Of Ostriches, Frogs, Birds and Lizards: A Dynamic Framework of Cultural Identity Negotiation Strategies in an Era of Global Mobility

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Abstract

Purpose

In response to the somewhat paradoxical combination of increasing diversity in the global workforce and the resurgence of nationalism in an era of global mobility, this article aims to uncover how employees on international assignments respond to exposure to new cultures. Specifically, the study aims to explicate the underlying psychological mechanisms linking expatriates' monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategies with their responses towards the host culture by drawing upon exclusionary and integrative reactions theory in cross-cultural psychology.

Design/Methodology/Approach

This conceptual article draws on the perspective of exclusionary versus integrative reactions towards foreign cultures – a perspective rooted in cross-cultural psychology research – to categorize expatriates' responses towards the host culture. More specifically, the study elaborates how two primary activators of expatriates' responses towards the host culture – the salience of home-culture identity and a cultural learning mindset – explain the relationship between cultural identity negotiation strategies and expatriates' exclusionary and integrative responses, providing specific propositions on how each type of cultural identity negotiation strategy is expected to be associated with expatriates' exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture.

Findings

The present study proposes that 1) expatriates' adoption of a monocultural identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with exclusionary responses towards the host culture and is negatively associated with integrative responses towards the host culture; 2) expatriates' adoption of a multicultural identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with both exclusionary responses and integrative responses towards the host culture; 3) expatriates' adoption of a global identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with exclusionary responses towards the host culture; 4) expatriates' adoption of a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with exclusionary responses, and positively associated with integrative responses towards the host culture. The following metaphors for these different types of cultural identity negotiation strategies are introduced: "ostrich" (monocultural strategy), "frog" (multicultural strategy), "bird" (global strategy) and "lizard" (cosmopolitan strategy).

Originality/value

The proposed dynamic framework of cultural identity negotiation strategies illustrates the sophisticated nature of expatriates' responses to new cultures. This article also emphasizes that cross-cultural training tempering expatriates' exclusionary reactions and encouraging integrative reactions is crucial for more effective expatriation in a multicultural work environment.

Keywords: expatriate; cultural identity; global identity; multicultural; cosmopolitan identity

Introduction

In an era characterized by global mobility, there is a resurgence of nationalism and increasingly unsettled international relations between the world's major political and economic powers. Identifying culturally competent employees for international assignments and tailoring supportive practices for their expatriation has thus become more challenging and critical than ever before (Horak *et al.*, 2019). In the current expatriation literature, there is a strong but unfounded assumption that expatriates are predominantly monocultural (Mao and Shen, 2015). However, according to research in social psychology, an individual's cultural identity can change as a result of prolonged exposure to more than one culture during primary or secondary socialization (e.g. Berry and Annis, 1974; Hong, Morris, Chiu, and Benet-Martinez, 2000; LaFromboise, Coleman, and Gerton, 1993). Secondary socialization takes place when people start interacting with a wider range of other social groups, for example during expatriation abroad (Jarvis, 2006). Expatriates are powerful minority groups with access to unique social, economic and public services in the host country, and have considerable freedom to negotiate their cultural identities (Adams and Van de Vijver, 2015). The recent stream of research on multicultural employees in international business (e.g. Fitzsimmons, Liao and Thomas, 2017; Vora *et al.*, 2019) acknowledges that individuals' cultural identities have become increasingly complex but focuses predominantly on individuals who are from bicultural families, such as American-Chinese and British-Indians, instead of the wider population of internationally mobile workers such as expatriates.

To address this research gap, this paper highlights the notion of choice in conceptualizing cultural identity negotiation strategies of expatriates and explores how organizations can better understand and manage expatriates from a dynamic cultural identity perspective. This paper focuses on corporate expatriates only, because their expatriate duration tends to be relatively standardized. Among self-initiated expatriates on the other hand, the length of exposure to new cultures varies significantly (Mayrhofer *et al.*, 2008). Self-initiated expatriates may also stay in the new culture for a much longer period than the average corporate expatriates (Doherty, 2012). As duration of stay in the new culture is an important factor affecting how individuals develop new cultural identities (Tsai and Pike, 2000), it is thus preferable to not conflate these two types of expatriates.

By examining expatriates' exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture, this paper proposes a theoretical framework of how expatriates can develop different types of cultural identity negotiation strategies such as monocultural identity negotiation strategy, multicultural identity negotiation strategy, global identity negotiation strategy (Sussman, 2002), and cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy (Levy *et al.*, 2007). Cultural identity is defined as an individual's perception of belongingness to a cultural group (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Identity negotiation strategies are shaped through both personal choice and environmental forces (Berry, 1997).

