International HRM’s Role in Managing Global Teams

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Abstract

Global teams are being increasingly employed by multinational corporations as a strategic human resources solution to coordinate and integrate knowledge from diverse parts of the organization, increase efficiency through around-the-clock work, lower costs of access to local markets and customers, and enhance innovation and performance. This chapter reviews the past decade of research on global, distributed, and multicultural teams. We start with a definition of global teams and then identify global team challenges as well as ways of managing virtuality and cultural diversity, discuss key debates and trends in the literature, and provide practical recommendations for IHRM managers interested in increasing global team effectiveness.
Introduction

The use of global teams by multinational corporations as a strategic human resource solution is growing (Caligiuri, Lepak, & Bonache, 2010). Global teams are formed across geographical, temporal, and cultural boundaries to tap into human resource pools distributed around the globe, with the goal of enhancing organizational innovation and performance by targeting expertise regardless of location, integrating diverse knowledge from various parts of the organization, achieving greater efficiency through around-the-clock work across time zones, and lowering costs of access to local markets and customers without the need to travel (Carmel, 1999; Gluesing & Gibson, 2004). In addition, the exchange of diverse viewpoints and perspectives among global team members offers benefits not just to individuals but to team and organizational performance in terms of higher quality outcomes and solutions (Cummings, 2004; Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, & Maznevski, 2010).

While global teams offer great promise in coordinating work on an international scale, they are also fraught with challenges in collaboration (Cordery, Soo, Kirkman, Rosen, & Mathieu, 2009), communication, and knowledge sharing across cultures and time zones (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Sole & Edmondson, 2002). Over the past decade, research has identified a number of challenges in managing global teams, as well as several interpersonal mechanisms that may help to overcome such challenges and enable global teams to operate effectively. This chapter starts with a definition of global teams and then reviews major research findings, including challenges due to virtuality and cultural diversity and ways of managing them, key debates and trends in the research, and recommendations for international human resource management (IHRM) practitioners for effective global team management.
Defining Global Teams

A review of the past decade of literature reveals that the study of global teams often overlaps with the study of multinational teams, multicultural teams, virtual teams, and distributed teams. In defining global teams, it is important to distinguish them from these other related phenomena. While the work on multinational and multicultural teams tends to highlight interaction among members from different nations or cultures (Arman & Adair, 2012; Connaughton & Shuffler 2007; Earley & Gibson, 2002; Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen, 2009), the work on virtual and distributed teams emphasizes interaction among members across time and space (Cummings & Haas, 2011; Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Martins, Gilson, & Maynard, 2004). There is a further body of research on computer-mediated groups and teams that examines the role of collaborative technology in group interaction (Hollingshead & Contractor, 2006; Hollingshead & McGrath, 1995). While these diverse literatures remain largely separate due to both the focus of study and the dominant methodological approaches used – the streams on multicultural and computer-mediated groups tend to be largely experimental while the multinational and virtual / distributed teams literatures often draw on field studies – they are all relevant in understanding key issues faced in global teams.

Global teams are both multinational / multicultural and virtual / distributed, as they span multiple countries, cultures, geographical locations and time zones. Global team members may have some face-to-face (FtF) interaction, but they are largely dependent on electronic forms of communication and thus heavily mediated by technology. They are virtual in that they are geographically distributed and reliant on computer-mediated communication (CMC), but they are distinguished from other types of virtual teams that are located within a single nation or composed of a single nationality. Global teams are often defined as performing a global task as
well; for instance, Maznevski and Chudoba (2000) define global virtual teams as groups that are
(a) identified by their organization(s) and the team members themselves as a team, (b) responsible for making and/or implementing decisions important to the organization’s global strategy, (c) using communication technologies significantly more than FtF communication, and (d) distributed across different countries (p. 474). We now review challenges facing global teams and ways to manage these challenges identified by the research.

**Managing Virtuality and Cultural Diversity in Global Teams**

Global teams face greater complexity than traditional teams in terms of their tasks, embeddedness in multiple geographical contexts, diverse backgrounds of members, operation across time zones and use of communication technology (Gluesing & Gibson, 2004) and this has implications for team processes and outcomes. We start this section with a review of key challenges faced by global teams, and then discuss ways of managing virtuality and cultural diversity as identified by the literature.

**Global Team Challenges**

The literature has identified a number of communication challenges associated with team virtuality. The reduced physical and nonverbal cues available in geographically distributed, technologically-mediated teamwork have been found to create challenges such as faulty attributions of others and difficulty sharing knowledge across various contexts (Armstrong & Cole, 2002; Olson & Olson, 2000). The distribution of members across time, space, and multiple teams creates challenges in managing time and attention amidst multiple commitments, and this may create stress for team members. Finally, cultural diversity is likely to create faultlines and conflict among team members from different countries and cultures due to differences in values, attitudes, behavior, and broader institutional environments.
First, geographical separation and its reduced physical cues may contribute to team members’ lack of ‘mutual knowledge’ about each others’ situations and lead to faulty attributions about remote team members (Cramton, 2001). Distributed team members have been found to be more likely to make negative attributions about distant colleagues because of limited cues and lack of situational awareness of their work contexts (Bazarova & Walther, 2009; Cramton, 2001; Cramton, Orvis, & Wilson, 2007). Global team members are more likely to make dispositional rather than situational attributions about dispersed team members, since they have less knowledge of remote co-workers’ local contexts and work constraints and are more likely to attribute the deficiencies of distant colleagues to internal, personal traits while attributing their own shortcomings to external, situational factors. This tendency not to give the benefit of the doubt to distant team members may reduce trust and increase conflict.

