THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CHALLENGES OF FEMALE
EXPATRIATE MANAGERS WORKING IN CHINA

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of
The School of Continuing Studies
and of
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
in Liberal Studies

By

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Washington, DC
April 13, 2009
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ABSTRACT

Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has been considered one of the world’s premier destinations for foreign direct investment and expatriate employment. Despite an increasing need for American talent and management skills abroad, companies cling to misconceptions about a woman’s desires and abilities to work efficiently in China. Through a thorough literature review, it was found that not only do women desire to be sent on international assignments and are capable to succeed, but they may be better suited for global management than their male counterparts. By actively engaging in enthusiastic efforts to revitalize selection, training, growth, and support of female managers, American businesses can not only enhance the effectiveness and success of their organizational performance in China, but live up to the principles of equal opportunity our country stands by.
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INTRODUCTION

Typical expatriate managers are Western-trained senior-level managers who have accumulated 15–20+ years of experience within a single industry.¹ Usually recruited for their ability to “oversee a particular division of a multinational company, their scope of work expands in their host nation to include higher-level managerial duties.”² Often relocated with their families, these international managers usually have limited local language skills, little cultural sensitivity training, and limited traveling experience. Their strength lies in their knowledge of their particular industry and their ability to manage business units back home.³

An international post is usually granted toward the end of a career or as part of the final progression toward a Vice President or CEO position back in the home office. With their years of management experience and long-term understanding of the corporate culture, expatriate managers “are expected to: instill key qualities/values in local staff; increase market share in existing markets; identify new markets for business growth; and manage a reduction in

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² Ibid.

³ Ibid.
manufacturing costs.”⁴ Expatriate managers also “tend to see their stint as a 2–3 year temporary assignment that will conclude with them and their family being repatriated to the home office.”⁵

Expatriate growth is being fueled by the ever-expanding global economy. For American businesses to be competitive, it is imperative that they be positioned worldwide to make contacts, sell goods and services, and find human talent. In response, the number of expatriate managers that American businesses are sending on global assignments is increasing steadily.⁶ For example, 94 percent of the 164 companies who responded to a recent survey said it was important to send people on international assignments today to take advantage of increasing global trade.⁷ However, the number of people who are willing to accept global assignments is not growing at the same rapid rate. In fact, American businesses are increasingly reporting that finding enough of the right people with the requisite skills for global assignments is “one of their greatest international human resource concerns.”⁸

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
Since joining the World Trade Organization in 2001, China has been considered “one of the world’s favorite destinations for foreign direct investment.”\textsuperscript{9} The Chinese economy has “grown at a rate of approximately 9 percent a year since the late 1970s” and by early 2005, the country had “attracted investments totaling $580 billion” with more than “80 percent of Fortune-500 companies and the world’s top 100 information technology businesses”\textsuperscript{10} having set up shop. The World Bank ranked China as the world’s sixth-largest economy by nominal national income last year, and some believe that its position may become even higher in the next 5 years.\textsuperscript{11}

Owing to this incredible potential for American profit, China is among the most attractive employment destinations for expatriate managers, but it is also one of “the hardest places for them to succeed.”\textsuperscript{12} The most common reason for expatriate manager assignments to fail, according to more than half of

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{9} Fujia Yang and Colin Campbell, “China’s Peaceful Rise,” Global Agenda 4, no. 1 (Jan, 2006), 162, \texttt{http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.lausys.georgetown.edu/pqdweb?did=1012474451&Fmt=7&clientId=5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD.} \hfill \textsuperscript{10} Ibid. \hfill \textsuperscript{11} Ibid. \hfill \textsuperscript{12} “China Easily Attracts Expats, but they Find it Difficult to Succeed,” Asian Reporter, Oct 3, 2006, \texttt{http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1159746271&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD}.}
recruiters (51 percent), is “a lack of cultural fit.”13 Other reasons for assignment failure given were “family or personal issues (23 percent) and not enough direction or goal setting (12 percent).”14 Too often, though, the “frustrations of foreign service—from the language barrier to family concerns back home to the psychological effect of being out of the office loop—wilt the worldliest of people.”15 They often “return home ahead of schedule or muddle though their tenures miserably.”16

In this competitive and quickly changing global market, American businesses cannot afford to gamble on the successful assignment of their expatriate managers. American businesses expect commitment, dedication, and, most of all, results. With businesses spending large amounts of money to send an employee to an international market, it is imperative that they succeed. The average cost of expatriate failure varies among American businesses.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.