Specifically, this study draws upon recent work on globalization in psychology that explicates the psychological processes through which individuals develop exclusionary versus integrative responses towards foreign cultures (Chiu, *et al.*, 2011). Exclusionary responses among expatriates are characterized by feelings of stress and anxiety associated with working in the host culture. Exclusionary emotions may further externalize as resistance towards and rejec-

tion of host culture employees and knowledge. In contrast, an integrative response leads expatriates to leverage components in the host culture to complement their home culture for a fruitful expatriation experience and future career success. An understanding and appreciation of cultural differences helps expatriates to adjust to and perform well in the host culture (Chen and Starosta, 2000; Fitzsimmons, 2013; Mol *et al.*, 2005), while psychological discomfort in the host culture is usually associated with poor mental health, low job performance and withdrawal (Hechanova *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, using the lens of exclusionary and integrative reactions towards the host culture offers considerable scope for understanding expatriation outcomes. More importantly, the perspective of exclusionary versus integrative reactions explicates the psychological mechanisms linking expatriates' adoption of different cultural identity negotiation strategies with their exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host and home culture.

This article makes a number of key contributions. First, it adds to the understanding of expatriates' cultural identity negotiation strategies by integrating monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan negotiation strategies to articulate their implications for overseas assignments, suggesting that expatriates adopting different strategies vary in their exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture. Second, it contributes to the expatriation literature by explaining *how* expatriates with different identity negotiation strategies may engage in exclusionary and integrative reactions towards the host culture and *why* they do so, i.e. the present study identifies the underlying psychological mechanisms. Monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategies vary in terms of the saliency of home cultural identity and the level of cultural learning mindset, thus resulting in differences in expatriates' responses during overseas assignments.

In the following sections, the article first reviews the relevant literature on cultural identity and multicultural employees in the context of expatriation success (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005). The conceptualizations of monocultural, multicultural, global, and cosmopolitan cultural identity negotiation strategies are then presented. The paper further introduces exclusionary and integrative reactions towards foreign cultures and specifies how this perspective can be applied in order to understand expatriates' responses towards the host culture. Subsequently, the study explicates the association between different expatriates' cultural identity negotiation strategies and their reactions towards the host culture. The article concludes with theoretical and managerial implications.

Cultural identity, multicultural employees and expatriation success

Cultural identity, as one type of social identity, is a critical predictor of individual behaviors in intercultural settings. How individuals self-define themselves plays an important role in regulating motivation and affects, and in other intrapersonal and interpersonal processes (Hogg and Terry, 2000; Markus and Wurf, 1987). In fact, research has shown that cultural identity facilitates the processing of certain types of information so that specific cultural knowledge may be cognitively accessible only for those who identify with the culture (Hong *et al.*, 2000). People who identify with one particular culture typically internalize its cultural values, follow its cultural norms and engage in cognitive processes that are consistent with the culture (Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Markus, *et al.*, 1996).

There is an increased recognition of the importance of different types of employees in terms of their cultural identities, such as multicultural employees (Fitzsimmons, 2013; Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2017) and cosmopolitan employees (Levy, Lee, Jonsen and Peiperl, 2018). Prior literature has investigated the role of these different cultural identities in successful expatriation, including adjustment (Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou, 1991), job performance (Harrison and Shaffer, 2005), and expatriate turnover (Hom and Griffeth, 1991). Empirical studies in the expatriation literature argue that identification with the host culture potentially facilitates intercultural adjustment and performance because of access to knowledge and skills from multiple cultures, and the ability to switch between cultures (Gillespie, McBride, and Riddle, 2010; Hong and Doz, 2013). However, prior research has also suggested that global and cosmopolitan expatriates, who are culturally independent of the home culture and the host culture, enjoy performance benefits resulting from their openness to multiple cultures and integration across cultures (e.g., Levy *et al.*, 2007; Maddux and Galinsky, 2009). A recent empirical study (Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2017) found that expatriates with multiple cultural identities have more social capital and display higher levels of intercultural communication skills. However, this paper argues that developing multiple cultural identity negotiation strategies is not exclusive to a small group of individuals who are born into multicultural families. Instead the wider population of expatriates can learn to negotiate their cultural identities in order to meet the development needs of their work abroad and/or to improve their own psychological well-being.

