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# Recruitment and Retention Across Cultures

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## Abstract

The flow of human capital into and out of organizations is a crucial aspect of organizational functioning. Recruitment is the primary mechanism for attracting human capital to the organization, whereas retention involves keeping desired employees in the fold once they are employed. Although extensive research explores and informs recruitment and retention, the bulk of the theory and research in major organizational psychology and organizational behavior journals adopts a US-centric perspective. This narrow perspective may be misleading, particularly in an increasingly globalized work context. We systematically analyze studies on the flow of people into and out of organizations in a variety of cultural contexts and especially in organizations managing talent across national borders. In so doing, we seek to create a coherent platform for future research by identifying key themes in the literature and using these themes to summarize what we know and indicate where we need to go in studying recruitment and retention across cultures.

## INTRODUCTION

The flow of human capital into and out of organizations is a crucial aspect of organizational functioning. Recruitment is the primary mechanism for attracting human capital, and consists of organizational practices with the purpose of identifying potential employees, informing them about job and organizational characteristics, and convincing them to accept offers to join the organization (Barber 1998). Retention involves keeping desired employees in the fold once they are employed (Allen et al. 2010). Although extensive research explores and informs recruitment and retention, the bulk of the theory and research in major organizational psychology and organizational behavior journals adopts a US-centric perspective (Allen et al. 2014).

This narrow perspective may be misleading, particularly in an increasingly globalized work context. Most employees do not work for firms that are US owned or based. In fact, US-based employees of US-based firms represent a distinct minority of the global workforce. For example, 73% of firms in the 2016 Fortune Global 500 are based outside of the United States (*Fortune Magazine* 2016), and many large US firms employ more individuals outside the United States than within (e.g., Alcoa, Chevron, Coca-Cola, ExxonMobil, Ford Motor, General Electric, General Motors, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, Johnson & Johnson, Kraft Foods, Pfizer, and Procter & Gamble). This raises the likelihood that what we think we know about employee recruitment and retention is, in a very real sense, “weird.” In the field of psychology, researchers have found that 96% of behavioral science experiment subjects are from Western industrialized countries, which account for just 12% of the world’s population, and that individuals raised in Western educated industrialized rich democratic (WEIRD) societies tend to be outliers in the way they perceive and react to the world (Henrich et al. 2010). Recruitment and retention theory and research similarly risks falling into this same trap.

Of course, as globalization has become ubiquitous over the past several decades, the ways in which organizations attract and retain talent internationally have gained interest among management scholars and practitioners alike. Organizational psychology and organizational behavior research has begun to shed light on these issues by highlighting the importance of cultural-level influences in attracting and retaining talent (Thomas & Au 2002), and testing extant recruitment and retention models across varying national contexts (e.g., Allen et al. 2009, Cunningham & Debrah 1995). Furthermore, as international work assignments have become a growing trend in multinational corporations (MNCs), research has examined how to identify and recruit individuals suited for expatriate assignments and how to retain these individuals both during those assignments and after they repatriate (Kraimer et al. 2016). Although this research has provided insight on the flow of people into and out of international organizations, it is somewhat fragmented and a unified understanding of these issues is lacking in the broader HR domain.

Given this state of affairs, a review of the literature on recruitment and retention across cultures is needed to facilitate research in this important area of study. Thus, the aim of this article is to systematically analyze studies on the flow of people into and out of organizations in a variety of cultural contexts and especially in organizations managing talent across national borders. In so doing, we seek to create a coherent platform for future research by identifying key themes in the literature and using these themes to summarize what we know and indicate where we need to go in studying recruitment and retention across cultures. Through synthesizing the extant literature, this review distills the research into key themes that can be used as a starting point for new theorizing and empirical analysis. Our hope is that this endeavor will serve as a launching pad for future studies of recruitment and retention across cultures, something called for in past reviews of both topics (e.g., Holtom et al. 2008, Ma & Allen 2009).

Our intention is to focus on culture in terms of scripts and schema, collective programming, and societal memory that shape how people think, act, and behave, and that is rooted in common experiences transmitted across generations (Hofstede 1991, House et al. 2004, Triandis 1994). Culture is neither isomorphic with nation or country—although it is often intertwined with national identities and institutions—nor is it monolithic within countries. Nevertheless, almost all of the studies in our review operationalize culture at the country level; therefore, we too find ourselves often discussing cross-cultural recruitment and retention in terms of differences across countries, while recognizing the limitations of doing so.

Our review spans articles published from 1992 to 2015, identified using the following keywords: international, turnover, retention, recruitment, cross-cultural, and applicant attraction. We performed this search focusing on the following journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *Human Relations*, *Human Resource Management*, *Human Resource Management Review*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Personnel Psychology*, *International Journal of HRM*, *British Journal of Management*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, and *Applied Psychology: An International Review*. These journals were chosen because they have either been deemed influential by prior reviews (e.g., Allen et al. 2014) or are particularly influential in the realm of international organizational behavior and human resource management. Our search yielded 218 articles for potential review, of which we identified 96 articles for inclusion in our review. Although recruitment and retention are clearly related, the effects of culture, expatriation, repatriation, and national context can be quite different for each topic; streams of literature on recruitment and retention have largely developed independently. Therefore, we review each stream independently, but integrate key themes from each in plotting directions for future research.

## RECRUITMENT ACROSS CULTURES

We turned to extant recruitment reviews as a starting point. However, we found little in-depth attention devoted to cross-cultural recruitment in traditional applied psychology and organizational behavior. For example, Breaugh & Starke's (2000) excellent review of recruitment research and remaining questions to be answered make no mention of cross-cultural recruitment issues. Chapman et al.'s (2005) extensive meta-analysis of applicant attraction and job choice does not address cross-cultural issues or the geographic location of the studies or samples included. Ployhart's (2006) review of twenty-first century staffing mentions that we know very little about staffing practices across cultures, but does not directly delve into these issues. Breaugh (2008) provided an updated review of research on recruitment methods, realistic job previews (RJPs), recruitment process variables (e.g., site visits, targeted recruitment methods), and job applicant variables (e.g., self-insight), but again, does not address cross-cultural recruitment.

A review chapter by Miller & Guo (2013) is the most direct and useful source as they explicitly review recruitment research from an international and cross-cultural perspective. They raise several of the issues on which we focus, ultimately concluding that there is relatively little cross-cultural research on recruitment as compared with other human resource management (HRM) practices. Perhaps the most recent review is that by Phillips & Gully (2015), who take a multilevel strategic perspective on recruitment research. Their model explicitly recognizes elements of the external environment, including globalization, labor markets, and varying regulatory schemes as affecting organizational, team, and individual recruitment policies, practices, and

outcomes. However, even this review does not elaborate in more depth how to integrate culture more systematically into recruitment theory and research.

Instead, much of the research relevant to cross-cultural recruitment focuses on broader issues of international recruitment, i.e., recruitment of home, host, and third country nationals to fill managerial and senior positions, whether at headquarters or in subsidiaries, of MNEs (Scullion & Collings 2006, Sparrow 2007). Micro-oriented research incorporating culture on topics that dominate traditional recruitment literature in organizational psychology and organizational behavior, such as RJPs, recruitment source effects, organizational attraction, and employment branding, has been sparse. However, there appears to be widespread agreement that HR functions, such as recruitment, although partially a function of culture-free factors (e.g., firm age, size, and industry), are also a function of culture-bound factors (e.g., national cultural values and institutions) (Budhwar & Khatri 2001). Indeed, observed variations in HRM practices (such as recruitment) may be a function of cultural differences that limit transferability across borders (Easterby-Smith et al. 1995).

Four streams of cross-cultural recruitment research emerged: research describing recruitment practices in a particular national context, comparative recruitment research across countries, global recruitment strategies for MNEs, and diversity recruitment around the world. We begin by selectively reviewing each stream. We then describe a few conceptual frameworks that have been advanced with relevance for cross-cultural recruitment research, and discuss opportunities for advancing the study and practice of recruiting talent across cultures.