16 Ibid.
Estimates range from $65,000 to $300,000 with some reaching $1 million or more with an estimate of total losses of $2 billion per year.\footnote{17}{Guilherme Pires, John Stanton, and Shane Ostenfeld, “Improving Expatriate Adjustment and Effectiveness in Ethnically Diverse Countries: Marketing Insights,” Cross Cultural Management 13, no. 2 (2006), 156, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1051749681&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD.}

Although women represent over 50 percent of the world population, in no country do women represent half, or even close to half, of the corporate managers.\footnote{18}{Nancy J. Adler, “Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in the Triad,” International Studies of Management & Organization 23, no. 2 (Summer, 1993), 3, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=547412&Fmt=7&clientId=5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD.} Even in the United States, where many believe the proportion of female executives to be significantly high, this is not the case. American women constitute only 3 percent of all senior executives at American businesses and less than one-half of 1 percent of the highest-paid officers and directors.\footnote{19}{Ibid.} Therefore, it should be no surprise that even with the urgent need to broaden the global talent pool “only 13 percent of American managers sent abroad are women, despite the fact that they represent 49 percent of all managers and professionals.”\footnote{20}{Sonia Ossorio, “Misconceptions about Women in International Arena Limit Numbers,” Workspan 44, no. 1 (Jan, 2001), 13, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=69897337&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD.}
For many women, the most difficult hurdle is figuring out how to get their home company to send them abroad.\textsuperscript{21} Even after selecting women for an international assignment, companies often limit the women’s professional opportunities and job scope in the host country, which in turn increases their chances of expatriate failure. Research has also found that women expatriate managers “face more problems from home country nationals within their own company than externally from local clients and colleagues.”\textsuperscript{22}

Because of the traditional Chinese belief in male superiority, many companies are reluctant to select women for international assignments because “foreigners are so prejudiced against women that the women managers could not succeed even if sent.”\textsuperscript{23} Although there has been a long-standing Chinese constitutional commitment to sexual equality, the Chinese Communist Party has neither successfully eliminated the remnants of feudal thinking nor implemented a viable feminist theory.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} Nancy J. Adler, “Women Managers in a Global Economy,” \textit{HRMagazine} 38, no. 9 (Sep, 1993), 52, \url{http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=707687&Fmt=7&clientId=5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD}.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.

Misconceptions about the abilities of women to handle international assignments and/or their willingness to accept these assignments are rampant among American businesses. Respondents to a new study show that many American businesses believe that women are not as “internationally mobile” as men and that “clients outside the United States are not as comfortable doing business with women as they are with men.”25 Similarly, “70 percent believe that dual-career issues are insurmountable.”26 Some survey respondents also expressed concern about women’s “physical safety, the hazards involved in travel in underdeveloped countries” and, especially in the case of single women, “isolation and loneliness.”27

Despite these notions, research has shown that 80 percent of female expatriate managers have never turned down an offer of relocation, compared with 71 percent of men.28 In fact, 76 percent of female expatriate managers said that being a woman had a positive or neutral impact on their effectiveness overseas.29 And in China specifically, research has found that “Asians see female expatriates as foreigners who happen to be women, not women who

25 Ossorio, “Misconceptions about Women in International Arena Limit Numbers,” 13
26 Adler, “Women Managers in a Global Economy,” 52
27 Ibid.
28 Ossorio, “Misconceptions about Women in International Arena Limit Numbers,” 13
29 Ibid.
happen to be foreigners.”30 It was also found that “our assumptions of the salience of gender (male/female) over nationality (foreign/local) has led many U.S. multinationals to make inaccurate predictions as to the female potential to succeed as managers.”31

Numerous studies have shown that women’s success level in expatriate assignments is no different from that of their male counterparts. Moreover, many researchers have argued that inherent “female attributes and personality traits” may actually be better suited for international assignments than traditional counterparts.32 It is also argued that “precisely because of their female skills that female expatriates can become successful” and that a “female expatriates’ attention to the personal side of business and their skills in building interpersonal relationships may give them an edge over male expatriates.”33

As American female expatriate managers rise in the ranks of American businesses, these businesses must ascertain whether women can serve


31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.
effectively in China, and they must accurately pinpoint and resolve the challenges faced. This problem will be fully investigated in my liberal studies thesis by a thorough examination of the most recent literature.
CHAPTER 1
RESEARCH OF DOMESTIC CHALLENGES

Challenges Involved With Selection

Nancy J. Adler, a leading expert on global leadership and cross-cultural management, conducted extensive research to see whether American businesses resist selecting women for international assignments. She interviewed human resource vice presidents and managers from several large North American companies and found that more than half of the companies surveyed do, in fact, hesitate to send women abroad. A general notion that women were “disinterested in global assignments because women in dual-career relationships would find such assignments difficult” and that women “were less inclined to disrupt their families” were among the reasons offered by executives for their reluctance to choose women for international positions.¹

Misconceptions about Women’s Desire to Go on International Assignments

The criteria for selecting expatriate employees by American firms often include the desire to serve overseas, technical competence, the ability to adapt, spouse and family adaptability, and human relations skills. Although the desire to serve overseas is usually sufficient motivation for assignment to an overseas post, the individual must also believe in the importance of the job and

¹ Adler, “Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in the Triad,” 3
have a sense of mission. Nevertheless, the desire to accept an overseas assignment, and by extension to pursue an overseas career, is often seen by American businesses as the most important determinant in selecting individuals for an international assignment.