Moreover, cultural identity is important for MNCs and their employees because the cultural learning associated with a change of cultural identity plays an important role in expatriate adjustment and performance (e.g., Hechanova *et al.*, 2003; Takeuchi, 2014). Individual characteristics that promote the understanding and embracing of cultural differences between the home and host cultures also contribute to successful expatriation. These characteristics are for example being culturally sensitive and being humble about one's culture of origin. A recent empirical study found that being culturally sensitive helps expatriates adjust to the new environment and perform better in the new workplace in which they need to interact with colleagues from a different culture (Bhatti, Battour, and Ismail, 2013). Individuals who are motivated to appreciate cultural differences are prone to engage in intercultural interaction, and thus become effective intercultural communicators (Chen and Starosta, 2000). By contrast, being ethnocentric, i.e. believing in the superiority of one's own culture, can significantly reduce expatriate effectiveness in the host culture (Shaffer *et al.*, 2006).

The existing literature on multiculturalism also offers an extended discussion of how differences in identity content (i.e. which culture(s) people identify with) and structure (i.e. whether different cultures are separate or integrated) between multiple cultural identities influence multicultural people's attitudes, behaviors and intercultural performance (e.g., multicultural identity plurality and integration, Fitzsimmons *et al.*, 2017; bicultural identity integration among bicultural individuals, Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005; Chen *et al.*, 2008; Cheng *et al.*, 2008). These findings shed light on which group of multicultural expatriates are more likely to engage in exclusionary versus integrative reactions towards the host culture. As emphasized throughout this article, however, we need to redirect our focus from a small group of born multicultural employees to the wider expatriate population.

Expatriate cultural identity negotiation strategies

Identity negotiation strategies are shaped as a joint outcome of personal choice and environmental forces (Berry, 1997). Expatriates may adopt a monocultural strategy to maintain their home-culture identity when working in the host country. Expatriates who are assigned to countries with cultural traditions that differ considerably from those of their own may experience severe culture shock (Ward *et al.*, 2001). After the initial shock, some expatriates, especially ethnocentric expatriates, may decide to follow a *monocultural* identity negotiation strategy, (that is choosing their home culture in defining self when working in the host culture), and view themselves as foreigners working in a different country, thus connecting their self-identities to their home culture and not identifying with the host culture (Shaffer *et al.*, 2006).

Expatriates may also temporarily ascribe to new cultural identities through their experience with multiple cultures. Some may employ a *multicultural* strategy, identifying with their home culture as well as the host culture. As Berry (1997) proposed, maintaining the home cultural identity while being receptive to the host (receiving) culture is a common acculturation strategy when adapting to a new cultural environment. For instance, some American expatriates begin to feel "more" Japanese some time into their assignment in Japan (Sussman, 2002).

In their negotiation of cultural identities, expatriates are not restricted to a choice between their home culture and the host culture. Globalization has witnessed the rise of international connectedness and the birth of global citizens - those who accept the world's global interdependence and hence develop a strong sense of belongingness to a global community that transcends national boundaries (Arnett, 2002; Erez and Gati, 2004). Those who appreciate similarities and universalism across cultures tend to adopt a *global* identity negotiation strategy – employing neither the home culture nor the host culture to define self. Expatriates following a global identity negotiation strategy endorse a universal set of values, for example, mutual respect and protection of human rights (Appiah, 2006), and/or environmental responsibility and ethical behaviors (Shokef and Erez, 2006). These universal values then guide expatriates during overseas assignments and allow them to maintain a global lifestyle anywhere in the world. MNCs with operations that span the world are usually keen to employ expatriates with a global mindset, especially for strategic business functions (e.g., Hong and Doz, 2013).

Expatriates who employ a *cosmopolitan* strategy are culturally independent from the home and host culture yet are willing to engage with the host culture. Similar to global expatriates, cosmopolitans detach themselves from both their home culture and the host culture during their overseas assignments. Yet they perceive themselves as consumers of cultures and value their engagement with the host culture (Adams and van de Vijver, 2015; Holt, 1997). As such, cosmopolitans are always ready to participate as members in a given culture and to detach themselves from the home culture (Adler, 1977). Different from their counterparts who employ a global identity, expatriates who adopt a cosmopolitan identity strategy do not subscribe to universal values. An open and nonjudgmental stance to any culture enables cosmopolitan expatriates to obtain information from many sources without referring to na-

tional or cultural origin. Cosmopolitan expatriates are usually good at learning new languages and fitting into a variety of different cultures (Brimm, 2010).

