foreigners, similar to the Sinochem expatriates in Wang's (2007) case study. In Chen et al.'s (2005) study, they found that

the use of cooperative, interdependent goals versus competitive, independent goals led to greater job commitment and innovation among the Chinese employees. Their study also indicated that shared goals, shared rewards, and trusting attitudes were some of the key factors in developing cooperative goals (Chen et al., 2005). Conversely, the use of competitive goals led to an “outdo climate” and mistrustful attitudes (Chen et al., 2005). These findings seem consistent with the concept of *guanxi*, as Chinese employees tend to desire harmonious relationships versus competitive, outdo relationships. These findings seem to provide a potential path for designing a constructive performance management system.

A major weakness of the performance management literature, which is not unique to the literature related to Chinese expatriates, is the common focus on the perceived accuracy of the performance appraisal process. The literature does not examine the relationship between the design and administration of performance management system and either adjustment or performance though. The assumption seems to be that increasing perceived accuracy will translate into greater performance, but that is not substantiated in the literature yet.

Proposition 6: Performance appraisals conducted between expatriates and their home country supervisor will help maintain *guanxi*.

Proposition 7: Performance appraisals conducted between expatriates and their home country supervisor will be seen by expatriates as more objective and accurate.

Proposition 8: The use of objective, straightforward performance appraisals will lead to increased performance.

Proposition 9: The use of cooperative, interdependent goals will lead to greater harmony and job commitment.

Corporate Office Communication

Selmer et al. (2002) recommended that organizations could increase support for Chinese expatriates to assist with helping them avoid feelings of “out of sight, out of mind.” In their recommendation, Selmer et al. suggested the use of mentoring or coaching as means to maintain regular contact. Maintaining regular communication with the corporate office while on assignment may prevent weakening *guanxi* (Shen & Edwards, 2004). At the same time, many mainland Chinese expatriates did not like having to regularly report both verbally and in writing to the corporate office (Selmer et al., 2003).

Although the Chinese expatriate literature is lacking in this area, the Western expatriate literature has emerged with some potentially important concepts in the Chinese context. There are several potential interventions that may help maintain *guanxi* and assist with adjustment and performance, including providing ongoing career counseling, providing psychological counseling, and providing in-country contractual services to help with transition (Kraimer et al., 2001; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). This is consistent

with the recommendation of Jassawalla, Connolly, and Slojkowski (2004) that encouraged deliberate, frequent communication that enables expatriates to feel connected and involved. In addition, it is recommended that supervisors take the initiative in developing positive relationships with expatriates (Kraimer et al., 2001).

Proposition 10: Deliberate, frequent communication between home country supervisors and expatriates will help maintain guanxi.

Proposition 11: Frequent communication between home country supervisors and expatriates will help expatriates remain connected to the home office and lead to increased adjustment on all three dimensions.

Socialization

Mainland Chinese expatriates in Hong Kong were shown to desire socialization with local staff outside of work, where Hong Kong Chinese expatriates on the mainland did not desire socialization with local staff to maintain distance and preserve fairness at work (Selmer et al., 2003). However, expatriates in both groups that did socialize with local staff found that doing so assisted them with better understanding their work situation (Selmer et al., 2003), which may lead to greater interaction and work adjustment, resulting in shrinking the U-curve. Non-work-related socialization with the community was found to be difficult for mainland Chinese expatriates in Hong Kong as they did not have the financial means to participate in the higher-cost lifestyle in Hong Kong, making the only social opportunities available ones that could be reimbursed as business entertainment (Selmer et al., 2003). Families of the expatriates had difficulty socializing as well, especially as a result of language barriers (Selmer et al., 2003). As a result, the wives of Hong Kong Chinese expatriates on the mainland tended to socialize only with other wives of Hong Kong Chinese expatriates (Selmer et al., 2003). Overall, language skills were an important factor in developing social circles beyond business colleagues (Selmer et al., 2003).