Recent research has shown that it is a common misconception that women do not want to take international assignments. A survey by the American research organization Catalyst found that women and men had the same level of ambition and interest in overseas assignments. More than 1,000 graduating Master of Business Administration (MBA) candidates were interviewed, and the results revealed overwhelmingly that both “female and male MBAs display equal interest in pursuing international careers” and that four out of five MBA women wanted an international assignment at some time during their career. Adler also found that the proportion of single and married women interested in working abroad is identical to that of men. Among a

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Adler, “Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in the Triad,” 3
group of business students that Adler surveyed, 84% of the sample was interested in international assignments. Adler found no significant differences in the willingness of men or women to accept an international assignment.7

Not only are women just as eager to go abroad as men, in some cases they are more eager. In another study, of undergraduate business students, researchers found that women were more interested than men and indicated that the women saw their international assignments as presenting opportunities to gain knowledge about different cultures as well as to enhance their interpersonal skills.8

Although American society, and its legal, political, economic, and social structures, often causes women’s underrepresentation and underutilization in management, many blame women themselves for leading upper-level management to believe that they are uninterested in international careers. One study found that women often “fail to demonstrate as much interest as men in pursuing managerial careers” and one reason more women are not “sitting above the glass ceiling” is that “they haven’t tried hard enough to get there.”9

Specifically, many female managers do not “actively engage in the

7 Ibid.


self-promotion and development of social networks needed to be considered for expatriate assignments” to the same degree as their male counterparts.10

One tenet of the assumption of a woman’s lack of interest in an international assignment is the lack of appeal to uproot one’s entire family to go live abroad. Almost 85 percent of the companies surveyed in one study reported that the majority of female expatriate managers go on overseas assignments alone. To manage international staffing requirements, address employee dual-career concerns, and reduce costs, some companies have moved to sending young single executives on short-term assignments abroad.11 In contrast to their single female counterparts, the majority of male expatriate managers are accompanied by a partner, according to 60 percent of American businesses.12 This leads executives to believe that senior-level women in management who are married with children have little interest in international assignments.

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10 Insch, McIntyre, and Napier, “The Expatriate Glass Ceiling: The Second Layer of Glass,” 19


12 Ibid.
Spousal Support

The topic of dual-career couples continues to be a controversial issue, as more and more American businesses are witnessing employees refusing overseas assignments because of their spouse/partner’s career choices. It is suggested, by Gary S. Insch, that partners of successful women tend to have high-powered careers and are less willing to make career concessions to accompany them.\(^\text{13}\)

This is not necessarily true in the twenty-first century as dual-income and dual-career couples become an increasingly important segment of professional managers in the America. Although the difficulties associated with addressing the unique needs of these dual-career couples is often accentuated when attempting to relocate one of the members of the couple overseas, it is becoming increasingly more common for “male trailing spouses” to accompany female expatriate managers on international assignments.\(^\text{14}\)

More than three-quarters of the human resource executives interviewed by Adler cited dual-career marriages as a reason that companies avoid sending women executives abroad.\(^\text{15}\) Many suggested that the problems

\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.


\(^\text{15}\) Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy," 52
posed by giving an overseas assignment to a married woman with an employed husband “can’t be solved.” But responses of women international managers interviewed indicate that couples’ career problems can indeed be ironed out. About half the women expatriates were married and reported that they and their spouses had reconciled career conflicts in different ways. Some opted for commuter marriages for a limited period of time, some spouses had “portable” careers that enabled them to work anywhere, and others simply found positions overseas.

Raising Children Abroad

Women expatriates in Adler’s study who had children reaped an unexpected benefit from their overseas posts: household help. Traditionally, companies supply their expatriate managers with housekeeping services, live-in child-care givers, and often drivers. According to female expatriate manager mothers, this windfall “gave them more time to attend to business than they had back home.” Flexible time off and financial support for school tuition and fees are also common types of support provided to female expatriate managers with children abroad, and one survey rated their families’

16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
adjustment to their host country as “fairly good.” Because of the usual set period of time for an international assignment, female expatriate managers found that their children “soaked up knowledge and languages like sponges” and “were enriched by the new cultures around them.”

Parfitt also found that even single women see the financial and cultural advantages that international management assignments can bring to their families. Single mothers in one survey actively choose to go and live abroad, taking their children with them, because ‘they have a better chance of a high income, more travel opportunities, an exciting lifestyle for the children as well as a taste of freedom away from the scrutiny of family and ex-husband.”

**Equal Opportunity Here and Abroad**

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act protect Americans both domestically and in foreign countries who are employed by American (or American-controlled) businesses from discrimination, without regard to international local

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19 Meckman, 1

20 Ibid.

customs or traditions. It is unlawful to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of his or her sex in regard to hiring, termination, promotion, compensation, job training, or any other term, condition, or privilege of employment. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also prohibits “employment decisions based on stereotypes and assumptions about abilities, traits, or the performance of individuals on the basis of sex” and “both intentional discrimination and neutral job policies that disproportionately exclude individuals on the basis of sex and that are not job related.”