Thus far, the paper has introduced the concepts of monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan cultural identity negotiation strategies among expatriates. Individuals can position themselves purposefully and thus navigate among various cultural identity negotiation strategies in different contexts (Roccas and Brewer, 2002; Hanek *et al.*, 2014). The adoption of these cultural identity strategies is thus dynamic and context-dependent. In the following section, this article will elaborate on the perspective of exclusionary and integrative reactions towards foreign cultures and how this perspective can be applied so as to understand expatriates' responses towards the host culture.

Exclusionary versus integrative reactions

Introducing the perspective of exclusionary versus integrative reactions

People may develop exclusionary or integrative reactions towards foreign cultures after being exposed to the mixing of components from their own culture and foreign cultures (Chiu *et al.*, 2011). Exclusionary reactions include negative affects (e.g., anger and hatred) and the rejection of foreign cultures. An example of an exclusionary reaction is the public protest in Beijing against the opening of a Starbucks Coffee Shop (perceived by Chinese people as an iconic American coffee shop) in the Forbidden City, an iconic historical site representing Chinese culture (Chiu *et al.*, 2011). The salience of an individual's home cultural identity is positively associated with exclusionary reactions towards foreign cultures, because a salient home cultural identity heightens an individual's awareness of intercultural differences in scenarios of cultural mixing (Chiu and Cheng, 2007). It further highlights the potential that foreign cultures may be seen to contaminate the integrity and purity of one's own home culture, thus activating negative emotional reactions towards foreign cultures (Torrelli *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, people may engage in rejection of or even aggression towards foreign cultural icons and commercial brands.

In contrast, individuals may welcome the alien elements from foreign cultures brought in by globalization, and even actively integrate those elements with those of their own culture. Such positive affects (e.g., admiration) and acceptance towards foreign cultures are labeled as integrative reactions. Starbucks' introduction of snow-skin mooncakes in Singapore during the Mid-Autumn Festival is an example of innovative integration of the American coffee culture with a flavor of Chinese tradition. Individuals with a cultural learning mindset pay attention to distinctive sets of values and knowledge rooted in foreign cultures, and consequently are likely to integrate novel components for problem solving. Leung and Chiu (2008) noticed that when exposed to foreign cultures, individuals who are open to new cultures provided more creative solutions. Exposure to cultural mixing may thus activate integrative reactions towards foreign cultures among individuals with a cultural learning mindset.

Expatriate responses towards the host culture

Working in the host culture constantly presents expatriates with the cultural mixing of their own home culture and the host culture. The host cultural components are embedded in their

working and living environment during their overseas assignments. At the same time, expatriates experience the home culture through their contact with family members, friends, and colleagues in the home culture. Expatriates themselves may also serve as carriers of the home culture. Exposure to the cultural mixing of home culture and host culture may activate the two distinctive categories of responses we have discussed above: exclusionary and integrative reactions towards the host culture. Table 1 summarizes the major differences between these two types of responses.

Table 1. Expatriates' exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture

Exclusionary responses	Integrative responses
Emotional responses to uncertainty associated with the host culture	Goal-oriented reactions to solve problems with new knowledge in the host culture
Perception of working in the host culture: disruptive conflicts	Perception of working in the host culture: growth opportunities
Negative intercultural affects: stress, anxiety	Positive intercultural affects: admiration
Exclusionary behavioral reactions: • social isolation from local employees; • avoidance of local culture; • cultural rejection	Integrative behavioral reactions: • active interactions with local employees; • learning about local language and culture; • creative integration
High salience of home culture identity	A cultural learning mindset

Exclusionary reactions towards the host culture are influenced by the stress and anxiety arising from living and working in a new cultural environment. Difficulties in understanding and controlling others' behaviors may cause expatriates to perceive the overseas assignment as disruptive. Given that expectations in terms of working styles and interpersonal norms might diverge between their home culture and the host culture or even be opposite in nature, expatriates are likely to experience uncertainty and conflict. Empirical research supports the view that role ambiguity and role conflict are primary sources of mal-adjustment and performance deficits during expatriation (e.g., Bhaskarshrinivas *et al.*, 2005; Kawai and Mohr, 2015). To manage the uncertainty rooted in the host culture, expatriates might respond by minimizing the interaction with host culture employees and other carriers of the host culture. Rejection of the host culture further induces frustration and stress as expatriates are still expected to conduct business in locally accepted ways. These exclusionary reactions are likely to result in failure to adjust and a premature return from their assignment (Aycan, 1997; Shaffer *et al.*, 1999). Therefore, expatriates' exclusionary responses towards the host culture have clear negative implications for expatriate adjustment and job performance during overseas assignments.