Second, global team members often face great challenges sharing knowledge across geographical boundaries. Working at a distance, team members often have fewer opportunities for serendipitous and informal encounters that play an important role in sharing knowledge, especially tacit knowledge. Moreover, team members are often members of multiple teams, which may result in unequal levels of commitment to contribute and share knowledge and expertise. Situated, local knowledge that is embedded in local contexts (such as knowledge of local holidays and working conditions) is more difficult to share in distributed teams as it is often taken for granted (Sole & Edmondson, 2002). Especially when dispersed team members need knowledge situated at a remote site, it may be difficult to grasp the local situation and access the point of view of the local team member.

A third key challenge faced by global teams is managing time and attention. While tools such as email, instant messaging (IM), and social media may facilitate communication across
time zones and allow for dispersed team members to respond at their convenience, excessive use of email and other collaborative technologies may also create information overload that results in enormous stress (Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011; Nurmi, 2011), interruptions and distractions from work tasks (Gibbs, Rozaidi, & Eisenberg, 2013), and consequences to well-being (Glazer, Kozusznik, & Shargo, 2012). In addition to time zone differences among team members, multi-team membership also elicits challenges in time allocation across multiple teams that may make it difficult for members to maintain focus and attention to particular tasks. Cummings and Haas (2011) studied the antecedents and consequences of member time allocation through a survey of 285 teams in a large global corporation, focusing on the proportion of time allocated to the focal team and the number of other teams to which team members allocated time concurrently. They found that team performance was higher for teams whose members allocated more time to their focal team. Surprisingly, it was also higher for teams whose members allocated time to a greater number of other teams concurrently. Further, more dispersed teams attained greater benefits from allocating more time to the focal team, while less dispersed teams achieved greater benefits from allocating time to a greater number of teams.

Finally, global teams face challenges due to cultural differences of team members. Scholars such as Hall (1976), Hofstede (2001), and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) have identified cultural taxonomies explaining cultural differences such as individualism-collectivism, low-high context, and time orientation that have been influential in research on multinational teams (MNTs). For instance, Arman and Adair (2012) focus on the impacts of time orientation in MNTs and advance several propositions explaining the influence of present vs. future time orientation and monochronic vs. polychronic time orientation on MNT effectiveness. This may be problematic in global teams in which members have different cultural orientations to time.
Further, cultural differences are likely to create faultlines or rifts within global teams (Cramton & Hinds, 2005; Earley & Mosakowski, 2002; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003; Lau & Murnighan, 1998). The existence of cultural or geographical subgroups in global teams is likely to activate social categorization processes in the form of in-group / out-group distinctions (Cramton, 2001; Cramton & Hinds; O’Leary & Mortensen, 2010) that can lead to team conflict and biased information sharing, as they trigger in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination (Yilmaz & Pena, 2014). Hinds, Neeley and Cramton (in press) found that power contests around language increase the likelihood of faultlines becoming salient and causing negative emotional reactions in global teams. Communication effectiveness in global teams is likely to be hindered by both surface-level (overt demographic features such as age, gender, ethnicity, or nationality) diversity as well as deep-level (personality, cultural values and attitudes) diversity (Stahl et al., 2009). Stahl et al. find that both types of diversity may provide benefits to creativity through heterogeneity in knowledge, ideas, and approaches to decision-making, but such diversity may also result in conflict that is detrimental to global team processes and outcomes (Mannix, Griffith, & Neale, 2002; Mattarelli & Tagliaventi, 2010).

Managing Virtuality and Cultural Diversity in Global Teams

Mechanisms for Managing Virtuality

Scholars have identified several mechanisms for managing the challenges of virtuality in global teams, recognizing that structural features of global teams are not necessarily barriers if certain interpersonal processes are in place. Some of these mechanisms are transactive memory systems (TMS), perceived proximity, psychologically safe communication climate (PSCC), identification and trust.
TMS. Scholars are beginning to examine global teams as networked forms of organizing. TMS are one mechanism found to facilitate knowledge sharing in global virtual teams (Oshri, Van Fenema, & Kotlarsky, 2008; Yoo & Kanawattanachai, 2001). A TMS refers to the structure and sharing of knowledge resources within a team (Wegner, 1987). When teams have an effective TMS, all members possess unique and useful knowledge as well as accurate and commonly shared maps of how knowledge is distributed within the team, and they participate in sharing their knowledge and acquiring knowledge of others; this is more efficient in providing access to a large pool of collective knowledge resources while reducing redundancy and the need for each member to know everything (Fulk, Monge, & Hollingshead, 2005). Maynard, Mathieu, Rapp, and Gilson (2012) assert that TMS help to understand, align, and utilize expertise of globally distributed team members. While a TMS often develops implicitly and is thus more difficult to develop in globally distributed teams in which remote members are less aware of each others’ expertise, Intranets and other electronic knowledge repositories can enable such knowledge sharing (Fulk et al.; Su, 2012).