### Research Describing Recruitment Focused on a Particular National Context

One stream of research focuses on describing recruitment practices in a particular national context. **Table 1** summarizes the author(s), year, and national context of the articles we selectively reviewed in this area. Many of these articles make the case that the bulk of recruitment research has focused on US or other Western contexts, and there is value in describing recruitment practices in other

**Table 1** Articles on recruitment in specific national contexts

Reference	National context
Hsu & Leat 2000	Taiwan
Turban et al. 2001	China
Robinson 2003	Japan
Rafaeli et al. 2005	Israel
Gump 2006	Japanese firm in the United States
Leat & El-Kot 2007	Egypt
Parry & Tyson 2008	United Kingdom
Henkens et al. 2008	Netherlands
Han & Han 2009	China
Li & Sheldon 2010	China
Seeck & Parzefall 2010	Finland
Zabalza & Matey 2011	Spain
Chen et al. 2012	Taiwan
Forstenlechner et al. 2012	United Arab Emirates
Van Hoya et al. 2013	Turkey

contexts. For example, in a study surveying HR professionals in Taiwan, Hsu & Leat (2000) argue that researchers in Taiwan tended to adopt Western models without critically evaluating the extent to which such models transfer across contexts. They provide descriptive data on the relative importance and frequency of recruitment activities and methods in Taiwan, and conclude that worker values in various cultural contexts should be emphasized in recruitment research and practice.

There are similar examples in many different parts of the world. For example, Leat & El-Kot (2007) describe the typicality of job description explicitness and internal versus external filling of vacancies according to a survey of HR managers in Egypt. Seeck & Parzefall (2010) interviewed HR managers and workers in Finland to describe HR practice usage, concluding that firms recruit for character and flexibility as a strategy for minimizing the need for organizational control mechanisms, such as close performance monitoring. Robinson (2003) describes how recruitment practices in Japan are embedded in social structures and norms, and thus slow to change in response to changing labor market conditions; Gump (2006) describes similar processes at work in the recruitment practices of a Japanese firm in the United States. Parry & Tyson (2008) describe the use and perceived effectiveness of online recruitment in the United Kingdom.

Some studies in this vein describe recruitment strategies and practices in response to particular contextual changes or challenges. Zabalza & Matey (2011) drew from case studies of four Spanish firms moving from public to private to describe changes in recruitment strategies, concluding that privatization increases the reliance on business background relative to political profile in recruitment. Forstenlechner et al. (2012) describe the reasons private sector firms in the United Arab Emirates prefer recruiting non-nationals to nationals. Henkens et al. (2008) describe how firms in the Netherlands respond to labor shortages by intensifying search behaviors, loosening job requirements, and targeting previously neglected populations. Similarly, Li & Sheldon (2010) describe how firms in China respond to skills shortages by partnering with vocational schools. Miller & Guo (2013, table 22.1) provide a useful summary of methods of recruitment described in various locations, but conclude that we know little about practice effectiveness across cultures.

A strength of these studies is the provision of rich descriptions of national and cultural context to justify the idea that recruitment may reflect that context, a feature that provides a valuable foundation future research. At the same time, these descriptive studies likely need to be complemented with studies that more directly address cross-context comparisons (of which there are several that are reviewed below), more theory-driven research facilitating the development and testing of recruitment-related hypotheses, and empirical studies extending the already voluminous body of research on recruitment. Regarding the final point, we are struck by how few of the studies we located directly address cross-cultural issues related to the primary questions and topics that have been studied in the recruitment literature, such as RJPs, employee referrals and other source effects, organizational attraction, and employer brand image.

There are some notable exceptions. Turban et al. (2001) conducted an experiment with Chinese university students in China. They focused on generalizing person-organization fit theory to a new context, and found some evidence that individual differences such as risk aversion, need for achievement, and self-efficacy moderated relationships of firm characteristics and familiarity with attraction to the organization. In another study, Rafaeli et al. (2005) compared source effects among employee referrals, geographically focused ads, and geographically unfocused ads in terms of costs per hire and yield ratios in Israel. After a descriptive study on the recruitment practices adopted by Chinese enterprises, Han & Han (2009) conducted a follow-up study to explore why network-based recruitment sources are viewed as more prevalent and effective than media-based sources, identifying information quality as a key mechanism. Van Hoye et al. (2013) attempted to generalize the instrumental-symbolic framework to a more collectivist cultural context in a

study of organizational image and attractiveness in Turkey. In a survey of university students aggregated to the organization level, they found the instrumental variable of working conditions and the symbolic variable of competence both predicted organization attractiveness. There are, of course, studies that investigate recruitment in non-US settings that make no specific mention of culture. For example, Chen et al. (2012) extend and test the Web-based recruitment study of Allen et al. (2007) in a sample of Taiwanese job seekers but provide no discussion of cultural context beyond identifying the sample. There may be an opportunity to use meta-analysis to quantitatively summarize the cross-national stability of recruitment relationships and models as a step in the direction of assessing recruitment across cultures.

One early conclusion from this body of research is that, although there may be context-specific nuances, the general frameworks relating recruitment processes to source effects, person-organization fit, image, and organization attraction appear to apply across national and cultural contexts. However, the evidence is limited, and there is substantial work to be done addressing these issues. The development or application of theory focused on organizational attraction in various contexts would help a great deal. Some of the research in this stream is almost purely descriptive. Others refer to theoretical perspectives such as strategic HRM, the resource-based view, institutional theory, and culture frameworks, but in a largely superficial manner. We encourage more systematic treatment of the theoretical underpinnings for why we should expect convergence or divergence of recruitment practices, processes, and efficacy across contexts. We also encourage attention to issues of competing pressures for maintaining practices consistent with local norms and constraints versus adopting more global perspectives in increasingly globally competitive labor markets, an issue addressed in a subsequent section on global recruitment strategy for multinational enterprises.

## Comparative Recruitment Research Across Countries

Another stream of research goes a step further relative to describing recruitment in a single national context and explicitly compares recruitment practices and processes in two or more national cultural contexts. As an example of this type of research, Quack et al. (1995) use interviews with personnel managers in retail banks in Germany, Britain, and France to describe reactions to increasing competitive pressures. They conclude that even though banks in all three countries faced common competitive pressures during the study timeframe, they tended to respond with different recruitment solutions, in part because of interactions with variations in national training and education schemes. **Table 2** summarizes the author(s), year, and national contexts of the articles we selectively reviewed in this area.

Other examples include a study comparing the relative importance of various HR practices, including recruitment, in Ghana and Nigeria compared to the United States (Arthur et al. 1995). They concluded that recruitment was generally perceived as less important than other HR practices in West Africa, with less emphasis on recruitment and less reliance on formal recruitment sources compared to the United States. Peiperl & Estrin (1998) compared HR practices in 157 firms in six Central and Eastern European countries and found variations in the use of recruitment methods and sources by country, but overall a trend toward the adoption of more Westernized (e.g., formal and external sources) methods. Easterby-Smith et al. (1995) compared the HR practices for the internal recruitment of managers in matched firms in China and the United Kingdom, concluding that there tended to be similarity across contexts, although the United Kingdom tended to focus more on track record, whereas China tended to focus more on relationships. Budhwar & Khatri (2001) surveyed top personnel managers for 93 firms in Britain and 137 firms in India, and concluded that differences by country were partially a function of industry sector, firm growth



**Table 2** Comparative recruitment research across countries

Reference	National contexts
Arthur et al. 1995	Ghana, Nigeria, United States
Quack et al. 1995	Germany, United Kingdom, France
Easterby-Smith et al. 1995	China, United Kingdom
Peiperl & Estrin 1998	Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Russia
Budhwar & Khatri 2001	United Kingdom, India
Robinson 2003	Japanese and foreign-owned firms in Japan
Harzing 2004	Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom
Daspro 2009	US and Mexican firms in Mexico
Caligiuri et al. 2010	China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Norway, Poland, Japan, Hong Kong
Mohamed et al. 2013	Domestic and multinational enterprises in Brunei

strategy, and firm life-cycle stage. They also concluded that Britain appeared to rely on more formal sources compared to India.