Finding a means to gain social support for the expatriate seems important to the expatriates' transition into the new environment, as host nationals have useful information regarding the local environment that can help expatriates (Varma, Toh, & Budhwar, 2006). A few researchers have suggested formal training is not an equitable substitute for the knowledge gained from host nationals (Caligiuri & Di Santo, 2001). As such, the resource network provided by host nationals is valuable to the expatriates' sense-making process (Feldman & Bolino, 1999; Toh & DeNisi, 2005).

In the Western expatriate literature, interaction with host nationals was strongly related to the expatriates' interaction adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Prior work has also found that time spent with host nationals, both inside and outside of work, affected the expatriates' general adjustment (Black, 1988). One possible intervention is the use of a host-country mentor that can provide a means for the expatriate to be involved in activities that assist and encourage interaction with other host-country nationals (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

Interactions with host nationals seem important in helping expatriates' adjustment and performance. Examination of the role organizations play in enhancing expatriates' interaction with host nationals is needed.

Beyond socialization with host nationals though, China seems to have a vested interest in state building overseas as well. The idea of state building overseas is the promotion of Chinese identity that, although global, is grounded in the concept of the nation (Nyiri, 2001). China sees expatriates and migrants as highly useful resources for "economic development in China and for the attraction of foreign investors and business partners, as well as for renewing the leadership of overseas Chinese communities in Japan, the USA and Europe, which are judged as losing touch with the homeland and Chinese culture" (p. 636). Chinese abroad often view themselves on a mission to open China to the world, while "carrying an intrinsic value that cannot be found in non-Chinese" (Nyiri, 2001, p. 650). This concept of a more "nationalist" identity and agenda seems to be an important, yet maybe still uncertain, aspect to consider for Chinese expatriates. The goal of socialization tactics may not be acculturation; rather the goal might just be assimilation.

Proposition 12: Integrated cross-cultural and language training for expatriates will help increase interactions with host nationals.

Proposition 13: Organizational support for and assistance with interactions with host nationals will lead to greater adjustment and performance.

Proposition 14: Expatriates that frequently interact with host nationals will adjust quicker and perform at a higher level.

Compensation and Rewards

In a study of the subsidiaries of Chinese multinational corporations in the United Kingdom, Shen (2003) identified four factors that influence their international reward and compensation policies: (a) host country legal requirements, (b) host country cost of living standards, (c) host and home country cultures, and (d) type of enterprise. The underlying concerns identified are concerns for fairness and equity and concerns for the recruitment and retention of staff (Shen, 2003). Ultimately, reward and compensation is highly affected by the management development policies and practices of organizations (Shen, 2003). Selmer et al. (2003) identified that mainland Chinese expatriates in Hong Kong felt it unfair that their compensation package was below that of other managers in Hong Kong. This may be part of the feeling that they cannot afford the Hong Kong lifestyle (Selmer et al., 2003).

The Western expatriate literature identifies a few common approaches to expatriate compensation. Although the specific aspects of compensation packages may differ, the approaches can generally be grouped into three categories: balance sheet approach, destination-based approach, and international headquarters approach (Sims & Schraeder, 2005). The balance sheet approach is the most common approach to compensating expatriates (Wentland, 2003). The general goal of the balance sheet approach is to help

the expatriates maintain their home lifestyle through the provision of equivalent purchasing power abroad. The destination-based approach to expatriate compensation considers how expatriates' compensation compares with host national employees and what competitors are paying (Chen, Choi, & Chi, 2002; Wentland, 2003). The international headquarters approach, or regional approach, compensates expatriates using an identical balance sheet method for all expatriates within a defined geographic region regardless of where the expatriate originated from (Chen et al., 2002). The concept is designed to help ensure that expatriates working in a given geographic region are not working under different compensation packages with the goal of promoting perceptions of equity (Chen et al., 2002).

Proposition 15: An increased sense of equity in compensation between expatriates and their host national coworkers will enhance adjustment and performance.