Perceived proximity. Another mechanism that has been found to help mitigate the discontinuities of virtuality is perceived proximity. Wilson, O’Leary, Metiu and Jett (2008) define perceived proximity as a dyadic construct that reflects an individual’s perception of psychological closeness to other virtual co-workers. This concept broadens the theoretical understanding of proximity from objective measures of distance to subjective perceptions. Their model proposes that perceptions of proximity are influenced by the degree of communication and social identification, in particular. Understanding what leads to perceived proximity can help manage virtuality as perceived proximity offers the benefits of co-location without actually having employees work in one place. O’Leary, Wilson and Metiu (2012) build on Wilson et al.
and present new validated measures of perceived proximity. They compare how both perceived proximity and objective distance affect relationship outcomes between geographically dispersed work colleagues. O’Leary et al.’s most important finding is that it is the symbolic meaning of proximity, rather than physical proximity itself, that affects relationship outcomes. They also find that the way sense of proximity is symbolically constructed mediates the effects of communication and identity on relationship outcomes.

**Psychologically safe communication climate (PSCC).** Other interpersonal processes have been found to help manage relationships at a distance. Gibson and Gibbs (2006) found that a PSCC mitigates the negative effects of virtuality on team innovation. Such a communication climate is characterized by members’ willingness to speak up, provide unsolicited information, bridge differences by being open to different views and perspectives, and take interpersonal risks (Edmondson, 1999). Gibson and Gibbs found that virtual teams with a PSCC engaged in more open and spontaneous communication and knowledge sharing, which led them to be more innovative. PSCC has also been found to help task conflict become positive for team members through the sharing of divergent perspectives and surfacing of new ideas and solutions (Bradley, Klotz, Postlethwaite, Hamdani, & Brown, 2012).

**Identification.** Another “coupling” mechanism for integrating global teams (Gibbs, 2006) is team identification. Identification has been defined as a sense of oneness or belonging to a social group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), and organizational identification occurs when an individual incorporates the organization (or team) into one’s self-concept and internalizes organizational values and goals (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Identification has been regarded as especially critical in virtual work settings as it facilitates coordination and control of remote employees, which is otherwise difficult due to the lack of direct monitoring and FtF
interaction (Fiol & O’Connor, 2005; Sivunen, 2006; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 1999). A shared team identity has been associated with reduced conflict in virtual teams (Mortensen & Hinds, 2001), and identification has also been found to mitigate the negative effects of virtuality (specifically lack of copresence) on psychological states of virtual workers, helping them derive more meaning from their work (Gibson, Gibbs, Stanko, Tesluk, & Cohen, 2011).

**Trust.** Similar to identification, trust is also seen to function as an informal control mechanism that is more effective than formal monitoring or authority status in post-bureaucratic organizations employing decentralized virtual teams (Handy, 1995; Murphy, 2004). Trust has been found to be a key factor characterizing successful global teams (Goodbody, 2005; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999; Jarvenpaa, Shaw, & Staples, 2004), as it improves the efficiency and quality of virtual team projects (Edwards & Sridhar, 2005), increases collaboration (Hossain & Wigand, 2004), creates a safe environment (Gluesing & Gibson, 2004), and improves productivity (Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001).

IHRM practitioners can engage in practices to actively foster organizational culture and climate in order to facilitate TMS, perceived proximity, PSCC, identification, trust, and other collaborative behavior within global teams. Site visits and other FtF meetings can facilitate relationship formation (Hinds & Cramton, in press) and help to create perceptions of proximity (Wilson et al., 2008), identification, and trust (Handy, 1995). IHRM professionals can also ensure that knowledge management technologies such as wikis, discussion boards, and enterprise social media (ESM) are available and supported for team members to use to exchange ideas and solve problems remotely, and to document and share knowledge. Such tools can provide virtual spaces or “virtual water coolers” (Erickson, 2013), which have been found to be important for global team effectiveness (Filey, 2013). IHRM practitioners can facilitate the creation of such
spaces by promoting implementation of ESM platforms where employees can share both task and social information safely (Gibbs, Eisenberg, Rozaidi, & Griaznova, in press). ESM and other collaborative technologies have been found to help overcome knowledge sharing challenges related to lack of context awareness through features such as status updates that enable quick, lightweight sharing of contextual information – e.g., local weather conditions or holidays – that is often taken for granted in distributed teams (Ellison, Gibbs, & Weber, in press). ESM may also play a role in encouraging spontaneous, informal communication beyond formal meetings, which has been emphasized as important for team innovation and cohesion (Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). ESM may help build interpersonal processes of TMS, identification, trust, PSCC and perceived proximity through providing social capital, context awareness, and identity information (Ellison et al., in press).

**Mechanisms for Managing Cultural Diversity**

While some employees are able to collaborate with colleagues from different backgrounds and cultures successfully, others fail. The rate of expatriate failure is under ongoing debate (Lee, 2007) but Black and Gregersen (1999) have estimated that about half of all expatriates are ineffective. Many expatriates, for instance, request early transfers back to their home country because they were not satisfied with their relationships in the host country. Dissatisfaction may also arise when team members are assigned to work virtually with others in different locations and from different national or functional cultures. Because of the attribution processes described above and due to increasing cosmopolitanism of the business world, it may be easy for managers and team members to assume that remote collaborators will act and communicate similarly to local employees, when in fact they do not. Researchers and practitioners alike have attempted to explain cultural differences and provide recommendations
to global team leaders and members, especially those who are geographically distributed and collaborate in diverse teams on multiple projects utilizing CMC.