These studies begin to suggest avenues for future research. For example, managers in several different countries appear to perceive that recruitment methods and sources are becoming more formal, more external, and more Westernized. Thus, the factors driving source choices and the outcomes associated with various sources warrant additional research. However, there are also larger issues to be addressed. One is that none of these studies focused on recruitment; each studied a variety of HRM practices, with recruitment often being a quite minor component of a larger study. It may be time for an in-depth look focused on comparative recruitment practices. At the same time, these studies focused on manager perceptions of the use and sometimes the efficacy of recruitment methods; however, there appears to be a dearth of studies investigating actual differences in outcomes, such as applicant pools, organization attractiveness, yield ratios, or posthire performance and retention, when using various methods in different contexts. A related issue is that these comparative studies tend to focus extensively on practice, with relatively less attention given to theory. The theoretical model offered by Ma & Allen (2009; discussed in more depth subsequently) may be a useful starting point for considering how to expect the use and effectiveness of recruiting practices to vary across contexts.

There are also a few studies comparing the recruiting practices of firms from different home nations operating in the same national context. Such an approach has the potential to hold certain organization and industry factors constant while addressing local strategic imperatives. For example, Robinson (2003) compared the recruitment practices of Japanese and foreign-owned firms in Japan, concluding that foreign-owned firms were less reliant on university graduates and more willing to recruit mid-career professionals. Mohamed et al. (2013) compared the recruitment practices of domestic and multinational enterprises (MNEs) in Brunei, concluding that MNEs placed relatively more emphasis on personal experience and qualifications, whereas domestic firms relied more on internal appointments. Daspro (2009) compared the job ads of US and Mexican companies in Mexico in terms of discriminatory language. She concluded that US firms were less likely to use discriminatory language in job ads, suggesting cross-context effects of home country legal systems and norms. The latter study raises a particularly important recruitment issue with respect to the idea of diversity recruitment, an issue we return to in a subsequent section on diversity recruitment around the world.

As with the previous section, we are struck by how few studies that we identified directly tackle culture across countries relating to the primary questions and topics that have been studied in the

**Table 3** Articles on global recruitment for multinational enterprises (MNEs)

Reference	MNE contexts
Caligiuri & Stroh 1995	Varied MNEs
Sparrow 2007	UK MNEs
Pruthi et al. 2009	UK MNEs
Kang & Shen 2013	South Korean MNEs in China
Yahiaoui 2015	French MNEs in Tunisia
Phillips et al. 2014	Global travelers

recruitment literature, such as RJPs; referrals and other source effects; organizational attraction; and employer brand image. There are studies addressing the role of employer reputation. Gowan (2004) suggested possible cultural differences in the importance of employer reputation as an antecedent of organizational attraction, and Harzing (2004) found differences in the ideal employer image among students from 16 European countries. Caligiuri et al. (2010) studied the relationship between employer reputation and organization attraction in nine countries, and concluded that employer reputation mattered more in more collectivist settings. However, beyond reputation and image, the literature on core recruitment topics remains underdeveloped in the cross-cultural domain.

### Global Recruitment Strategy for Multinational Enterprises

Another stream of research is subsumed in the larger issue of how enterprises that operate across multiple national borders manage their HRM strategies and practices. **Table 3** summarizes the author(s), year, and national contexts of the articles we selectively reviewed in this area. These studies often draw from institutional theory and agency theory to describe the circumstances under which MNEs choose to staff subsidiaries with home, host, or third country nationals. For example, Caligiuri & Stroh (1995) surveyed 46 HR managers in MNEs and concluded that MNEs with a more geocentric strategy were more likely to recruit globally compared to MNEs with a more ethnocentric strategy who were more likely to recruit from the MNE home country. Pruthi et al. (2009), in a series of surveys and interviews with UK-based venture capital firms operating internationally, concluded that these firms exhibited a strong preference for recruiting local executives rather than expatriates.

Kang & Shen (2013) surveyed HR and general managers in 10 South Korean MNEs operating in China, emphasizing a dearth of empirical research on the recruitment practices of non-Western MNEs. They concluded these MNEs tended to take a polycentric approach, adopting local recruitment practices associated with the host country (e.g., relying more on headhunters than they would domestically). Yahiaoui (2015) interviewed employees and HR managers in two French MNEs in Tunisia to describe the process of “hybridizing” recruitment practices, i.e., adapting corporate practices to the local culture to create a new hybrid approach. For example, she observed that local subsidiaries recruited managers on the basis of age as well as skill, because of cultural norms regarding authority in the host country. She also described how the idea of an employee referral became “wasta,” a reference to using one’s personal connections, resulting in deeper connections between supervisors and employees.

Sparrow (2007) directly focused on international recruitment and selection. In a case study of four UK-based organizations, he describes international recruitment practices contrasting organizations pursuing centralized versus decentralized control and focusing on international



recruitment primarily for domestic or international labor markets. For example, one organization focused on internationally recruiting for domestic healthcare positions reported researching appropriate media channels in target markets, specifying a new value proposition for international recruits, and developing new web-based gateways. Another moved in the direction of outsourcing much of their international recruitment. Firms focused on international recruitment for international positions reported developing specialist international resourcing teams, building networks of preferred recruitment suppliers, and developing customized recruitment ads by location. Interestingly, a key consideration across contexts was the development of an employment brand and building an international reputation as an employer.

Although the bulk of the research on MNE expatriate staffing focuses on selection, training, and compensation (Tarique et al. 2006), there are implications for recruiting to international assignments. For example, drawing from person-environment fit theory, Tarique et al. (2006) suggest MNEs are likely to staff subsidiaries as a function of the fit among business strategy, parent country cultural dimensions of power distance and uncertainty avoidance, and the cultural similarity (or dissimilarity) between parent and host countries. Although focused on the business staffing strategy, these ideas likely have implications for recruiting international assignees; for example, to what extent do perceived fit and cultural similarity affect attraction to international assignments?

Collings et al. (2007) suggest that a portfolio of alternative arrangements to the traditional expatriate model is growing, for example, increasing reliance on short-term assignments; regular international business travel; rotational assignments between home and host locales; and even virtual global assignments. Whereas the traditional expatriate staffing literature has focused on recruitment issues such as willingness to relocate internationally, lower participation rates by women, and increasing dual career issues, the growth in these alternative forms may raise new types of recruitment questions. As a follow-up to these ideas, Meyskens et al. (2009) suggested a combination of subsidiary-parent goal congruence and international assignee work-life balance considerations be used to determine the best type of international assignment. This perspective may have useful implications for studying how to recruit different individuals in varied circumstances to types of international assignments.

One study that takes a more traditional applied psychology perspective to studying international recruitment is recent work by Phillips et al. (2014) on recruiting global travelers. They designed two experiments to explore how recruitment messages influence the fit, attraction, and job pursuit intentions of individuals to jobs requiring global travel. They found that realistic recruitment messages about global travel requirements and organizational global orientation interacted with individual differences such as willingness to travel and global openness to influence the recruitment process. By drawing from well-established recruitment theory and research on fit and on RJPs, and by incorporating experimental design, this study is an exemplar for needed future research linking cross-cultural recruitment with the rich body of recruitment research and theory.

## Diversity Recruitment Around the World

Another group of studies addresses the role of national culture in recruiting a diverse workforce. **Table 4** summarizes the author(s), year, and national contexts of the articles we selectively reviewed in this area. We believe this topic warrants attention given the importance of diversity considerations in staffing twenty-first century organizations. The growing emphasis in many countries on recruiting a diverse workforce is driven by legal, moral, competitive, and social responsibility motives. The nascent research in this area focuses on the recruitment of immigrants and the role of national culture in diversity recruitment initiatives.

**Table 4** Articles on diversity recruitment around the world

Reference	National contexts
Ng & Sears 2010	Ethnic minorities in Canada
Almeida et al. 2012	Immigrants in Australia
Kamenou et al. 2013	Immigrants in Scotland
Moore 2015	British subsidiary of German parent
Peretz et al. 2015	Australia, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Philippines, Russia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, United States, United Kingdom

Several of these studies address the specific issue of national ethnicity in recruiting and integrating immigrants (and the children of immigrants) into host country organizations. This research addresses barriers to recruiting and fully utilizing the skill sets of ethnic minorities, particularly immigrants (and particularly female immigrants), such as barriers to credential recognition, language, and various forms of discrimination (including direct prejudice, employer perceptions about skills, and immigrant confidence in labor market prospects; e.g., Almeida et al. 2012, Kamenou et al. 2013, Ng & Sears 2010). Firms tend to (sometimes unintentionally) create barriers in the recruitment process by emphasizing job requirements that disadvantage immigrants (e.g., local experience), making negative assumptions (e.g., assuming immigrants have greater family responsibilities), or failing to appreciate immigrant credentials and skills. Additional research is needed to assess how recruitment policies affect immigrant recruitment, evidence that recruitment firms are more open to recruiting immigrants, the efficacy of developing immigrant networks, and the possibility that perceived skills shortages are a function of undervaluing immigrant credentials and skills.