The American laws prohibiting sex discrimination cover both American females and American males, but the origin of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was to protect American women in the workplace and that is still its main emphasis today. When the “sex of the worker is made a condition of employment” (such as only male waiters or carpenters) or there is a “job requirement that does not mention sex but ends up barring many more persons of one sex than the other from the job” (such as height and weight limits), discrimination occurs.

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24 Ibid.
It is illegal for American businesses to “include separate lines of promotion or seniority for women, payment of different wages for the same work,” or “different pension and fringe benefits” that are based on sex.25 Employer rules barring women from certain jobs on the basis of their marital status or the fact that they have minor children to care for or treating women differently from men when involved in workplace affairs or extramarital relations are all also illegal.26

Preference vs. BFOQ

Even if a host country “prefers not to conduct business with women, U.S. women cannot be unfairly denied access to jobs, training, promotions, etc. in foreign countries.”27 In U.S. case law, Fernandez v. Wynn Oil Co. (1981), the court held that “neither stereo-typed impressions of male and female roles, nor stereotyped preferences of host national customers may justify a sexually-discriminatory practice.”28 Thus a company’s allegation that its host nation’s customers would refuse to deal with a female corporate officer “did not

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Caligiuri and Cascio, "Can we Send Her there? Maximizing the Success of Western Women on Global Assignments," 394

28 Ibid.
constitute a legitimate defense for its decision to promote only males to that position.”29

A loophole to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a bona fide occupational qualification (BFOQ). BFOQ is a quality or an attribute that employers are allowed to consider when making decisions on the hiring and retention of employees—qualities that when considered in other contexts would be considered discriminatory and thus a violation of civil rights employment law.30 Often, American businesses argue that because their foreign customers “prefer to work with men,” it is a BFOQ. Fortunately, sex, in these cases, can be considered a BFOQ only when a “law of the host country limits women from doing a particular job.”31 For instance, in the case of Diaz v. Pan American World Airways (1971), American courts ruled that a “customer preference is not a BFOQ.”32 Therefore, although Chinese discrimination toward Chinese women managers exists, it is not illegal for women to work and do business in the country and thus it is not an American BFOQ.

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
Determining Factors Leading to Expatriate Success

Different researchers use a multitude of factors to determine the definition of expatriate success. The most common aspects to the definition of a successful expatriate assignment in China (or any other country) are adjustment, performance, and turnover. A positive adjustment of the expatriate to the new culture, new work responsibilities, and interaction with people from the host country often relates to the overall success and performance of his or her assignment. If an expatriate leave the assignment early, it is very expensive for employers, sometimes costing American businesses up to three times the expatriate’s salary. Therefore, it is also important to try to predict turnover or turnover intentions.

Each of these criteria is likely to be important to the overall success of the expatriate and suggests the inherent relationship among the three elements of expatriate success. If expatriate employees are unable to adjust to their new surroundings, they may be unable to perform their job activities proficiently, or they may terminate the assignment early. Caligiuri found that for American expatriate managers in China, the “ability to adapt” was ranked


34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
first among their criteria for success.\textsuperscript{36} For example, an expatriate who does not adjust to interacting with host nationals may not be able to obtain the information needed to perform effectively or to adjust to daily life in the new culture. As another example, an expatriate who fails to adjust to living and working in the new culture is more likely to perform ineffectively, experience stress or negative emotions, and desire an early return to the home country.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{The Selection Criteria}

The selection of expatriate managers for assignments has had a long and tortured research history. Initial models documented that technical or functional expertise had been the primary criterion for selecting expatriate managers for assignments.\textsuperscript{38} Further attempts at identifying an appropriate model for selecting expatriate managers focused on identifying personal characteristics of candidates that could help improve the chances of an

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{36} Paula M. Caligiuri, “The Big Five Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Expatriate’s Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Supervisor-Rated Performance,” \textit{Personnel Psychology} 53, no. 1 (Spring, 2000), 67, \url{http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=51642846&Fmt=7&clientId=5604&RQT=309&VName=PQD}.

\textsuperscript{37} Chen, "Selection of Expatriates: Decision-Making Models used by HR Professionals.," 1

\textsuperscript{38} Rosalie L. Tung, "Female Expatriates: The Model Global Manager?" \textit{Organizational Dynamics} 33, no. 3 (Aug, 2004), 243, \url{http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=697257651&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD}.}
expatriate manager’s “survival” during assignments. Although the models used to select managers vary with the nationality of the organization, the core concepts have centered on functional capabilities and personal characteristics of potential candidates.

Because of the importance of an expatriate assignment to the American business, companies use a multitude of personal and professional factors in determining an employee’s fit for a particular foreign assignment. Certain personality traits, such as flexibility, willingness to learn, openness, sense of humor, adaptability, ability to handle ambiguity, and interest in others, are also helpful characteristics in determining who will succeed abroad. To fairly determine the eligibility of an employee seeking an international assignment, companies should consider the employee’s sex only in the context of these traits or skills.