**Cultural intelligence (CQ), global mindset, and cultural agility.** Several mechanisms have been proposed for managing cultural diversity. Some researchers claim that developing cultural intelligence (CQ) will make leaders more successful in cross-cultural collaboration (Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006; Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley, Murnieks, & Mosakowski, 2007); others contend that they need to build a global mindset (Bowen & Inkpen, 2009; Boyacigiller, Beechler, Taylor, & Levy, 2004; Govindarajan & Gupta, 2001; Levy, Beechler, & Taylor, & Boyacigiller, 2007) or cultural agility (Caligiuri, 2012). These related concepts rest on the common assumption that having experience and interaction with individuals from different cultural backgrounds is essential in learning to build this meta-skillset enabling individuals to effectively collaborate across cultures (Caligiuri; Caligiuri & Tarique, 2009; Tung, 1987).

Scholars (e.g., Levy et al., 2007) have recognized that these terms are inter-related and have encouraged exploring relationships between global mindset and related terms such as CQ.

Caligiuri (2012) describes cultural agility as related to the notion of physical agility; it is a meta-competency that enables professionals to be more flexible and perform successfully in cross-cultural situations involving unfamiliar cultural norms. CQ is a related concept that is regarded as a cognitive ability, similar to the notions of IQ or emotional intelligence (EQ) (Goleman, 1998). Thomas et al. (2008) define cultural intelligence as a system of knowledge and skills, linked by cultural meta-cognition, that allows people to adapt to, select, and shape the cultural aspects of their environment. In a sense, CQ is the ability to learn from experiences and adapt to new people and situations, unknown behaviors, norms and communication styles.

Global mindset, on the other hand, is a broader concept. It is a meta-capability that permits an
individual to function in new and unknown situations and to integrate this new understanding with other existing skills and knowledge (Boyacigiller et al., 2004). According to Boyacigiller et al., global mindset has two main features: cosmopolitan orientation and cognitive complexity. Those with greater cosmopolitan orientation exhibit external world orientation and curiosity to know more about others who are different. Cognitive complexity is the capacity to handle uncertainty, contradictions, ambiguities and tradeoffs (Boyacigiller et al.). Kefalas (1998) suggests that individuals with a global mindset are better able to understand diverse cultural viewpoints and consequently develop strategies to fit in to local environments.

These concepts - cultural intelligence, global mindset and cultural agility - have each been extensively studied in terms of leadership, but they have yet to be applied to team level processes. For instance, Caligiuri (2012) regards cultural agility as a necessary skill of global business professionals. These professionals are usually CEOs and top managers responsible for more strategic organizational functions, who generally get more customized training, coaching, and development, rather than lower level virtual team members. Similarly, global mindset has been regarded as necessary for global managers, but not necessarily other types of global employees (Boyacigiller et al., 2004). Expanding these concepts to all global team members is a potential avenue for future research on global teams (Zander, Mockaitis, & Butler, 2012), as increasing the abilities of all team members to adapt to culturally different others may lead to positive team and organizational outcomes such as innovation and performance.

**Key Issues and Debates**

We will now review key issues and debates that characterize the literature and its development that have implications for IHRM.

**Team Virtuality**
One source of contention within the virtual teams literature has been how virtuality is defined and measured. The research has moved away from notions of virtuality as singular, dichotomous, objective, and a focus on single team membership with top-down leadership to regard it as multidimensional, continuous, subjective, and characterized by multi-team membership and shared leadership. We describe these conceptual shifts and trends below.

**Virtuality as multidimensional.** Early research often used the term imprecisely to describe work arrangements that were geographically distributed, computer-mediated, structurally dynamic, or took place among diverse members. While these dimensions were often studied individually or left implicit in early research, there has been growing recognition that virtuality is a multidimensional construct. Although scholars do not always agree on what the key dimensions are, there have been growing attempts to capture multiple dimensions systematically in virtual teams research (Chudoba, Wynn, Lu, & Watson-Manheim, 2005; Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Griffith, Sawyer, & Neale, 2003; Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005). For instance, Gibson and Gibbs examine four features of virtuality: geographical distribution, electronic dependence, national diversity, and dynamic structure. Chudoba et al. examine similar features but characterize them as discontinuities created by the three dimensions of team distribution, workplace mobility, and variety of work practices (including cultures).

**Virtuality as a continuum.** Another shift in conceptualization has occurred from viewing virtuality as a dichotomy or “on-off switch” between non-virtual and virtual to regarding it as a continuum ranging from low to high virtuality (Gibbs, Nekrassova, Grushina, & Abdul Wahab, 2008). While many early experimental studies of CMC groups and teams compared purely FtF and CMC conditions and their performance and process impacts (see Hollingshead & McGrath, 1995 for a review), scholars have expanded beyond such conditions to recognize that
as new communication technologies have become highly incorporated into the workplace, very few completely FfF or CMC teams exist in modern organizations. Researchers have begun to realize that most teams are not purely collocated or purely virtual (Griffith et al., 2003; O'Leary & Mortensen, 2010). Rather, teams vary in the extent to which they are geographically distributed and reliant on CMC. While some virtual team members rely on email to communicate with other members on a different floor of the same building, global teams are highly virtual as they span national boundaries and are typically highly reliant on CMC to communicate, as well as being highly culturally diverse and structurally dynamic.