Other research focuses on how differences in national culture affect the implementation of diversity recruitment initiatives. For example, Moore (2015) suggests that managers and employees hold culturally based native categories as to appropriate work roles related to gender. Thus, in a case study, a diversity initiative driven by a German parent company to increase the recruitment of women factory workers did not export as intended to a British context. The author concluded that effective diversity recruitment across cultures requires not only a recognition that cultural differences exist, but also an understanding of how practices and their meanings are recontextualized from one cultural context to another.

Another study surveyed HR managers in 22 countries about diversity programs focused on recruitment, training, and career progression (Peretz et al. 2015). They found that national cultural values (in terms of dimensions from the GLOBE database) were related to the adoption of diversity programs (including recruitment); in particular, collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance were negatively related to adoption, whereas future orientation, gender egalitarianism, and performance orientation were positively related. They also found that national cultural practices moderated several of the relationships of diversity programs (including recruitment) with absenteeism and turnover. Future research is needed to address how national cultural norms, expectations, values, and practices influence the adoption, interpretation, and implementation of diversity recruitment efforts.

### Conceptual Models and Frameworks

Why and how should we expect national culture to influence recruitment? Budhwar & Sparrow (2002) describe five mechanisms through which national culture influences HR policies and practices, and thus recruitment: how the managerial role is defined; basic assumptions

that shape manager behavior; value orientations, norms, and customs; preferences of the social elite; and unique ways of doing things. Aycan (2005) presents a framework based in the Model of Culture Fit (Kanungo & Jaeger 1990). According to this model, organizational work cultures are a function of managerial beliefs and assumptions about tasks and about employees; these assumptions, especially about employees, are driven by the socio-cultural context. Cultural dimensions are grouped in terms of three perspectives on overarching values: emphasis on maintaining interpersonal relationships relative to improving performance; on maintaining a status hierarchy relative to promoting egalitarianism and participation; and in flexible relative to inflexible beliefs about change and development. On the basis of these ideas, Aycan develops a series of cross-cultural recruitment propositions that provide fertile ground for empirical study. For example, internal and informal recruiting practices are proposed as more likely to be emphasized in cultural contexts higher in uncertainty avoidance and collectivism; in contrast, greater emphasis on formal, structured, and widespread recruitment is to be expected in cultures higher on universalism and with a stronger performance orientation.

The value-based recruitment (VBR) model developed by Ma & Allen (2009) proposes a framework for considering the role of culture in individual reactions to recruitment and job choice decisions. This model, grounded in signaling theory (Spence 1973) and person-organization fit theory (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al. 2005), suggests culture can influence recruitment outcomes in four ways: the signals job seekers attend to, how seekers interpret signals, how signals influence reactions and decisions, and the extent of perceived person-organization values fit. The VBR model integrates Barber's (1998) phases of recruitment with Hofstede's framework of national cultural values to suggest that cultural values influence recruitment processes in terms of how applicants respond to initial communication methods and messages, how applicants respond to assessment methods and the recruitment process, and the most salient job and organizational attributes used in decision making. They use this framework to develop a series of propositions specifying how cultural values interact with recruitment (informal and formal source effects, active and passive sources, group and individually focused messages, interview structure, communication delays, extrinsic and intrinsic job attributes, and recruiter effects) to affect outcomes identified in Chapman et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis (i.e., attraction, pursuit intentions, and job choice decisions).

## Conclusion

We envisioned a focus primarily on cultural differences in recruitment processes, methods, and outcomes. However, our review revealed a much broader perspective, including research on multinational HR strategies, in part because there is little research directly addressing culture in recruitment. There is an expansive and growing literature on international recruitment, encompassing the integration and differentiation of recruitment practices across countries and cultures, with macro-oriented theoretical perspectives such as the RBV and institutional theory used to explain firm actions. However, there is a need for more micro-oriented theoretical explanations of individual motives and behaviors as they relate to cross-cultural recruitment.

## RETENTION ACROSS CULTURES

During the past 25 years, the world has undergone accelerated technical and social change that has made retention of talent a global issue. For instance, many employees of MNEs view overseas assignments as a necessary part of career advancement and development, suggesting MNEs must manage retention across a variety of cultural contexts. However, recent reviews of the turnover literature suggest theory on retention has not explicitly considered cross-cultural or international issues. Holtom et al.'s (2008) review noted a lack of consideration of culture and national context

in turnover theorizing, and none of the prevailing turnover models identified by Allen et al. (2014) include culture as a driver or moderator in the turnover process. Our review instead reveals that research on retention across cultures has been forged through application of existing frameworks to new contexts, or through slight modifications of extant models with cross-cultural variables. We identified two primary themes in cross-cultural retention research: retention of expatriate workers and the role of national culture in turnover, with multiple categories of studies within each broader theme. We begin by reviewing these common themes.

### Retention of Expatriate Workers

The most prevalent topic we identified is retention of expatriate workers. **Table 5** lists the author(s) and year of the articles we selectively reviewed on expatriate turnover and categorizes them within the broader expatriate theme. Turnover and withdrawal are phenomena that fall under the broader category of expatriate failure or the exit of expatriates from an assignment before their assignment contract expires (Harzing 1995). Research on expatriate turnover has been underpinned by two process models. The first is Black et al.'s (1991) model of international adjustment. Adjustment is defined as an expatriate's psychological comfort with job tasks, general living conditions, and interactions with locals during a foreign assignment (Black & Stephens 1989). This framework

**Table 5** Articles on expatriate retention

Area of research	Reference
Adjustment-based studies	Naumann 1992
	Amante 1993
	Birdseye & Hill 1995
	Shaffer & Harrison 1998
	Hechanova et al. 2003
	Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. 2005
	Siers 2007
	Kraimer et al. 2009
	Reiche 2009
	Chen et al. 2011
	Pattie & Parks 2011
	Kempen et al. 2015
Nonadjustment-based studies	Guzzo et al.1994
	Mezias & Scandura 2005
	Lo et al. 2012
	Nguyen et al. 2015
Repatriate retention	Feldman & Thomas 1992
	Stroh 1995
	Sánchez Vidal et al. 2007, 2008
	Stahl et al. 2009
	Kraimer et al. 2009
	Birur & Muthiah 2013
Proactive adjustment	Lazarova & Cerdin 2007
	Chen et al. 2010
	Ren et al. 2014

suggests employees go through two periods of adjustment—an anticipatory period in their home country and another upon moving to the host country. The framework further suggests the novelty of the new culture is negatively associated with adjustment, whereas spousal adjustment should have a positive impact. The second model is Naumann's (1992) model of expatriate turnover, which integrates the turnover process models of Mobley (1977), Mobley et al. (1979), and Steers & Mowday (1981) into the expatriate context. Naumann's model also incorporates Black et al.'s work by integrating work adjustment into the expatriate turnover process. This model specifically suggests that cross-cultural adjustment moderates the link between preassignment work attitudes and attitudes during the assignment. These attitudes are then theorized to lead to withdrawal cognitions and ultimately turnover behavior.