Proposition 16: The destination-based approach to compensation will help create a sense of equity for expatriates in comparison to host national coworkers.

Discussion

The primary limitation of the extant literature is the focus on either adjustment or psychological well-being as the dependent variable. These variables should not be the primary dependent variables; rather, they are actually moderators of the desired dependent variable of performance. The assumption behind much of the adjustment literature is that an inability to adjust will result in psychological strain that will "spill over" to poor observable performance (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). Conceptually, well-adjusted expatriates should have greater resources (time, effort, and emotional investment) available to support good performance (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001). The growing trend from the late 1990s into the 2000s is to look more closely at performance (e.g., Caligiuri, 1997; Kraimer et al., 2001; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Takeuchi et al., 2005).

Another limitation of the current literature is that it seems to look at human resources performance interventions in isolation, whether it is cross-cultural training, compensation, performance reviews, or other interventions that might affect performance. Research is needed that looks at interventions for expatriate performance and adjustment as an interconnected system. There is little empirical evidence on what interventions should be used at each stage of the expatriate experience or on how the various possible interventions interact with each other to enhance expatriate performance and adjustment. Littrell, Salas, Hess, Paley, and Riedel (2006) made this same suggestion at the conclusion of their integrated literature review that spanned 25 years of cross-cultural training. It seems to be important to consider performance interventions as an interconnected system for all expatriates, particularly Chinese expatriates, as the focus of this article.

Figure 2 attempts to synthesize the literature reviewed in relation to the timing of the performance interventions. Although the literature is lacking, Figure 2 depicts the

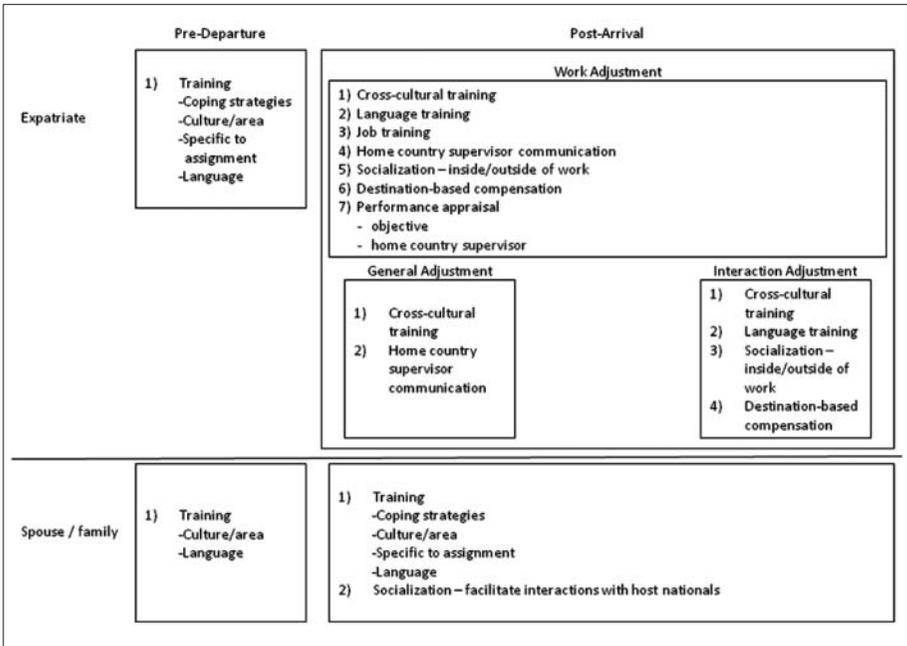


Figure 2. Synthesis of literature in relation to timing of performance interventions

beginning outline of an integrated system of performance interventions that human resource development professionals can consider. Figure 2 does emphasize consideration of the spouse and family’s adjustment, as the literature indicated a tie between spouse and family adjustment and expatriate adjustment. A key observation in the figure is that although predeparture training is important, there are numerous other performance interventions that are important to consider once the expatriate is on assignment.