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Integrative reactions towards the host culture are goal-oriented actions that aim to solve problems by integrating cognitive resources located in the host culture. Expatriates displaying integrative reactions perceive working in the host country as an opportunity for personal growth and future career advancement. They show admiration and appreciation towards the host culture, thus further engaging with host culture employees and learning about the host culture. Interaction with host culture members is an effective way to acquire knowledge about culturally appropriate behaviors (Caligiuri, 2000). In addition, expatriates' integrative reactions help them to enhance learning during their expatriation as a result of new job roles, new performance standards and expectations from the host subsidiaries, all of which are critical to expatriate adjustment and performance (Gong and Fan, 2006; Kramer *et al.*, 2001). Integrative responses also facilitate the development of global leadership skills, as best practices from various host cultures can be synthesized and novel resolutions be developed as a consequence. In sum, expatriates' integrative reactions towards the host culture have positive implications for expatriates' individual performance, subjective well-being in the host culture, as well as the subsidiary performance as a whole.

Psychological mechanisms underlying expatriates' responses towards cultures

The salience of home cultural identity, i.e., the dominance of the home cultural identity in one's self perception, and a cultural learning mindset, i.e., a set of favorable attitudes that an individual holds towards intercultural learning (Chiu et al., 2011), serve as the main activators of expatriates' exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture. When the home cultural identity is salient, the home culture becomes the most accessible lens through which expatriates process and categorize information (Chiu *et al.,* 2011). Simultaneous exposure to two different cultures elevates perceived cultural incompatibility and highlights the different characteristics of these two cultures (Torrelli *et al.*, 2011); this is likely to cause a sense of uncertainty among expatriates. The salience of home cultural identity further guides expatriates' attribution of perceived stress and anxiety to the host culture. For instance, expatriates may make unfavorable comparisons between the host culture and their home culture (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005). A salient home cultural identity is therefore likely to activate expatriates' exclusionary reactions towards the host culture.

Expatriates with a cultural learning mindset are open and curious about the host culture and are keen to acquire cultural knowledge for effective intercultural performance. Appreciation and an understanding of cultural differences between the home and host culture promote appropriate intercultural communication (Chen and Starosta, 2000) and expatriate job performance (Mol *et al.*, 2005). In addition, living and working in the host culture presents alien experiences in numerous domains, from cultural rituals and language to recreational activities. A cultural learning mindset encourages expatriates to expose themselves to distinctive or even opposing opinions and experiences rooted in the host culture. Attempts at the integration of novel components from foreign cultures nurtures cognitive complexity – a cognitive ability that helps people to capitalize on the creativity benefits embedded in multicultural experiences (Tadmor *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, expatriates with a cultural learning mindset are more likely to engage in integrative reactions towards the host culture.

Thus far, the paper has articulated how the perspective of exclusionary and integrative reactions towards foreign cultures can be applied to understand expatriates' responses towards

the host culture. Next, the article will discuss how expatriates' adoption of monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategies are associated with their exclusionary and integrative reactions to the host culture.

Identity negotiation strategies and expatriates' responses towards cultures

The two activators of exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture – the salience of home cultural identity and a cultural learning mindset – differentiate monocultural, multicultural, global, and cosmopolitan strategies among expatriates, thus serving as the inter-mediatory mechanism linking cultural identity negotiation strategies and expatriates' responses. The associations between expatriates' identity negotiation strategies and their exclusionary and integrative reactions are summarized in Figure 1. An animal analogy (Harzing, 2001) is included for each cultural identity negotiation strategy to illustrate and clarify the differences between the four strategies.

Figure 1. The associations between cultural identity negotiation strategies and expatriate responses

High salience of home culture identity

	Monocultural strategy	Multicultural strategy	
Absence Cultural Learning Mindset	Ostrich Mainly exclusionary reactions	Frog Both exclusionary and integrative reactions	**Presence** Cultural Learning Mindset
	Global strategy Bird Neither exclusionary nor integrative reactions	**Cosmopolitan strategy** Lizard Mainly integrative reactions	

Low salience of home culture identity

Of ostriches: The monocultural strategy and expatriate responses towards the host culture

Expatriates adopting a monocultural identity negotiation strategy rely on the values and behavioral norms rooted in their home cultures to guide them when working in the host country. This is labelled as the "ostrich" strategy. The ostrich is chosen as an analogy, because

it symbolizes the image of an individual burying their head in the sand and ignoring the host culture. The cognitive closed-mindedness associated with a monocultural strategy inhibits expatriates from engaging in integrative reactions towards the host culture, thus preventing expatriates from being able to leverage knowledge and practices in the host culture for creative benefits and the development of global leadership skills. Expatriates employing a monocultural strategy tend to have a salient home cultural identity and lack a cultural learning mindset towards the host culture. Therefore, expatriates employing a monoculutral identity negotiation strategy are more likely to develop exclusionary responses and are less likely to engage in integrative responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 1a.   Expatriates' adoption of a monocultural identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with their exclusionary responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 1b.   Expatriates' adoption of a monocultural identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with their integrative responses towards the host culture.