Subsequent research on expatriate turnover has focused on adjustment [e.g., Shaffer & Harrison's (1998) research showing that adjustment factors played a role in the development of withdrawal cognitions and the decision to quit]. For example, Amante (1993) suggested that cultural differences in wage expectations and work cooperation contributed to a lack of adjustment and higher turnover rates among Japanese expatriates working in the Philippines, a finding supported by Chen et al.'s (2011) study of expatriates in Kenya. Hechanova et al. (2003) found support for relationships among cultural novelty (negative), spousal adjustment (positive), and expatriate adjustment and found a negative link between adjustment and turnover intentions. These linkages were supported by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis. Siers (2007) extended the model by demonstrating that justice perceptions moderate the adjustment-turnover intentions link. Attributes of the assignment have also been shown to play a role in the turnover process. For instance, Birdseye & Hill (1995) found that life satisfaction and job autonomy during the assignment fostered retention. Life enrichment activities during the assignment have been shown to reduce turnover intentions, likely because they aided adjustment (Kempen et al. 2015). Pattie & Parks (2011) found that minority employees were less likely to develop turnover intentions on an international assignment and explained that minorities were more likely to culturally adjust because of their past familiarity with cultural adjustment in their home contexts.

Although most expatriation research has focused on adjustment, other aspects of the expatriate assignment have received some attention. For example, Lo et al. (2012) took a job embeddedness perspective in showing that host country community links were an important factor in retaining expatriates. Other studies have also considered traditional sets of variables that predict expatriate turnover. Guzzo et al. (1994) found that violations of the psychological contract were associated with turnover intentions among expatriate managers, whereas Nguyen et al. (2015) found that commitment to the company was more powerful than commitment to the local operation in fostering expatriate retention. Conceptual work also suggests mentoring through the assignment effectively fosters expatriate retention (Mezias & Scandura 2005).

Research has also examined retention after the assignment is complete and the employee is repatriated to their home country. Studies suggest turnover rates are high among repatriated employees, with as many as 38% of repatriated employees leaving within one year of returning from an assignment (Birur & Muthiah 2013). Career advancement has been proposed as a key factor in repatriate retention. Feldman & Thomas (1992) posed career advancement as a motive for accepting expatriate assignments and highlighted the natural link between lack of career advancement and withdrawal. Empirical research has found initial support for this linkage (e.g., Stroh 1995), including research finding a curvilinear relationship between the number of expatriate assignments in one's career and career advancement and a negative link between career advancement and turnover intentions (Kraimer et al. 2009). This finding becomes more important when one considers Stahl et al.'s (2009) finding that repatriate turnover is impacted by whether the assignment is developmental (learning-based) or functional (demand-based). They found that assignments

that were functional in nature were significantly associated with turnover intentions, suggesting development and advancement are key for repatriate retention. Satisfaction with the repatriation process has also been identified as a turnover driver. For example, Sánchez Vidal et al.'s (2007, 2008) research found that differences in organizational culture between the host and domestic office could stimulate turnover. They also concluded that factors such as training after repatriation and changes in social status were associated with satisfaction with the repatriation process, which they then linked to repatriate retention.

An emerging lens through which expatriate retention is viewed is expatriate proactivity in managing foreign assignments. The expatriate literature is largely based on relationships between the expatriate and his or her international environment, suggesting a reactive behavioral paradigm of adjustment to international relocation (i.e., poor adjustment leads to the employee entering a withdrawal process). This new lens suggests that expatriates can strategically contour their own cross-cultural assignment so that rather than being reactive, these individuals are proactive in shaping their social world (Chen et al. 2010). Moving beyond the adjustment model, this perspective takes the view that expatriates have agency in acquiring the resources necessary to shape their expatriate experiences. In the realm of retention, Lazarova & Cerdin (2007) found that career activism and the individual's ability to change their employment context was linked to remaining in the organization. Ren et al. (2014) extended this perspective examining both reactive and proactive pathways to retention and found that proactive tactics were associated with both adjustment and embeddedness and contributed to employee retention.

Thus, key conclusions from the literature on expatriate retention over the past 25 years are that expatriate adjustment is a key factor and that other traditional factors such as commitment and job satisfaction also play a role. Naumann's (1992) model, which is heavily influenced by Mobley and colleagues' (Mobley 1977, Mobley et al. 1979) and Steers & Mowday's (1981) turnover process models, has theoretically underpinned much of the research, with other prominent turnover models receiving very little attention. Although adjustment continues to drive research in this domain, the literature appears to be moving toward a more proactive view in which expatriates have agency in shaping their cross-cultural experiences. To a large extent, research in this area tends to take established theories and processes (i.e., Mobley's process model, job embeddedness, employee attitudes, career advancement, autonomy, psychological contracts, withdrawal cognitions) and apply them to the expatriate context. The specific roles of culture are less directly integrated. An exception is the idea of cultural novelty or cultural distance; this represents a prime opportunity to integrate cross-culture recruitment and retention research into the culture-bound factors influencing the successful attraction and maintenance of employment relationships in cultures that vary in how closely or distantly related they are. Another integrative opportunity lies in traditional recruitment research on the role of recruitment messaging (e.g., realism) and method (e.g., source effects) on ultimate retention.

## National Culture and Retention

Another set of studies we identified focuses on the effects of national culture in employee retention. **Table 6** lists the author(s), year, and national contexts of the articles we selectively reviewed and places them into categories. Some (but not all) of this research has been underpinned by Hofstede's (1980) dimensions of national culture and the individualism/collectivism framework of Triandis (1995). These cross-cultural frameworks provide insight about variation in attitudes and behaviors across national cultures. Cross-cultural retention research has found considerable support for the differences proposed in these models. For example, Wiersema & Bird (1993) applied Hofstede's framework in formulating a model that explained how demographic variables will differentially predict top management team turnover in various national cultures. Their findings from a study



**Table 6 Articles on the effects of national culture**

Reference	National contexts
<b>National culture effects</b>	
Wiersema & Bird 1993	Japan
Shadur et al. 1995	Japan
Chiu et al. 2001	United Kingdom, Hong Kong
Fang 2001	Singapore
Not reported	Netherlands
Yao & Wang 2006	China
Coyne & Ong 2007	Malaysia
Yanadori & Kato 2007	Japan
Zimmerman et al. 2009	China
Stavrou & Kilaniotis 2010	Multiple
Hom & Xiao 2011	China
König et al. 2011	Switzerland
Yang et al. 2012	24 countries
Not reported	Canada
Owens 2014	Australia
Peretz et al. 2015	22 countries
<b>Maquiladoras</b>	
Pelled & Hill 1997a	Mexico
Pelled & Hill 1997b	Mexico
Miller et al. 2001	Mexico
Linnehan & Blau 2003	Mexico
Maertz et al. 2003	Mexico
Posthuma et al. 2005	Mexico, United States
<b>Replications</b>	
Vandenberg 1999	Belgium
Lee et al. 2001	South Korea
Allen et al. 2009	South Korea
Kim et al. 2013	South Korea, China
<b>Other cultural effects</b>	
Ng & Tung 1998	Canada
Cohen & Kirchmeyer 2005	Israel
Reiche 2009	Singapore
Peltokorpi 2013	Japan

of Japanese executives suggest that sociocultural values such as collectivism and stratification impact turnover by shaping social dynamics. Chiu et al. (2001) found that UK workers were more likely than those in Hong Kong to stereotype older workers as less adaptable to change and that stereotyping was associated with turnover of those workers. The results suggest values such as collectivism and respect for hierarchy found in Eastern cultures may become manifest in the retention of older workers.

These models also formed the foundation for more traditional studies of extant turnover variables. For example, Yao & Wang (2006) found that collectivism enhanced the negative effects of normative commitment on turnover, suggesting certain types of commitment may have a stronger

effect on retention in collectivistic cultures. König et al. (2011) examined the role of uncertainty avoidance in the turnover process and found that, contrary to expectations, relationships between job insecurity and turnover intention were stronger in a low uncertainty avoidance country (United States) than in a high uncertainty avoidance country (Switzerland). The authors cited the generous welfare benefits in Switzerland as a possible explanation. Research demonstrates that workload has a stronger relationship with work strain and turnover intention among workers from individualistic countries than collective ones and that strain was significantly associated with organizational withdrawal (Yang et al. 2012). Zimmerman et al. (2009) found that Western HR policies were ineffective in fostering retention among Chinese employees when compared to HR policies of Asian firms, further supporting the idea that collectivism should be considered in the turnover process. Stavrou & Kilaniotis (2010) found that flexible work arrangements have differential effects between Anglo and Nordic cultures, with practices such as part-time arrangements being associated with increased turnover in Anglo cultures and reduced turnover in Nordic cultures. Other research has taken a network approach in examining the ways in which familial ties uniquely influence turnover in China (Hom & Xiao 2011). These so-called *guanxi* ties were found to grant in-group status and distinctly embed employees in the organization.