**Virtuallity as subjective.** Finally, virtual teams scholars are starting to move away from objective measures of virtuality such as distance, time, proximity, or amount of FfF contact (e.g., Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Griffith et al., 2003; Kirkman, Rosen, Gibson, Tesluk, & McPherson, 2002; Kraut, Fussell, Brennan, & Siegal, 2002) to more subjective or perceptual measures of virtuality. Extensive research on social relationships has found that we feel close to those who are in close physical proximity to us (Festinger, 1951; Kiesler & Cummings, 2002). For instance, Kraut et al. used a decompositional framework that examines how visibility, copresence, mobility, contemporality and other affordances of media affect the important collaborative tasks of initiating conversation, establishing common ground, and maintaining awareness of potentially relevant changes in the collaborative environment. More recently, another school of thought has emerged, according to which people can develop feelings of proximity across spatial distance (Chayko, 2002, 2007). In line with this, more recent research has found that employees do not need to be physically close to successfully collaborate. As Wilson et al. (2008) argue, perceptions of proximity may be more impactful than objective measures of proximity, as often virtual workers may be far from one another yet feel psychologically close, while the opposite
may be true for co-located workers in adjacent cubicles. Other recent studies have investigated the role played by technology in the interaction between objective and subjective distance (O’Leary & Cummings, 2007), used self-construal theory to examine how objective dimensions of distance lead to psychological distance that in turn affects virtual team interaction (Wilson, Crisp, & Mortensen, 2012), and examined perceptions or experiences of virtuality and the ways in which they influence psychological states of virtual workers (Gibson et al., 2011).

**Technology as challenge or asset.** The role of technology use in global teams has been another contested topic. Much of the virtual teams literature has relied on the cues-filtered-out perspective (Culnan & Markus, 1987; Walther & Parks, 2002), which assumes that electronic communication is deficient compared to FtF because it conveys fewer nonverbal and socioemotional cues. A long stream of experimental research on computer-mediated groups has explicitly compared purely CMC to purely FtF groups (Hollingshead & McGrath, 1995), finding that FtF groups typically outperform CMC groups. Although reanalyses of these early studies revealed that CMC groups performed as well as FtF groups when given additional time for relationship formation – leading to Walther’s SIP theory and hyperpersonal perspectives (Walther, 1996) – the virtual teams research continues to rely on CMC theories such as Media Richness Theory that emphasize the limitations of CMC (e.g., Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Hinds & Mortensen, 2005; Kirkman et al., 2002; Klitmoller & Lauring, 2013; Purvanova & Bono, 2009). Emerging research, however, finds that technology can fill the “holes” in virtual team interaction (Kurtzberg, 2014), as electronic resources such as Intranets and collaborative technologies can facilitate knowledge sharing in virtual teams (e.g., Fulk et al., 2005; Su, 2012), and documents the positive role of ESM in enhancing collaboration in distributed work contexts (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2009; DiMicco, Millen, Geyer, Dugan, Brownholtz, & Muller, 2008; Gibbs et al., in
A scholarly shift has become evident from studying technology as deficient due to its reduced cues to examining its affordances, or possibilities for action (Gibson, 1979), in particular distributed work contexts (Leonardi, 2011; Gibbs et al., 2013). Future research should examine the affordances of various technologies for global teams more explicitly.

**From single to multi-team membership.** While much of the early virtual teams research focused on internal team processes and outcomes (Chudoba & Watson-Manheim, 2007), the recognition that many virtual team members work on multiple teams has spurred a focus on multi-team membership (Maynard et al., 2012; O’Leary, Mortensen, & Woolley, 2011). For many employees, allocating their time to multiple projects appears to be the norm. Estimates suggest that between 65 percent (Zika-Viktorsson, Sundström, & Engwall, 2006) and 95 percent (Martin & Bal, 2006) of knowledge workers are on multiple teams simultaneously. Various researchers (e.g., Mathieu et al., 2008; O’Leary et al.) acknowledge the existence of multiple team memberships (MTMs), but only a few empirical studies (Engwall & Jerbrant, 2003; Mortensen, Woolley, & O’Leary, 2007; Zika-Viktorsson et al.) have addressed the unique challenges faced by such team members. O’Leary et al.’s model describes the effects of the number and variety of MTMs, demonstrating the need to carefully balance the number and variety of team memberships in order to maximize organizational productivity and learning while keeping competing pressures on attention and information to a minimum.

Network scholars have also found that teams that engage in more internal and external knowledge sharing among members of structurally diverse work groups perform better, highlighting the need to examine the broader external networks beyond the team itself (Cummings, 2004), although having too many relationship ties outside the team may be counterproductive due to the greater time and effort required (Margolin, Ognyanova, Huang,
Huang, & Contractor, 2012). Suh, Shin, Ahuja, and Kim (2011) also found that structural holes were beneficial for virtual teams because they increased the diversity of contacts and allowed team members to take advantage of their network positions. We see the study of multi-team membership and the external networks in which virtual teams are embedded as an exciting avenue for future research on global teams.