The current literature did not give much attention to the timing of the various performance interventions either. There are three primary time frames considered in the broader expatriate preparation literature: predeparture, postarrival, and repatriation (Littrell et al., 2006). Our knowledge and understanding of expatriate performance interventions would be significantly enhanced if future research focused on which interventions were most appropriate at each stage and how they should best be implemented. The literature related to training for Chinese expatriates only addressed predeparture training. Selmer (2002b) indicated the need for training about the use of effective problem-focused coping strategies versus the detrimental use of symptom-focused coping strategies, which Chinese expatriates tended to use more. This type of training might potentially be most beneficial predeparture if supplemented with postarrival, on-the-job guidance, possibly from a coach or mentor.

Further related to the timing of interventions is consideration of where the expatriates’ adjustment is on the U-curve. None of the literature related to Chinese expatriates

considered the impact of the various performance interventions at the different phases of the adjustment process. For instance, non-work-related socialization opportunities for expatriates seemed to be important to the adjustment process. Studies that look at how organizations might facilitate those opportunities during the honeymoon phase as a means of limiting the impact of the culture-shock phase might be beneficial. Also, studies that consider interventions focused on the expatriates' spouse and family along the U-curve would also seem beneficial, as the literature seemed to indicate that the spousal and family adjustment is a factor in the expatriates' adjustment and performance. There are a variety of possible performance interventions organizations might use but little research on which interventions best assist Chinese expatriates at each stage of the expatriate experience exists. Such research would add to our collective knowledge and be of great benefit to practitioners.

Interestingly, *guanxi* was not a major subject of study in the limited body of articles identified, especially considering that it seems to provide an important framework for understanding interactions with Chinese staff. Shen and Edwards (2004) briefly discussed the role of *guanxi*. Primarily, their focus was on the relationship between *guanxi* and the expatriate selection process. However, they did identify the importance of communication between the expatriate and headquarters, as a lack of interaction may weaken the expatriate's *guanxi*. This is similar to a suggestion made by Selmer et al. (2002) that the provision of mentoring or coaching relationships might serve to help maintain *guanxi*. With the value of *guanxi* for both solving day-to-day problems and developing long-term career success (Xin & Pearce, 1996), the impact of *guanxi* on expatriate performance interventions needs greater examination.

As noted, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the use and impact of performance interventions on the adjustment and performance of Chinese expatriates. Empirical studies, both positivistic and nonpositivistic, and conceptual studies are required to better understand how organizations can best assist Chinese expatriates. Kealey and Protheroe provided guidelines for reliable cross-cultural training studies that suggested the use of (a) comparison groups, (b) pretraining and posttraining measures of change, (c) random assignment, (d) longitudinal measures, and (e) multiple measures of training outcomes (as cited in Littrell et al., 2006, p. 359). These same guidelines seem appropriate for the future study of performance interventions, beyond just training, for Chinese expatriates. Research fitting these guidelines would enhance the literature.

Based on the literature review, Figure 3 depicts a proposed research agenda. The proposed research agenda is consistent with the conceptual frame, as it considers the impact of adjustment across the full time span, including the U-curve adjustment, with consideration of the specific Chinese culture. To move the research in this area to the next level, a development of Chinese expatriate acculturation profiles, similar to Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985), seems important. Furthermore, a longitudinal study that examines performance interventions and their impact on adjustment and performance as a set of interrelated variables would seem to add significantly to our current understanding. Of course, this requires a clearer identification of the specific adjustment and performance issues faced by Chinese expatriates, which is also not well developed in