Research on turnover of workers in Mexican maquiladoras has also examined the role of national culture. Maquiladoras are foreign-owned manufacturing plants that operate on a limited tariff-free basis in the northern region of the country near the US border. Pelled & Hill (1997a,b) examined the role of cultural values in turnover in this context and found that although Mexico's culture has been characterized as having high power distance, participative management was associated with reduced turnover in these organizations. At the same time, US-based recruitment approaches have been shown to have an adverse effect on turnover in this context, with Mexico's collectivist culture cited as an explanation (Linnehan & Blau 2003). Maertz et al. (2003) interviewed 47 Mexican maquiladora workers and concluded that family concerns may be relatively more important, whereas affective organizational commitment may be relatively less important in Mexico compared to the United States; a follow-up study with a matched sample of retail workers in Mexico and the United States showed that job satisfaction and ease of movement demonstrated weaker relationships with turnover intentions in Mexico (Posthuma et al. 2005). Similarly, a study of compensation practices in 115 maquiladora plants found minimal evidence that material inducements influence turnover rates (Miller et al. 2001). A key take-away from the maquiladora research is that despite the geographic proximity of maquiladoras to the United States, cultural differences make retention management complex in this setting.

However, findings also suggest that culture does not always impact the turnover process. Fang (2001) found that stress and supervisor satisfaction had similar effects in the turnover process across samples from Canada, the United States, and Singapore, suggesting national culture had little effect. Shadur et al. (1995) examined the applicability of retention "best practices" from Western cultures to nonwestern contexts, and found that there were relatively few differences in the two contexts. Other research has found that the effects of turnover rates on organizational performance in Japan were similar to those found in US studies (e.g., Shaw et al. 2005, Yanadori & Kato 2007) and that the practices US and UK firms use in offshore retention are also effective for Australian firms (Owens 2014). Coyne & Ong (2007) studied the effects of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) in samples from England, Germany, and Malaysia and found that although OCBs were more prevalent in Malaysia, the effects on retention were similar across cultures.

Other studies examined national culture outside the theoretical bounds of the Hofstede and Triandis models. For example, research has examined the impact of culturally diverse (versus culturally homogenous) workgroups on member retention, finding that diverse work groups suffered significantly higher turnover (Ng & Tung 1998). Cohen & Kirchmeyer (2005) examined

the ways in which work and nonwork factors impacted turnover across religious cultures. Their findings identified several differences among Christians, Muslims and Jews in the turnover process. Having higher numbers of children was positively associated with turnover for Muslims but negatively associated for Jews, whereas job tension reduced turnover intention for Muslims but increased it for Jews. Reiche (2009) examined turnover among local staff in host countries of MNC subsidiaries, and theorized organizational identification as a key mechanism for overcoming intercultural differences in retaining these employees.

Finally, we identified research that replicated findings from studies of US samples in foreign contexts. For example, Vandenberg (1999) drew upon a Belgian sample in replicating O'Reilly et al.'s (1991) finding that value congruence between employee and organization negatively impacts turnover. Lee et al. (2001) tested the generalizability of Meyer & Allen's (1991) three-component model of commitment in a South Korean context. The results demonstrated a link to turnover intentions and supported the generalizability of the model. In replicating Aquino et al.'s (1997) referent cognitions model in a South Korean context, Allen et al. (2009) found that comparisons to referent others were a generalizable predictor of turnover. Kim et al. (2013) attempted to replicate Harris et al.'s (2005) U-shaped relationship between leader-member exchange and turnover intentions, but instead found the relationship was linear in Asian contexts.

Thus, the bulk of the research has revolved around establishing differences in the turnover process based on dimensions of national culture such as individualism, collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance. This research has highlighted cultural contexts that alter the effects of HR practices and predictor variables and those in which the practices and variables generalize from the United States to other domains. Culture has been integrated in at least three ways: directly, as through, for example, social dynamics or stereotyping; as a moderator, with multiple studies finding the strength of relationships varying on the basis of cultural context; and by influencing construct meaning, as in reinterpreting social ties in the context of *guanxi* or considering culture as an important element defining group diversity. At the same time, it appears important to remember that several studies suggest turnover models and processes actually generalize quite well across cultural contexts, so it may be the case that we should be cautious about overstating culture's role.

Although these findings have shed light on the ways in which cross-cultural factors influence retention, the research has not been integrated into extant turnover models. Turnover intentions and turnover behavior have rarely been situated within extant process models in this stream and instead have been looked at almost exclusively as study outcomes. One exception is recent work by Peltokorpi (2013), who found that although job embeddedness theory is a useful framework for understanding turnover in Eastern contexts, certain dimensions took primacy. In particular, the importance of in-group status in Japan made on-the-job ties very important for retention, whereas the fit component was less salient. Thus, although cross-cultural frameworks have informed retention, we lack an integration of the prevailing frameworks from each field, and a coherent understanding of how national culture impacts retention remains elusive.

## DISCUSSION: LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

Although the literatures relevant to international recruitment and retention have developed largely independently, we integrate these research streams by drawing four conclusions about how culture is likely to influence recruitment and retention as well as the ways scholars are studying these issues, with an eye toward encouraging future research. First, culture is expected to influence the adoption and implementation of recruitment- and retention-related HRM practices by firms and by managers. Second, culture is expected to influence how prospective and current employees are likely to interpret and respond to work-related conditions, cues, and experiences. Third, the

relative importance of these culture-related influences is likely to vary based on features of the individual, the firm, and the cultural context. Finally, we consider ways in which the study of cross-cultural recruitment and retention may need to evolve to facilitate the growth and transferability of research in these domains. These conclusions and potential directions for future research are presented in **Table 7**. Despite the limited empirical grounding to date, we also suggest practical implications in **Table 7**, drawn from our review and from recommendations in the existing literature (e.g., Aycan 2005, Ma & Allen 2009, Miller & Guo 2013).

**Table 7** Future research questions and practical implications

Topic area	Directions for future research	Practical implications
<b>HRM practice: adoption and implementation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Culture's impact on the adoption of specific recruitment and retention practices</li> <li>■ Effective ways to introduce new practices into the organization</li> <li>■ Differences across cultures in how messages are crafted and delivered</li> <li>■ The impact of recruitment methods on applicant pools, organization attractiveness, yield ratios, or posthire performance and retention, in different contexts</li> <li>■ How assumptions and stereotypes influence applicant pools and retention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In more collectivist cultures, emphasize word-of-mouth, referrals, campus-based, and other relationship-focused recruitment methods.</li> <li>■ In higher power distance cultures, design more formal and structured recruiting processes.</li> <li>■ Carefully consider home and host country legal frameworks and underlying stereotypes in crafting job ads.</li> <li>■ Develop international resourcing teams.</li> <li>■ Diversity programs in higher power distance and higher uncertainty avoidance cultures require additional support.</li> </ul>
<b>Employee interpretations and reactions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Comparing the processes and magnitudes of relationships based on cultural variation</li> <li>■ Testing Ma &amp; Allen's VBR model</li> <li>■ The role of fit perceptions in recruitment and turnover</li> <li>■ Branding and image across cultures</li> <li>■ Identifying and testing differences in expectations and met expectations across cultures</li> <li>■ Determining the role of family influence in recruitment and retention across cultures</li> <li>■ Meta-analysis on the role of culture in organizational attraction or turnover decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ In more collectivist cultures, emphasize group-oriented messages and firm reputation in recruitment messages; emphasize also social dynamics in the workplace.</li> <li>■ Target employment image to fit with culture.</li> <li>■ Strategically emphasize or de-emphasize firm foreignness depending on views of home culture.</li> <li>■ In higher uncertainty avoidance cultures, avoid lengthy communication delays and emphasize job security.</li> <li>■ In more feminine cultures, emphasize fit and relational aspects of work; in more masculine cultures, emphasize job attributes.</li> <li>■ In higher power distance cultures, provide more structure and formality; emphasize status and prestige.</li> <li>■ In more short-term oriented cultures, emphasize immediate rewards; in more long-term oriented cultures, emphasize development and advancement opportunities.</li> <li>■ In more performance oriented cultures, emphasize hard criteria.</li> <li>■ Consider traditionally underrepresented groups for overseas assignments.</li> </ul>