IHRM practitioners can help overcome challenges related to multi-team membership by providing formal recognition and award systems for teamwork. Such systems help to combat other demands on team members’ time and attention and incentivize them to prioritize virtual teamwork. Further, IHRM specialists should consider how tasks and interdependence of teams is designed. For example, Maynard et al. (2012) demonstrate that the amount of time members should allocate to a focal team depends on the level of team interdependence, such that they devote more time to teams with greater interdependence. In less interdependent teams, members may be more productive working autonomously, and encouraging more frequent interactions may in fact be counterproductive for task accomplishment by leading to process loss and frustration. Since teams differ in their design and interdependence, they should be allowed relative freedom to allocate their time and attention as best warranted for the collective good. In addition, team members should be able to utilize collaborative planning tools and multiple means of coordination to enhance their ability to plan effectively, prioritize their goals, and develop alternative courses of action. With such processes in place, global teams should be better able to understand, align, and leverage their specialized expertise and improve effectiveness.

**From top-down to shared leadership.** Early research on virtual team leadership often focused on identifying competencies and functions of effective leaders (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Joshi, Lazarova, & Liao, 2009) and offered advice such as adopting appropriate leadership styles
and strategies, establishing credibility, monitoring performance, and clearly defining vision and tasks (Connaughton & Daly, 2004; Kayworth & Leidner, 2001). As global teams operate as flattened, matrix or network forms of organizing, they are often decentralized, cross-functional, and distributed and thus may not have a clear leader. For instance, Cordery et al. (2009) examined the use of parallel global virtual teams (pGVTs) at the chemical manufacturing company Alcoa Inc. to generate novel solutions to global and local problems and breakthrough innovations. The research is shifting to look at shared rather than top-down leadership, noting that the relative absence of formal hierarchical authority is a feature of global teams that distinguishes them from traditional organizational forms. According to Hoch & Dulebohn (2013), shared leadership is a team-level phenomenon in which multiple team members are engaged in leadership behaviors. While a cross-functional team may have a formally appointed leader, this individual is more commonly treated as a peer (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2009). The formal leader may often be at a knowledge disadvantage because the purpose of the cross-functional team is to bring diverse functional expertise and experience together, and the formal leader may therefore be dependent on the knowledge of other team members. Leadership in these cross-functional teams is not only impacted by positions of authority, but rather by individuals’ knowledge and abilities to influence peers. In their study of 96 teams, Muethel, Gehrlein and Hoegl (2012) found a positive relationship between shared leadership and virtual team performance. Shared leadership has also been related to collaborative decision-making, knowledge sharing, and shared responsibility for outcomes, and team members have been found to be more likely to lead each other toward the achievement of goals (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004; Pearce & Conger, 2003). We see further investigation of the role of shared leadership as another important avenue for future global teams research and practice (Zander et al., 2012).
IHRM professionals may play a role in encouraging shared leadership in global teams by providing training on this kind of leadership in the form of instructing team members about leadership behaviors and how to share them among the team and promoting these behaviors in team meetings through facilitation and observation of such meetings. They should also implement reward systems for global team members who emerge as leaders, providing incentives for individuals who serve as both formal and informal team coordinators and liaisons within the team and between teams. Rewarding such team members in addition to formal leaders may promote shared leadership and its resulting benefits of increased coordination, knowledge sharing, and relationship formation, and help to minimize the role of faultlines.

Cultural Diversity

Global teams are often multicultural or multinational, composed of members representing multiple nationalities (Earley & Gibson, 2002). There are several debates and shifts in the ways in which cultural diversity has been defined and regarded in the literature. Culture plays an important role in global team collaboration because such teams are assembled to benefit from local and specialized knowledge dispersed around the globe (Connaughton & Daly, 2004) and many global team challenges result from cultural differences. The impacts of cultural diversity thus have important implications for IHRM. Two key debates involve culture as singular versus multidimensional, and cultural diversity as detriment or asset.

Culture as multidimensional. Traditional cultural variability approaches to classifying cultures according to taxonomies such as Hofstede’s (2001), Hall’s (1976), or Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck’s (1961) have been quite influential to theory and practice, but their application to contemporary global teams is problematized due to the fact that members may come from a variety of cultures and may also have experience living in multiple cultures, such that they do not
fit clearly into their country’s prototypical cultural profile. Further, the fact that global team members do not have to leave their own country to have daily encounters with team members from other countries complicates the traditional assumption that international sojourners and expatriates should adapt to the culture of their host country.