Although intelligence and other physiological characteristics of managerial employees are gender neutral, both Adler and Caligiuri assert that as a group, women may be better suited for expatriate success in China. Their research, which will be discussed in further detail, emphasizes that

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39 Caligiuri, "The Big Five Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Expatriate’s Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Supervisor-Rated Performance," 67

40 Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy, 52; Caligiuri, The Big Five Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Expatriate’s Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Supervisor-Rated Performance," 67
inherently female characteristics and personality traits could be considered an advantage in expatriate assignments if the characteristic and personality traits considered to be success indicators are accurate.

**Experience Working Internationally**

Some researchers believe that previous international experience is very important to predicting a successful expatriate employee because “past international work experience should provide strategies that assist in future adaptation.”41 Unfortunately for most female managers, they have not had much international experience because of domestic sex discrimination in expatriate selection. Although international experience can be a positive indication of future expatriate success, most “past experiences are often not similar enough to the current expatriate assignment to aid in adjustment and performance.”42 Alternatively, being abroad “may not be enough if one did not adjust or perform particularly well while there” in the first place.”43

Instead of considering similarity or success of a previous international experience, American firms often rely on measures of the number of previous expatriate assignments or time spent abroad as predictors. Although the ability

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41 Chen, "Selection of Expatriates: Decision-Making Models used by HR Professionals.,"

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.
to demonstrate previous other-country experience as a predictor of expatriate success may be helpful, female managers should not have this criterion used against them in being chosen for an assignment to China. As the number of American female expatriate managers sent to China increases to the same level as that of American male expatriate managers, this factor should be given more weight in the decision-making process.

**Intelligence**

Another criterion for selecting expatriate managers is evaluating the intellectual abilities of each potential candidate. For American expatriate managers to be able to adapt and learn in a foreign host country, a solid base of intellectual capability is necessary. According to Harvey, three different types of intelligence are positive indicators of successful expatriate candidates: analytical, practical, and creative.44

Analytical intelligence is the “planning, implementation, evaluation of problem solving processes and knowledge acquisition, which includes: cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence.”45 Practical intelligence is the “tacit knowledge that can derive common sense, intuition, and ‘street smarts’

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45 Ibid.
knowledge to adapt to an environment or to shape the environment to the problem facing the manager, which includes: political intelligence, cultural/social intelligence, organizational intelligence and network intelligence.”46 Creative intelligence is the “ability to develop innovative solutions to new problems in novel environments, which includes: innovative intelligence and intuitive intelligence.”47

By assessing these multiple intelligences, American businesses can evaluate the base competency of their expatriate candidates. Once the intellectual ability inventory is assessed, American businesses can examine how the learning styles of potential candidates influence their absorptive capacity to adapt and succeed in foreign environments.

Although there are essentially no disparities in general intelligence between the sexes, a University of California, Irvine study found significant differences in brain areas where males and females manifest their intelligence.48 The study shows women having more white matter and men more gray matter related to intellectual skill, revealing that “no single neuroanatomical structure determines general intelligence” and that “different

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
types of brain designs are capable of producing equivalent intellectual performance."\(^{49}\) Therefore, if American businesses use intelligence as a selection criterion for expatriate assignment, women should be considered for positions equally with their male peers.

**Personality**

Attention has been given to personality characteristics as major predictors of expatriate success. The personality traits of extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and emotional stability are considered key indicators of an expatriate's likelihood of success on foreign assignments.\(^{50}\) Caligiuri found “extroversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability to be negatively related to the expatriate’s desire to terminate the assignment” and found “conscientiousness to be positively related to the expatriate’s performance as rated by the supervisor.”\(^{51}\) She also found a positive relationship between sociability and cross-cultural adjustment and also

\(^{49}\) Ibid.

\(^{50}\) Meredith Downes, Iris I. Varner, and Luke Musinski, “Personality Traits as Predictors of Expatriate Effectiveness: A Synthesis and Reconceptualization,” *Review of Business* 27, no. 3 (Spring, 2007), 16, [http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1309019301&amp;Fmt=7&amp;ClientId=5604&amp;RQT=309&amp;VName=PQD](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1309019301&amp;Fmt=7&amp;ClientId=5604&amp;RQT=309&amp;VName=PQD).

\(^{51}\) Caligiuri, “The Big Five Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Expatriate’s Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Supervisor-Rated Performance,” 67
determined that “when individuals possessed the personality trait of openness, their increased contact with the locals facilitated the adjustment process.”

Black and Gergersen agree with Caligiuri’s findings and suggest that “in selecting global managers, organizations must seek individuals with a drive to communicate, broad-based sociability, cultural flexibility, cosmopolitan orientation, and a collaboration style of negotiating.” Arthur and Bennett also echo the importance of the big five personality traits as positive indicators of expatriate success and “evaluated dimensions of extra-cultural openness (e.g., extroversion and openness), flexibility/adaptability (e.g., emotional stability), job knowledge and motivation (e.g., conscientiousness), and relational skills (e.g., agreeableness).” These studies all offer “either evidence or insight to support the relationship between personality and expatriate success.”