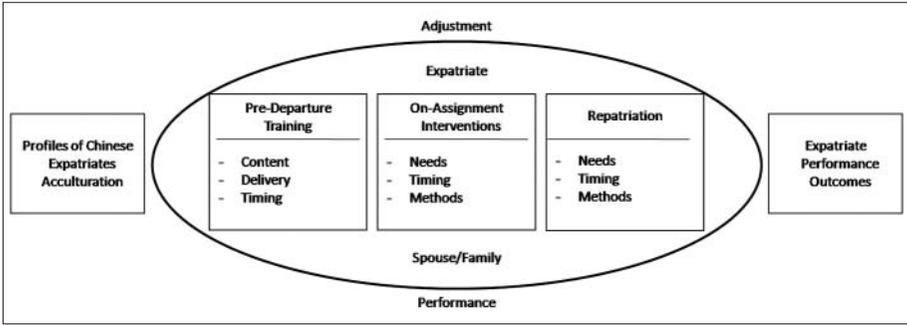


Figure 3. Research agenda for performance interventions for Chinese expatriates

the literature. As noted in the synthesis of the literature and depicted in Figure 3, future research needs to study interventions that target both expatriates and their spouses and families. Future research on Chinese expatriates needs to first determine the performance outcomes that comprise success, and then use those as measures for comparing various groups and various interventions.

Conclusion

Although literature regarding expatriates, especially American and Western European, is growing, little attention has been paid to Chinese expatriates specifically. China continues to grow rapidly, with near double-digit growth in annual GDP (World Bank, 2008). As China's economy continues to grow globally, a large Chinese workforce will emerge globally as well. As this global workforce grows and more Chinese expatriates are sent on assignment, organizational success will be dependent on these global managers (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2001). With China's changing economy, a more modern form of human resources management is developing in China (Child, 1994; Warner, 1995). Owing in part to the growth in globalization, there is also a possible convergence in human resources management across all Asian countries (Zhu & Warner, 2003). This growth and change seems to highlight the importance of examining the adjustment and performance of Chinese expatriates.

More research on performance interventions that assist Chinese expatriates' adjustment and performance is needed. As previously noted, the need for continued research on expatriates and the variables affecting their performance continues (Brewster, 1997; Thomas, 1998). This article reaches the same conclusion as Feldman and Tompson (1993) in that existing research studies have examined the variety of job factors affecting expatriate performance in isolation rather than as a set of interrelated variables. Conceptual and empirical works that look at performance interventions as an interconnected system focused on each phase of the expatriate experience will enhance our collective knowledge and benefit human resource development practitioners. The

16 propositions made in the literature review provide a potential starting point for examining performance interventions for Chinese expatriates.

This article has several implications for both current Chinese multinational organizations and future research. The synthesis of the literature provides a skeleton for the beginning of an interconnected system of performance interventions that spans the timeline of the expatriate experience. This article also makes a series of propositions that may potentially have significant value to Chinese multinational corporations and their expatriates. First, these propositions provide some means by which *guanxi* may be maintained during the expatriate assignment. Second, these propositions provide some means by which the adjustment curve may be made both shallower (not as severe a culture) and shorter (reaching the mastery stage of the U-stage quicker) for the expatriate. Finally, these propositions provide some means by which Chinese multinational corporations can help enhance expatriates' performance.

As far as future research is concerned, this article attempts to provide a focus for future study regarding the adjustment and performance of Chinese expatriates. It makes a series of propositions that need to be empirically tested. Also, the research agenda provides a high-level outline by which future studies can be organized. This article also highlights an important subject, in relation to Chinese expatriates, that is currently not well covered in the literature. Lastly, the consideration of culture, especially relating to *guanxi*, and its impact on expatriate performance interventions and research is important. Although a larger body of research related to Western expatriates exists, that same body of literature may not be appropriate to use when examining or working with Chinese expatriates.

This is an important area for ongoing research and study. As Wang (2007) noted, Chinese expatriates face numerous tensions: between home and foreign lands, between cultural roots and a foreign value system, between family and work, between personal desires and collective needs, between a sense of loyalty and betrayal, between wanting choice and having no choice, between gain and loss, and between change and stability. The belief of the authors is that the 16 propositions will help Chinese multinational corporations better assist their expatriates in balancing these tensions, resulting in increased adjustment and performance.

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