(Continued)

Table 7 (Continued)

Topic area	Directions for future research	Practical implications
Culture strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The role of individual attributes in adjustment</li> <li>■ The role of cultural diversity in the choice to use standardized practices</li> <li>■ The role of local norms in the choice to use standardized practices</li> <li>■ The implications of host context culture strength for MNC HRM practices</li> <li>■ The role of global strategy on the adoption and standardization of recruitment and retention practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consider cultural novelty and distance when assessing fit of prospective and current employees.</li> <li>■ Diverse pools of candidates should be considered for expatriate assignments.</li> <li>■ Fitting recruitment and retention practices to the local context may be counterproductive in more diverse cultural settings.</li> <li>■ Consider the firm's global strategy when deciding on standardized or contingent practices in a cross-cultural setting.</li> </ul>
Research approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Investigating the generalizability of domestic research on core recruitment topics (RJPs, source effects, etc.) across cultures</li> <li>■ Investigating the generalizability of contemporary turnover models across cultures</li> <li>■ Investigating the generalizability of findings from recruitment case studies to broader populations of firms in cross-cultural settings</li> <li>■ Investigating the translation of turnover intentions to turnover behavior across cultures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Many turnover antecedents and processes appear to generalize across cultures.</li> <li>■ Recruitment practices appear less generalizable across cultures.</li> <li>■ Use caution in generalizing theories, processes, and practices across cultures without careful consideration.</li> </ul>

Abbreviations: HRM, human resource management; MNC, multinational corporation; RJP, realistic job preview; VBR, value-based recruitment.

## Practice Adoption and Implementation

Culture is expected to influence the adoption and implementation of recruitment- and retention-related HRM practices by firms and by managers in at least six ways. First, culture appears to influence the relative frequency of adopting relevant HRM practices, for example, the reliance on formal relative to informal recruitment sources. Additional research is needed to understand the adoption of the wide range of recruitment (e.g., the use of referrals, third-party recruiters, technology) and retention (e.g., engagement surveys, exit interviews, job crafting) -related HR practices. The adoption and implementation of RJPs would seem a particularly fruitful route for integrative research given the relevance of this practice for both recruitment and retention (Earnest et al. 2011). A second, related, issue is that culture appears to influence the speed of adoption and change in HRM practices, for example, the spread or diffusion of practices across MNE locations. Research is needed to address effective ways to introduce recruitment and retention practices and manage change in various cultural contexts.

A third mechanism by which culture matters is by influencing the relative value placed on criteria used to evaluate prospective and current employees. For example, research suggests culture affects the relative weight placed on experience or connections in recruiting decisions. A fourth, closely related, issue is that culture appears to influence the characteristics of communication messages sent to prospective and current employees, in terms of content and delivery method. Messaging is a core element of recruitment research (e.g., credibility, realism, specificity), and additional research that identifies differences across cultures in how messages are crafted and communicated

would be valuable. One natural intersection of recruitment and retention research would consider how culture influences the nature of communicating employer image as a great place to work.

A fifth way culture is likely to influence recruitment and retention practice is through underlying assumptions about individuals and about their capacity for growth, development, and change. For example, to the extent there are cultural differences in assumptions about individual capacity to grow and develop skills, development opportunities and career paths, two key antecedents of turnover, may systematically differ. A sixth, and again very closely related issue, is that culture may be related to the underlying stereotypes more or less likely to be held in a particular context. For example, age-related stereotypes may be partially culture-bound, and could influence how firms recruit and retain workers in the face of shifting demographics.

### **Interpreting and Reacting to Conditions, Cues, and Experiences**

Perhaps the most direct way that culture should be expected to influence our models and theories about recruitment and retention is by playing an important role in how individuals interpret and respond to the work environment. Our review identifies at least six ways this occurs that have implications for future research in the area. One of the primary ways is by influencing the expectations individuals bring to the workplace with regard to working conditions, employment terms, managerial roles, and psychological contracts. For example, culture likely influences whether one expects a manager to lead in a more authoritative or participative manner. A second, related, way culture matters, then, should be influencing the relative salience and importance of job and organizational attributes and managerial practices. For example, research suggests that the importance of employer reputation varies across contexts. As another example, turnover research in the United States suggests participation in decision making reduces turnover likelihood (e.g., Allen et al. 2003); however, there may be cultural variation in the extent to which participation matters, suggesting that conceptual models should account for these cross-cultural differences.

One core element of most recruitment and retention models is that relationships matter (e.g., employee referrals, job embeddedness). A third way culture is likely to influence interpreting and responding to the workplace is through culture closely intertwining with the role of the individual vis-à-vis others in terms of social dynamics, relationships with others, and social hierarchies. For example, US-based research suggests that relationship-based recruiting (i.e., referrals) is more effective and that having more or better relationships with others aids retention. However, these dynamics may differ across cultures, and the literature to date has largely been limited to showing that antecedents “work” in different contexts. Future research that compares the processes and magnitudes of relationships based on cultural variation is needed. A fourth and related issue is the key role of attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment, particularly in turnover models. These attitudes strike us as inherently individualistic, and could operate differently in settings where individual identity is more closely tied with the group. A key opportunity to integrate recruitment and retention research here would be the role of fit perceptions, as they are key to both literatures.

We noted earlier that culture may influence the messages firms and managers send; we also think a fifth way culture is likely to influence interpreting and responding to the workplace is that culture may influence how prospective and current employees interpret and respond to organizational communication. Such research could address cultural differences in terms of message content and message delivery; for example, are more realistic recruitment messages received the same way; does source credibility vary? Recent research on employment branding suggests winning a “Best Place to Work” certification influences subsequent applicant pools and turnover rates (Dineen & Allen 2016); thus, research on branding and image effects across cultures represents a prime opportunity for integration.



Finally, the sixth issue involves the role of family. The recruitment literature primarily focuses on the role of family in international move decisions, whereas the turnover literature emphasizes kinship ties and responsibilities in multiple ways. Given that culture is likely deeply intertwined in how individuals view their familial roles and responsibilities vis-à-vis work, there is important research to be done as to how these considerations vary across cultures.

### **Culture's Relative Importance**

Despite culture's role in recruitment and retention, theory and research suggest that the magnitude and relevance of culture's impact may vary. For instance, findings suggest that how novel a culture is relative to home context plays an outsized role in adjustment for prospective and current expatriate employees. Cultural novelty is a consideration for assessing the fit of job candidates and applicant attraction, and the literature on expatriate retention is primarily underpinned by the idea of cultural novelty. As this review notes, several interesting findings have come to light based on this idea. For example, although cultural novelty is negatively associated with adjustment, home country minorities were found to adjust better to host cultures, ostensibly because they were already accustomed to adjustment processes from experiences in their home country. Future research might seek to discover other individual attributes that foster adjustment. Individuals with unique attributes such as cultural agility or openness to experience may be impacted less by varying cultures and have higher levels of adjustment.

The homogeneity or diversity of the culture also likely impacts the strength of its effects, both on adjustment and on how much firms consider the local context when formulating and implementing HRM practices. Trying to fit recruitment and retention policies to local contexts may be counterproductive in highly diverse settings because norms and values are not widely shared by prospective and current employees. Similarly, homogenous cultures may have strong norms that run counter to standardized HRM practices used in other settings, making the practices ineffective. Research investigating these possibilities could be important in informing cross-cultural recruitment and retention.

The notion of culture strength also extends to MNEs. Questions arise about the role of culture strength in determining whether MNEs standardize HRM practices such as a recruitment or retention across contexts or if they fit these practices to local contexts when the culture is strong in those contexts. It stands to reason that the strength of the culture would play a role; however, it is unknown whether MNEs consider the strength of the culture or if such considerations foster more positive outcomes. Addressing these questions could be effective in explicating the importance of culture strength and in finding prescriptions for MNE HR managers coping with the demands of recruiting and retaining personnel in multiple host country cultures.