The cultural taxonomy approach (as exemplified by Hofstede’s research), while still popular, has also come under critique for reifying and focusing exclusively on national culture differences (and ignoring the great deal of within-culture variation that exists), for selecting categories with a Western-centric bias, and for treating country as a proxy for culture (Ailon, 2008; Kirkman, Lowe, & Gibson, 2006). In global teams that are cross-functional and inter-organizational, other dimensions of difference may in fact be more salient such as functional (engineering versus sales/marketing) or organizational (different regional structures) culture (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007; Gibbs, 2009a; Gibbs, 2009b). Much of the global teams research has focused on demographic, racial, national, or ethnic diversity, however (e.g., Lau & Murnighan, 1998). The fact that global teams are often highly diverse in multiple ways challenges the validity of using traditional measures of cultural diversity such as Blau’s (1977) index, which captures one cultural dimension at a time and does not account for the simultaneous effects of multiple dimensions of culture such as national, functional, and organizational, and their interactions. Studies are starting to capture the complexity of culture in a more qualitative fashion (Gibbs, 2009a) and through more dynamic models of cultural adaptation that account for dialectical tensions that play out within and across nested social structures (Cramton & Hinds, in press; Gibbs, 2009b). Other new ways of capturing the fluidity and complexity of multiple dimensions of global team culture are needed as researchers push further in this arena.
**Cultural diversity as challenge or asset.** A final debate in the literature concerns the impacts of cultural diversity on team performance. This long-standing debate pre-dates the existence of global teams but has implications for their cultural composition and staffing. Research findings on the relationship between cultural diversity and performance have been equivocal and contradictory, with some studies finding positive effects and others negative effects. In their meta-analysis, Stahl et al. (2009) examined this research systematically and found no direct association between cultural diversity and team performance. They outline a number of moderators that may explain the mixed findings: creativity, conflict, communication effectiveness, satisfaction, and social integration. They also note that location (within or outside North America) and type of methodology (laboratory studies with student samples versus non-student field studies) also influenced the relationships found.

A review of the virtual and distributed teams literature concludes that the cultural dimension of virtual teams has been underexplored in empirical research (Stanko & Gibson, 2009), suggesting that more research is needed on cultural diversity in virtual teams, specifically. Stahl et al. (2009) did find that dispersed multicultural teams had less conflict and more social integration than co-located teams, speculating that members of such teams may either avoid engaging with cultural differences or they may be more aware of them and more adept at dealing with them (Stahl et al.). Some global teams researchers regard diversity as beneficial if it is managed properly (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Maznevski, 1994), while others recommend minimizing it by aiming for homogeneity in membership. For instance, Yuan and Gay (2006) argued that homophily is beneficial to distributed teams because more similar people have greater probability of network tie formation. Kossinets and Watts (2009) also emphasized the benefits of homophily, in that the ongoing cost of maintaining ties is lower between similar
others, these ties last longer, and trust may be easier to establish. Others have similarly emphasized the positive role of cultural similarity in cultivating labor and trade networks (Lincoln, Gerlach, & Takashashi, 1992; Mouw, 2003). The way in which diversity is regarded has implications for IHRM managers in terms of membership selection and team composition.

**Implications for IHRM**

Based on the above review, IHRM managers interested in improving global team effectiveness will need to attend to and overcome challenges related to virtuality such as faulty attributions, knowledge sharing across geographical contexts, managing time and attention, as well as challenges due to cultural differences of team members. Such managers may play a key role in helping train global team leaders and members in developing an effective TMS, and in developing communication practices that cultivate a sense of perceived proximity, PSCC, identification, and trust. Such processes have been found to help overcome challenges of virtuality and improve team member satisfaction and productivity. Further, global team managers should also consider the role that external networks and multi-team memberships have on team processes, beyond the internal “container” of the team.

Attracting global team leaders and team members with the important skills needed to manage cultural diversity – cultural agility, global mindset, and CQ – is an issue with significant implications for IHRM, not only for training and development but also for selection of team members. Although some studies (e.g., Yuan & Gay, 2006) suggest that making distributed teams more homogeneous will benefit their performance, reducing diversity may have drawbacks for team innovation, which is stimulated by the divergent thinking, diverse talent and local perspectives brought together in global teams. It may be more productive for global team leaders to find ways to reap the benefits of cultural diversity without allowing it to create rifts or
faultlines within the team. One way of doing this is by breaking up cultural cliques to prevent strong subgroups from forming (Earley & Mosakowski, 2000; Gibson & Vermeulen, 2003). This can be done by organizing work arrangements and office configurations to increase cross-cultural interaction both within and across locations (Gibbs, 2006), rather than allowing for strong cultural subgroups to form that are aligned with geographical location, creating divisive rifts and negative attributions (Cramton & Hinds, 2005; Hinds et al., in press; Yilmaz & Pena, 2014). Further, global team managers must also be attuned to other sources of cultural difference beyond national culture that may also significantly impact team functioning, such as functional, organizational, or sociodemographic culture (Gibbs, 2009a; Hinds et al., in press).

Many recommendations identified by Black and Gregersen (1999) for expatriates are applicable to global team member selection. For instance, it may be desirable to select team members who enjoy working in teams and interacting with diverse others. In terms of recruiting for global assignments, Black and Gregersen suggest seeking employees who are both enthusiastic and extroverted in conversation and not afraid of new experiences. Identifying such employees may require ongoing employee assessment and IHRM staff and managerial collaboration. IHRM professionals may play an important role in team member retention and assessment of employee satisfaction. Training and retention of good global team members as well as designing motivational career paths for them is important for organizational knowledge sharing and creativity as well as performance.