Studies examining male and female managers in a domestic context have generally concluded that no pronounced differences exist between the sexes on personality characteristics related to managerial success. This picture, however, may change somewhat in a global context. In terms of

52 Ibid.

53 Downes, Varner, and Musinski, “Personality Traits as Predictors of Expatriate Effectiveness: A Synthesis and Reconceptualization,” 16

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.
personality traits relative to the big five, women may have the edge over their male counterparts.

Women tend to rely on “cooperation to achieve goals, and to adopt an indirect style of communication.”56 This trait may be particularly useful for female expatriates conducting business in high-context cultures, such as China, where social values dictate indirect communication styles. The importance of cooperation in forming global strategic alliances has also been recognized as a success indication for expatriate assignment; therefore; the ability to form relationships with host nationals as colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and clients “may be integral to performing the assignment for expatriate women, and may be facilitated by certain traits that women are known to possess.”57

In a domestic context, Ragins and Sundstrom have pointed out that forming interpersonal relationships at work “plays a key role in the career advancement of women.”58 By forming relationships with superiors, subordinates, and peers, “women derive mentoring, support and networking

56 Tung, "Female Expatriates: The Model Global Manager?," 243
57 Ibid.
58 Caligiuri, "The Big Five Personality Characteristics as Predictors of Expatriate’s Desire to Terminate the Assignment and Supervisor-Rated Performance," 67
opportunities.”59 In an international context, orientation toward others may enable women to form such relationships, hence enabling better cross-cultural adjustment.

Given that Western women often work in host countries that have a lower incidence of women as managers, the perceptual orientation of women may be particularly important. Women, more so than men, need to understand not only cultural differences but also the gender differences that might be present in cultures that see a more traditional (homemaker) role for women. Thus, female expatriates may be placed in situations where these cultural differences have a more direct impact on their performance on the job, and openness to differences in values, norms, and behaviors may be all the more important. Research has indicated that expatriates (both male and female) who are flexible in their attitudes toward cultural differences and are willing to learn from different cultural contexts adjust better to overseas assignments.60

Westwood and Leung, for example, reported that in their qualitative results, a number of female expatriate respondents perceived that women benefitted from being more sensitive, interpersonally aware, empathetic, and sociable than men. They asserted that this “is interesting since it implies that

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
women are naturally better suited to cross-cultural situations and may be more appropriate candidates for overseas assignments than men."61

**Competence**

Competence, the ability to accomplish tasks with self-confidence, sometimes with little or no help, is also an important personal characteristic that will affect an expatriate's success. In a fast-paced foreign environment, expatriate managers need to be innovative and competent in accomplishing their goals. Thinking on their feet and maintaining their expertise abroad becomes essential to winning the respect not only of their home offices but also of their foreign subordinates and fellow expatriate colleagues.

According to Harvey, as the level of competency of the expatriate candidate increases, the likelihood of success in terms of a foreign environmental become more certain.62 This allows management to “make future strategic choices to position the global organization dynamically in the business landscape based on the competent advice from the globally dispersed expatriate network."63 A continuous expatriate-sourced

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62 Harvey and Novicevic, "Selecting Expatriates for Increasingly Complex Global Assignments," 69

63 Ibid.
reassessment of competencies and market changes “allows the organization to
develop a global competency unique from other organizations competing in
hypercompetitive market segments.”64

Expatriate managers with managerial competencies are able to focus on
their company’s vision of their assignment and implement the decisions and
actions necessary to realize that vision. By selecting expatriate managers who
have high levels of managerial competencies, American business can “create
sustained competitive advantage” and “provide an institutional bridge between
the cultural, social, and political divide often found between the domestic and
foreign subsidiaries.”65

As the managerial competencies of expatriates develop over time
abroad, outcomes such as “implementing new strategic visions” may reshape
the thinking, actions, and even the worldview of the home office management
team, making the business “ultimately evolve into a global mindset.”66 The
importance of global assignments for expatriate managers is directly tied to
their ability to transfer knowledge and cultural attributes of the headquarters to

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
overseas operations and developing this multilevel competency through knowledge transfer.

Expatriate managers in China may also need to acquire and develop competencies to more effectively address issues and collaborative relationships with external entities and institutions (i.e., government agencies, banks, suppliers, customers, strategic alliance partners) and key local individuals. By having transformation-based competencies, expatriate managers enable American firms operating in China to “transform inputs into outputs” and “include alliance-based technology or marketing innovations that facilitate new product and customer relationship development.”67 Similarly, expatriates exhibiting these competencies may “create a collective experience base and/or learning capability, resulting in an organizational culture conducive to learning that is difficult for competitors to replicate” and therefore can create a relative competitive advantage over other global organizations.68

Although technical competence is very important for male expatriates, it is even more critical for women who may be considered “tokens” in their global assignments.69 An operational definition of tokenism is being “a member of a

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67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Caligiuri and Cascio, "Can we Send Her there? Maximizing the Success of Western Women on Global Assignments," 394
15% or smaller minority group.”70 In most global contexts, female expatriates would be categorized as tokens because they are not likely to have other female counterparts at their level.71 A minority-group member (i.e., a token) “has to be exceptionally competent to gain acceptance by the majority.”72