Of frogs: The multicultural strategy and expatriate responses towards the host culture

A multicultural identity negotiation strategy refers to expatriates choosing to identify with the host culture while maintaining their home cultural identity. This is labelled as the "frog" strategy, because frogs can live both in the water and on the land. Expatriates following a multicultural strategy are receptive to internalizing the host culture, while at the same time maintaining their home culture as an important part of their self-identity. The cultural mixing of the home culture with the host culture during expatriation therefore activates exclusionary responses towards the host culture. Yet, expatriates employing a multicultural strategy are also willing to acquire and internalize values and knowledge of the host culture; the cultural learning mindset among expatriates following a multicultural identity negotiation strategy activates expatriates' integrative reactions towards the host culture. Therefore, cultural mixing of the home and host cultures may activate both exclusionary and integrative responses among expatriates who employ a multicultural identity negotiation strategy in the host culture.

Proposition 2a.   Expatriates' adoption of a multicultural identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with their exclusionary responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 2b.   Expatriates' adoption of a multicultural identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with their integrative responses towards the host culture.

This article does not propose that expatriates employing a multicultural strategy display exclusionary and integrative responses at the same time. Whether exclusionary or integrative responses are activated among these expatriates depends on the perceived compatibility between their home culture and the host culture (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos, 2005). When expatriates perceive the host culture to be in conflict with their home culture, their multicultural strategy is dominated by a salient home culture identity, leading to exclusionary responses towards the host culture. On the contrary, perceived harmony between the home culture and the host culture elevates the role of cultural learning mindset in a multicultural

strategy, thus activating integrative response. However, a full articulation of the antecedents to exclusionary versus integrative responses or the role of perceived compatibility between the home and host cultures in responses towards the host culture lies outside the scope of this paper.

Of birds: The global strategy and expatriate responses towards the host culture

Using a global identity negotiation strategy enables expatriates to work and socialize in the host culture through deploying universal work styles and communication patterns across cultures. The global identity negotiation strategy is represented with the metaphor of a "bird" symbolizing the detachedness from the host and home culture (in the same way that birds do not live on the ground but fly in the sky). For expatriates employing a global identity negotiation strategy, moving into a new host culture highlights their sense of belongingness to a global community (Sussman, 2002) rather than activating the salience of their home cultural identity. Therefore, expatriates following a global cultural identity negotiation strategy are less likely to display exclusionary reactions towards the host culture. Although they are open to cultural diversity, they do not have a strong motivation to engage with the host culture (Hanek *et al.*, 2014); possibly because their belief in the transcendence of values beyond cultural boundaries results in the perception of the host culture as part of a large global village. Because these expatriates typically possess high levels of intercultural competence, inclusive of interpersonal sensitivity and open-mindedness (Dewaele and Van Oudenhoven, 2009; Lyttle *et al.*, 2011), they do not possess a strong motivation to learn about specific aspects of the host culture. The study therefore proposes that a global identity negotiation strategy does not activate either expatriates' exclusionary or integrative responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 3a: Expatriates' adoption of a global identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with their exclusionary responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 3b. Expatriates' adoption of a global identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with their integrative responses towards the host culture.

Of lizards: The cosmopolitan strategy and expatriate responses towards the host culture

Expatriates employing a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy do not subscribe to the home culture in their self-definition but do engage with the host culture during their overseas assignments. This strategy is represented with the metaphor of "lizard" because the skin color of a lizard adapts to its surroundings. The cultural independence of these expatriates suppresses information processing through the lens of their home culture, thus preventing the activation of salient home cultural identity. Therefore, working in the host culture is less likely to evoke exclusionary reactions towards the host culture among these expatriates. Expatriates employing a cosmopolitan strategy are willing to learn about the host culture; they consume cultural products from many cultures and appreciate cultural novelty (Levy *et al.*, 2007). As cultural connoisseurs, they are motivated to experience the host culture (e.g., Hannerz, 1990; Hannerz, 1996), and thus have more exposure to alien knowledge embedded in the host culture. Because these expatriates are able to detach themselves from both the home culture and the host culture, their "outsider" status allows them a peripheral position from which to absorb and integrate seemingly incompatible components from different

sources for creativity and innovation (Van Kleef *et al.*, 2013). Meanwhile, these expatriates also wear the "insider" hat to actively interact with host culture employees and learn about the host culture. Therefore, a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy facilitates expatriates' engagement with integrative reactions towards the host culture.