The global strategy of the firm may also play a role in culture's impact. Culture may be more likely to influence the adoption of HRM practices for firms with a more polycentric or geocentric strategic orientation as they attempt to localize recruitment and retention to the host context; however, culture may be more likely to influence employee reactions to practices for firms with a more ethnocentric strategic orientation as they attempt to standardize their recruitment and retention practices across contexts.

### **Growth and Transferability of Research**

As cross-cultural research in recruitment and retention has evolved, issues have developed that hinder the growth and transferability of research in both domains. For example, our review revealed that both literatures have ignored key aspects from domestic research. Recruitment research has

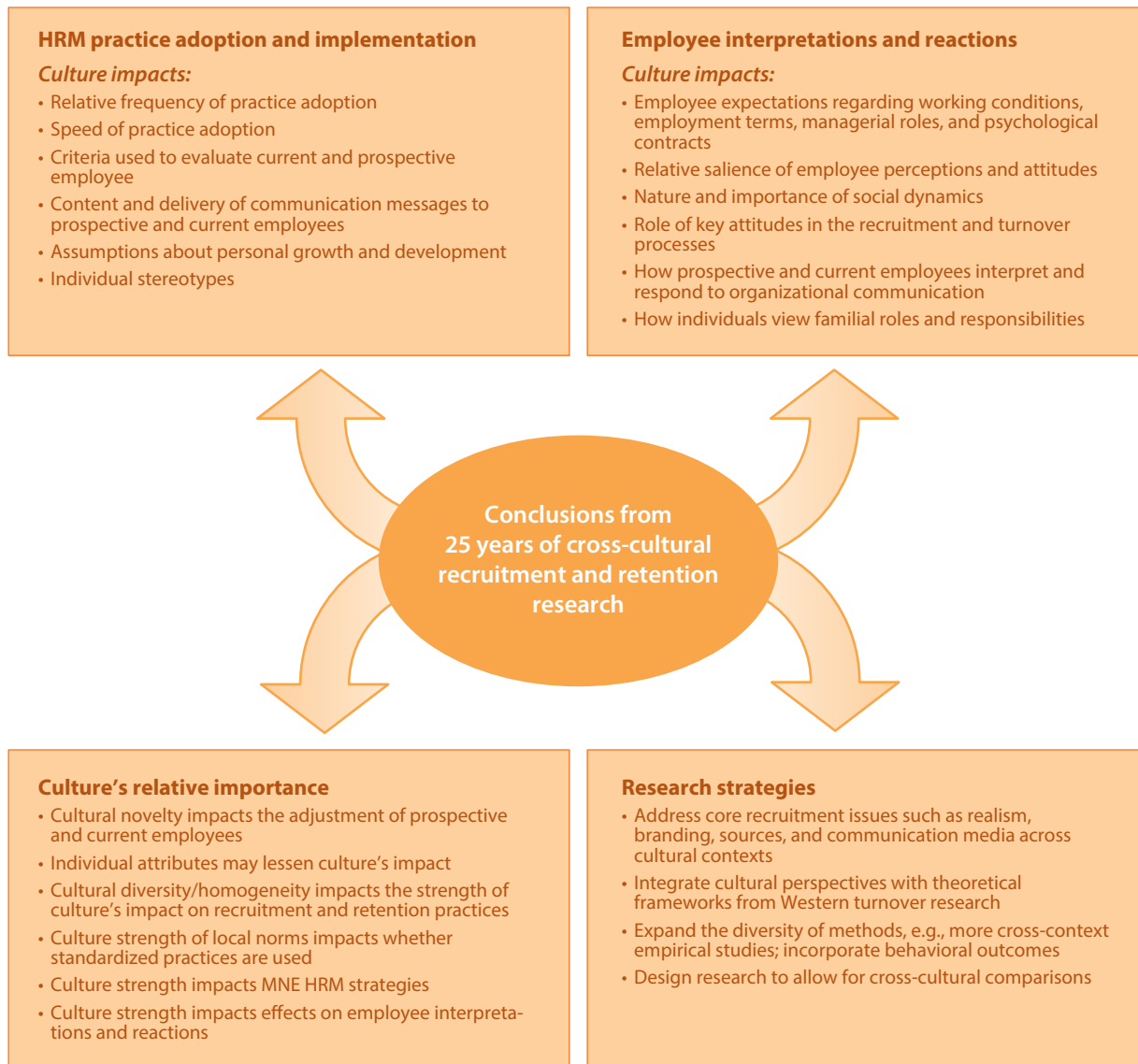
not shed much light on core recruitment topics in the cross-cultural context. Thus, the impact of culture on the effectiveness of these practices remains unknown. By contrast, retention research has studied core retention predictors such as commitment and job satisfaction, but has not systematically applied extant turnover models to the cross-cultural context. Thus, interesting questions remain unanswered in both domains. Questions abound around the impact of culture on traditional recruitment topics such as RJP, source effects, and the medium of communication with recruits (online versus other forms). In the retention realm, numerous questions arise from extant turnover models; for example, do the shocks described in the unfolding model (Lee & Mitchell 1994) have differing impact based on cultural norms; do alternate job opportunities (Griffeth et al. 2005) have the same effect in collectivistic cultures as they do in the United States?

Both literatures are also marked by a lack of continuity with domestic research in the way studies are conceptually and empirically operationalized. For example, the cross-cultural recruitment literature is populated by several case studies that address very specific contexts, with fewer quantitative studies that can be explicitly generalized to the broader field of organizations. This brings questions about the transferability of the research across settings. Our review also suggests that the bulk of the cross-cultural retention literature investigates the behavioral intention to quit rather than actual behavioral employment separation. Although turnover intentions are an important part of many turnover process models, they explain only approximately 20% of turnover variance and most turnover theory has been built through studies of turnover behavior with the intention as an intermediate step in the process. Cross-cultural retention research would benefit from examining turnover behavior more explicitly and specifically by investigating the translation of turnover intentions to turnover behavior across cultures.

Finally, it is important to remember that cross-cultural research is challenging. There are a host of theoretical, logistical, and methodological issues that add complexity to conducting and interpreting cross-cultural studies, and it can be difficult to separate the effects of culture from potential confounds. Spector et al. (2015) address these challenges in depth and provide useful strategies for scholars interested in tackling cross-cultural recruitment and retention research. Drawing from Spector et al.'s review, we encourage scholars to design research that allows for cross-cultural comparisons by, for example, identifying research questions and constructs that are culturally relevant; sampling multiple cultural contexts and assuring samples are representative of intended populations; including measures of cultural variables; and using measurement methods that address language differences, culturally influenced response styles, and measurement invariance.

## CONCLUSION

Although research on the flow of human capital into and out of organizations in an increasingly globalized world may be a little "weird," our review provides a launching pad for new theorizing and study. In **Figure 1**, we summarize our key conclusions, organized around four themes: the role of culture in the adoption and implementation of recruitment- and retention-related HRM practices and strategies, the role of culture in employee interpretations of and reactions to work and employment considerations, factors related to the relative importance of culture in various circumstances, and suggestions for future research strategies. Overall, our review shows that many of the elements of the primary frameworks describing recruitment and turnover processes appear to apply across national and cultural contexts. However, research explicitly focused on developing theory specifically on the interplay of culture with core processes and theories of recruitment and turnover processes is needed. Theoretically, there is a need for more micro-oriented theoretical explanations of individual motives and behaviors as they relate to cross-cultural recruitment;



**Figure 1**

Conclusions from 25 years of cross-cultural recruitment and retention research. Abbreviations: HRM, human resource management; MNE, multinational enterprise.

however, there is a need for more macro-oriented theoretical explanations of the role of cultural context on turnover decisions. Empirically, strategically designed studies that rule out confounds and isolate the role of culture are needed, and perhaps meta-analytic studies summarizing the variation of relationships and models across cultural contexts as well. We also note that cross-cultural research on recruitment and retention have largely developed independently; theory and research that integrates culture-bound factors influencing the attraction and maintenance of employment relationships is sorely needed.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors are not aware of any affiliations, memberships, funding, or financial holdings that might be perceived as affecting the objectivity of this review.

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