Adler supports this argument in the case of female expatriates. American female expatriates in China reported that “demonstrating their competence” was critical for gaining the respect of the host nationals.73 She also notes that arguments have been made that “the increasing emphasis on international and transnational management, and with it the heightened importance of relationship-building skills,” put a “premium on the very characteristics that have been thought to be women’s strengths.”74 If this is the case, “gender-based dispositional differences may lead to better performance by females in international assignments.”75

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
75 Caligiuri and Cascio, "Can we Send Her there? Maximizing the Success of Western Women on Global Assignments," 394

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**Self-Efficacy and Confidence**

Having a strong self-orientation can also be important for the cross-cultural adjustment of global assignees (both men and women). Self-orientation encompasses characteristics “that enable the expatriate to maintain mental health, psychological well-being, self-efficacy, and effective stress management.”\(^76\) Other characteristics related to self-orientation, such as self-esteem, comfort with self, and self-confidence, have also been linked to cross-cultural adjustment.\(^77\)

Self-orientation—more specifically, self-confidence and self-efficacy—may be especially important for women on global assignments, given that they will “need to believe solidly in their own competence to be successful.”\(^78\) One’s belief in one’s own competence or ability to overcome obstacles and succeed in a given endeavor is often described as self-efficacy or self-confidence. For women, having high self-efficacy and confidence is “associated with success in nontraditional, powerful jobs.”\(^79\) Further research suggests that confidence is

\(^{76}\) Ibid.


\(^{78}\) Caligiuri and Cascio, "Can we Send Her there? Maximizing the Success of Western Women on Global Assignments," 394

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
linked with encouragement-seeking and training-seeking behaviors, both of which are likely to facilitate success on global assignments.\textsuperscript{80}

Having self-confidence during global assignments may be especially important because verbal and nonverbal signs of encouragement from Chinese nationals may be difficult to interpret by both female and male expatriate managers.\textsuperscript{81} This puts American women at an advantage because even when outside signs of encouragement from others are present and interpretable, women are “less likely to increase confidence in their own abilities from outside encouragement” because they typically “enhance their performance by inspiring confidence from within.”\textsuperscript{82}

A woman facing the prospect of a global assignment is more likely to be successful if she has a high level of confidence in her ability to succeed because a woman’s self-confidence is related to her managerial advancement and her desire to remain in a group where she is a minority.\textsuperscript{83} Therefore, simply being selected for an international assignment should increase a

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Caligiuri and Cascio, "Can we Send Her there? Maximizing the Success of Western Women on Global Assignments," 394
woman’s confidence, thus resulting in a greater success rate than male counterparts who usually seek self-confidence from outside sources.

**Lack of Intercultural Training Preparation and Culture Shock**

Intercultural training is about providing people going to work in foreign countries with information to help them settle in and work well in their new surroundings. Besides preparing an individual or family for the ups and downs of culture shock, such intercultural courses also prepare people for some of the weird and wonderful sights, smells, and sounds they will be coming across. Expatriate employees will also be given insight into the working styles, communication preferences, etiquette, expectations, and so on, of the new culture. This helps them understand some of the issues they will face when working in the new environment. In essence, intercultural training is about helping people realize a smooth transition when moving abroad for work.⁸⁴

The success of expatriate postings often “hinges on the extent and quality of the preparations undertaken to ready the person and his or her family.”⁸⁵ Intercultural training is commonly seen as essential to gaining preparatory exposure. It is important not only to the new job and job context

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⁸⁴ “China Easily Attracts Expats, but they Find it Difficult to Succeed,” 8; “Intercultural Training and the Expatriate Assignment,” Kwintessential Ltd, [http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/expatriate-intercultural-training.html](http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/cultural-services/articles/expatriate-intercultural-training.html) (accessed March 12, 2009); Ibid.

⁸⁵ Westwood and Leung, "The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture," 64
but also to the unfamiliar social and cultural context. Culture shock is a very real phenomenon and can have debilitating effects.86

Adaptation to a new Chinese overseas setting usually begins with “a period of excitement, followed by disillusionment and then a state of culture shock.”87 This shock is a “stress reaction when salient physiological and physical rewards are generally uncertain and difficult to control or predict.”88 A surprising finding is that American expatriates working in China often experience greater culture shock for a given level of inter-cultural sensitivity than in any other Asian country.89

Despite the evidence suggesting that expatriate assignments often fail because of the inability to adapt and culture shock, many American businesses still do not invest in offering their expatriate staff intercultural training and wrongly assume that “people will be able to gel and settle in well.”90 An investment by American businesses in intercultural training of female

86 Ibid.


88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

expatriate managers should be seen as an ethical, as well as a financial, investment in the international assignment itself. Lack of in-depth cross-cultural preparation makes adapting to foreign cultures extremely difficult, yet “many cross-cultural preparation programs barely scratch the surface.”

IA study by McFarland found that many expatriates “received only minimal face time with the relocation manager before departure.” Despite their lack of intercultural training, to prepare for their international assignments to China, most female respondents in her survey “had taken some personal steps of preparation. This mostly consisted, however, of limited reading and talking to people who knew Hong Kong. Only a very small minority could be described as “having taken substantial personal preparatory steps.”