Proposition 4a. Expatriates' adoption of a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy is negatively associated with their exclusionary responses towards the host culture.

Proposition 4b. Expatriates' adoption of a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy is positively associated with their integrative responses towards the host culture.

Discussion

Expatriates may choose a monocultural, multicultural, global, and/or cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy when working in the host country. The present study has drawn on pertinent theories and empirical evidence to categorize expatriates' responses towards the host culture into exclusionary and integrative reactions. Specifically, expatriates employing a monocultural strategy are likely to engage in exclusionary responses because their home culture identity is salient. They are less likely to develop integrative responses towards the host culture due to the absence of a cultural learning mindset. The adoption of a multicultural strategy is positively associated with both exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture, because of the coexistence of high identity salience and a cultural learning mindset among expatriates. By contrast, expatriates following a global strategy do not engage in exclusionary or integrative reactions towards the host culture, because their home cultural identity is not salient and they do not have a learning mindset towards the host culture. Since home culture does not take a central place in the self-definition of expatriates following a cosmopolitan strategy, these expatriates are less likely to develop exclusionary reactions towards the host culture. They also enjoy the beneficiary effects associated with integrative reactions due to the presence of a cultural leaning mindset.

This article contributes to the field by offering a dynamic framework to understand expatriates' responses towards the host culture. In the proposed framework, expatriates' cultural identity negotiation strategies are associated with their tendency to engage in exclusionary and integrative responses towards the host culture through the inter-mediatory roles of the salience of home cultural identity and a cultural learning mindset. In doing so, the study offers insights into psychological mechanisms linking identity negotiation strategies and expatriates' affective and behavioral responses towards the host culture.

Further, this study integrates the expatriate literature and the multiculturalism literature by delineating the relationship between cultural identity negotiation strategies and cross-cultural adaptation. The multiculturalism literature mainly focuses on adaptation ensuing from identifying with the host culture (e.g., Berry, 1997), i.e., it proposes that internalization of knowledge, values, and norms of the host culture enhances adaptation. Meanwhile, the expatriate literature has widely examined various factors as facilitators of adaption to the host culture, such as openness to cultural differences, cultural sensitivity,

cultural knowledge, and linguistic skills (e.g., Chen and Starosa, 2002; Mol *et al.*, 2005). A cultural learning mindset towards the host culture nurtures these facilitators regardless of the expatriate's identification with the host culture. Integrating the multiculturalism literature can provide us with a better understanding of expatriate adaptation in the host culture, both from the perspective of cultural identification and that of cultural learning.

The proposed framework of expatriate identity negotiation strategies is applicable to a broader category of mobile workforces who are exposed to a multicultural working environment. Technological developments transform the ways that people experience foreign cultures. Foreign cultural elements are prevalent in the workplace and in the media; multicultural exposure thus no longer requires travelling overseas. Scholars have further identified global domestic and global virtual team members as subgroups of global workers that are rarely physically overseas, yet are responsible for interaction with stakeholders from other cultures (e.g. Shaffer *et al.*, 2012). Employees experiencing exposure to foreign cultures in such a virtual way are also likely to employ one of the identity negotiation strategies discussed above in order to navigate a multicultural environment. For instance, a local employee located in a global virtual team may gradually develop a cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategy as a result of the accumulated new cultural exposure during daily interactions with colleagues from other cultures via email or video calls. Therefore, the proposed framework of expatriates' cultural identity negotiation strategies also offers insights into managing non-expatriate employees in a multicultural workplace.

This article acknowledges the variations in strategies that an expatriate may choose to employ across different assignments. Expatriates may adopt different strategies when facing assignments in different host cultures. For example, an Asian American employee is likely to take advantage of his/her Asian ancestry and employ a multicultural strategy when assigned to work in an Asian subsidiary. (S)he may choose a different strategy such as a monocultural strategy, global strategy or cosmopolitan strategy during deployment to a South American office. When expatriates choose the same strategy consistently across different host cultures over a long period of time, they may internalize their choice as a stable cultural identity type and become a monocultural/multicultural/global/cosmopolitan individual. On the other hand, expatriates may even adopt different strategies in the same host culture. For example, the same Asian American expatriate may use a cosmopolitan strategy when addressing his/her local subordinates and a global strategy in a meeting with other expatriates from various countries.