IHRM may play a key role in ensuring global team members receive sufficient training or benefits (Briscoe, Schuler, & Tarique, 2011). To the extent possible, managers should standardize different HRM practices (such as selection, knowledge transfer training, employee development, rewards or mentoring) around the world (Caligiuri, 2014). It is also important to
recognize that this may not always be possible, however. Global teams research has highlighted inequities among team members from different countries that may not always be resolvable. Due to the fact that team members are embedded in different organizational structures and contexts, it may not be possible to standardize policies regarding salary, bonuses, or other benefits. Gibbs (2009b) identified several irresolvable tensions that produced feelings of inequity among temporary foreign assignees in a global software team involved in offshoring. First, they negotiated a tension between their “insider vs. outsider” status as customers treated them differently from their local, permanent counterparts by regarding them as outside contractors, excluding them from team meetings, training and other company benefits. A second tension occurred between “equitable vs. inequitable” treatment related to perceptions of the fairness of pay, awards, and benefits: when working on-shore on temporary assignments, foreign assignees often received much lower salaries and bonuses than their local counterparts (that were commensurate with their home country’s pay structure) as well as differential treatment in terms of living conditions and other benefits than assignees from higher-cost labor centers. Due to the different economic conditions in each country, it was impossible for global team managers to develop one standardized policy, which resulted in perceptions of inequity and unfairness among assignees. IHRM managers should assist in the development of policies perceived as fair by all, while at the same time being aware of differing conditions that may preclude development of a single standardized policy.

Managing performance evaluations of global team members is also a huge challenge (Heller et al., 2010). Managers should focus on evaluating group process, not just outcomes, even if it is more difficult to measure. “Creating objective performance appraisals against an organization’s various scorecard dimensions enables managers to have a far more transparent
understanding of the effectiveness of their virtual team and create more standardized methods of evaluating future virtual team performance” (p.71). For example, it is recommended that supervisor evaluations be supplemented by modified 360 evaluations by gathering input from several stakeholders electronically (Kirkman et al., 2002).

Beyond these, we find several other practical recommendations in the literature useful for managers responsible for global teams (Burke, Shuffler, Salas, & Gelfand, 2010; Walther & Bunz, 2005; Zander et al., 2012) or global employees in general (Caligiuri, 2012; Caligiuri et al., 2010). Global teams require special attention from higher-level managers to champion and oversee them. Proper selection, training and development, performance management of team members as well as compensation and benefits administration are necessary for global team member satisfaction and productivity. Providing rules and structure early in team development is another effective way to foster positive team outcomes. Walther and Bunz outline effective rules such as communicating frequently, setting deadlines and sticking to them, and explicitly acknowledging that one has read others’ messages as ways of building trust in virtual teams. Early global teams research (e.g., Maznevski & Chudoba, 2000; Armstrong & Cole, 2002) often recommended that team members maximize FtF communication and work on building a rich common context for team members. Although it may not always be possible or practical to bring team members together given the high costs of travel, periodic site visits have been found to be quite valuable in fostering closer relationships among remote co-workers that are characterized by increased responsiveness, more frequent communication, and increased personal disclosure (Hinds & Cramton, in press). Boundary objects can also be used to constitute a symbolic common context and allow for effective collaboration among diverse groups of distributed engineers on product innovation and design (Barrett & Oborn, 2010). Finally, social media tools
providing features such as status updates and activity streams are also becoming more prominent in distributed organizations as a means of establishing common ground and facilitating knowledge sharing in global work arrangements (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Future research should continue to explore the various mechanisms for increasing shared understanding among global teams members and helping them collaborate more effectively.

Based on the preceding review of the global teams literature, we see the following areas as ripe for future research on global teams. First, technology use and cultural diversity have been researched largely separately, but their intersection provides a rich agenda for future research exploring how cultural differences are enacted through communication technologies. As mentioned earlier, research on teams may focus on different dimensions separately (i.e. geographic distribution or cultural diversity) but it rarely captures complex dimensions of global teams simultaneously (Connaughton & Shuffler, 2007). Leveraging global team diversity continues to be a big issue for global teams (Stahl et al., 2009; Zander et al., 2012). The role of language, power and status differences among global team members has also been underexplored (Hinds et al., in press). Some research questions to be further explored include: what qualities of interactions with people from different cultures make team members more satisfied with global team collaboration? How do highly effective or innovative teams deal with various cultural differences to achieve goals in collaboration? Under what conditions are cultural differences detrimental, and under which conditions are they conducive to creativity and innovation? How does culture impact ICT use? What are the moderators of team diversity and outcomes? What mix of ICTs are used by highly creative and effective global teams? How does ICT use (whether ESM, Sharepoint, wikis, etc.) contribute to knowledge sharing and subgroup formation in global teams? Which factors trigger subgroup formation in global teams (e.g.,
differences in language, culture, function, or geography)? How can participation among global team members be enhanced? How do people who are different and who think differently fit into teams and make the most creative, productive contribution? How can global team managers achieve fairness in perceptions of global team compensation and benefits?

In conclusion, global teams present an innovative and effective human resource management solution for multinational corporations, although their distinguishing features of virtuality and cultural diversity pose challenges to collaboration among distributed and diverse members. As notions of virtuality and cultural diversity continue to evolve, we encourage IHRM researchers and managers to develop more complex and fluid conceptualizations of global teams and the ways in which they relate to their external environments, as well as a better understanding of the interpersonal processes and cultural abilities that foster successful global teams with an eye to developing better policies for selection, retention, training, and development. It is our hope that this chapter provides some guidance in this regard for both researchers and practitioners.
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