Limitations, suggestions for future research and managerial implications

The present study acknowledges that expatriates' choice of a certain cultural identity negotiation strategy is the joint outcome of many factors such as expatriates' own personality, their cultural experiences as well as their expatriation tasks. Given that this article is not a focused investigation of all possible antecedents, future studies could examine in more detail what factors would result in expatriates' choice of a specific strategy. For instance, congruence between universal values and one's home culture values may contribute to expatriates' choice of a global strategy. The theoretical framework proposed in this article was created with a focus on corporate expatriates. Future studies could systematically examine the char-

acteristics of self-initiated expatriates and how they develop cultural identity negotiation strategies in a way that is similar to or different from corporate expatriates.

Since this article is conceptual in nature, future studies could test our propositions. Moreover, only expatriates' cultural identity is examined in this article. Future work could look at other identities of expatriates such as ethnic identity (Zhang, Harzing and Fan, 2018) as well as other identity markers such as mother tongue, accent in speaking the lingua franca of the MNC as well as the local language, gender and age.

In spite of its conceptual nature, this article has important implications for international HR practices. Trait antecedents affecting expatriation experiences such as personality, ethnocentrism, willingness to communicate (Black, 1990) are innate, thus are difficult to change. MNCs can nevertheless provide training to prepare expatriates for overseas assignments and help them to develop a cultural identity negotiation strategy that is appropriate for both for work and personal purposes. Such specific cross-cultural training would be beneficial for both MNCs and their employees. Cross-cultural training has generally been found to be helpful in improving expatriates' adjustment and performance in past research (e.g. Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Morris and Robie, 2001). Cross-cultural training for expatriates usually covers a wide range of topics from foreign language, field experience in the host culture to intercultural sensitivity (Morris and Robie, 2001; Tung, 1981). These training programs equip expatriates with intercultural knowledge and skills to adapt to and work in the host culture environment. In addition to this type of training, MNCs could provide further preparatory training that focuses on tempering expatriates' exclusionary reactions and encourages integrative reactions to enhance expatriate adjustment and performance. For example, strengthening expatriates' belongingness to the global organization may be an effective way to weaken the salience of expatriates' home cultural identity, thus deactivating expatriates' exclusionary reactions. Such training sessions could present successful innovation in managerial practices, products and marketing strategies that leverage knowledge of the host culture to activate integrative reactions by cultivating a cultural learning mindset among expatriates. MNCs could also predict potential strategies that expatriates may employ and further tailor training practices to facilitate/inhibit the adoption of a certain strategy. For example, for expatriates with the tendency to employ a multicultural strategy, training sessions weakening the salience of home cultural identity might guide them to adopting a cosmopolitan strategy.

In addition, despite the generally negative (positive) implications of an exclusionary (integrative) response towards the host culture in terms of expatriate adjustment, psychological wellbeing, job performance, and other work-related outcomes, there are many moderating factors in the relationship between expatriates' exclusionary/integrative reactions and specific expatriate outcomes. Even if organizations fail to influence an individual expatriate's choice of identity negotiation strategy, it is still possible to influence expatriation outcomes by affecting factors such as role ambiguity, which is a specific trigger of expatriates' exclusionary reactions at work. Kawai and Mohr (2015) found that organizational support buffers the negative association between role ambiguity and work adjustment. Therefore, organizations could minimize the detrimental influence of exclusionary responses by providing support to expatriates, such as offering expatriates recognition for going the extra mile.

Conclusion

Cultural identity has significant implications for expatriate adjustment and performance. Yet to date, the scholarly understanding of expatriates' identity negotiation strategies is limited to a small group of born multicultural employees. This article provides a dynamic framework explaining monocultural, multicultural, global and cosmopolitan identity negotiation strategies among the broader population of expatriates during overseas assignments, and elucidates the psychological mechanisms underlying the associations between these identity negotiation strategies and expatriates' responses towards the host culture. Contrary to the recent literature on multicultural employees that has downplayed the notion of choice, this article sees expatriates as active agents who can choose their cultural identity negotiation strategies based on their own preferences and environmental demands. It thus provides a solid conceptual ground for future empirical research on understanding the cultural identity of corporate expatriates from a dynamic perspective.

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