McFarland thought that this did not necessarily show complacency but rather a “lack of time due to the pressures of moving, sometimes at short notice, or a presumption that they knew enough already.” In some cases, this was real knowledge, based on earlier visits to Hong Kong; in others, it was

\[91\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[92\text{ Ibid.}\]
\[93\text{ Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64}\]
\[94\text{ Ibid.}\]
“merely assumptive.” An equal number of female respondents, however, took the view that “leaping into the dark” was part of the excitement of moving overseas and expressed no desire to prepare themselves better.

**Dual Career Issues and Familial Preparedness**

Ensuring that the partner of a female expatriate manager is prepared and able to cope with the enormous challenge of living in a foreign culture is also critical to the expatriating organization and the assignee. When couples migrate for the benefit of one partner’s career, the other partner is often referred to as the “trailing spouse.” Trailing spouse and dual-career issues should be discussed and provided for regardless of the manager’s sex.

Noonan asserts that it is most often the female partner who is the trailing spouse, but whoever is trailing “may have to take a job in the new location that is a less-than-ideal match” for his or her skills or qualifications.

Although most female trailing spouses are unemployed during their male spouses’ international assignments, many male spouses of female

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95 Ibid.
96 Ibid.
97 Insch, McIntyre, and Napier, "The Expatriate Glass Ceiling: The Second Layer of Glass," 19
expatriate managers prefer to embark on an international assignment as well.\(^9\) A study, by Insch found that companies “generally failed to support male expatriate spouses.”\(^10\) Although trailing-spouse issues may be more acute for female expatriates, “developing and implementing policies for dual-career expatriates would yield strong benefits” for American businesses and could “alleviate the rising trend in foreign assignment refusals.”\(^10\)

It is very important for the spouses of female expatriate managers who are in dual-career relationships to have the opportunity to participate in fulfilling career opportunities abroad. Among respondents for a report in Mercer Human Resource Consulting, 66 percent of female expatriate managers said that their American businesses provided “little to no incentives or support” to help partners settle in their host location.\(^10\) Only 7 percent of female respondents’ partners were offered information on the local job market. When support was available, it was usually given only when specifically requested.\(^10\)

\(^9\) Insch, McIntyre, and Napier, "The Expatriate Glass Ceiling: The Second Layer of Glass," 19

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ibid.

\(^10\) Ruiz, "Employers Sending More Women on International Assignments," 1

\(^10\) Ibid.

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Intercultural training and support are just as important to the children of female expatriate managers, given that women have a tendency to assume the traditional role of child rearing. Research from the literature on domestic relocation suggests that any relocation may be stressful for children. In the global context, adaptation may be even more extreme. The happiness of a female expatriate manager’s family can have a spillover effect on the overall outcome of her international assignment. The effects of such spillover from home to work and from work to home can either enhance a female expatriate manager’s performance or detract from it.

Limiting Factors of Overseas Assignments

Job Scope

To eliminate the perceived fears of Chinese cultural rejection of female expatriate managers, many American businesses limit women’s professional opportunities and the job scope of their international assignment. 104 Adler found that it is not uncommon for American businesses to “limit women to working only internally with company employees, rather than externally with clients” or out of “concern for the woman’s safety, limit her travel (and thus the regional scope of her responsibility), excluding very remote, rural and

104 Adler, "Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in the Triad," 3
underdeveloped areas.” Adler also found that many female expatriate managers worked and circulated “only in sophisticated and Western or Westernized environments, with little opportunity to become immersed in more challenging cross-cultural situations.”

When a female expatriate manager is placed in such a limited role, there is often considerable ambiguity among Chinese managers about “who she is, her status, her level of surprise, authority and responsibility, and therefore the way to behave toward her.” This most likely happens because most American women whom Chinese local managers have previously met were the wives or secretaries of male expatriate managers.” For this reason, when an American male expatriate colleague is present, Chinese local managers often “direct initial comments to male colleagues, not to the newly arrived women manager.”

If the pattern of limiting the external scope of the female expatriate managers’ role continues, women will continue to have their credibility, authority and responsibility challenged by local Chinese managers and

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105 Ibid.
106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
employees. This vicious cycle can become chronic and undermine women’s effectiveness in the larger scope of the project or assignment.  

Length of Assignment

Another way American businesses often set female expatriate managers up for failure is by offering them only temporary or travel assignments instead of regular expatriate positions. For instance, one female expatriate manager stated that “after offering me the job, they hesitated: ‘Could a woman work with the Chinese?’ So my job was defined as temporary, a one-year position to train a Chinese man to replace me. I succeeded and became permanent.”

American businesses create disadvantages for women when they “limit the length of assignment, rather than offering her the standard two to three years.” Although temporary assignments appear to “offer companies a logically cautious strategy,” in reality they “create an unfortunate self-fulfilling prophecy.” When an American business “is not convinced that a woman can succeed” and therefore offers her a temporary, rather than a permanent,

\[\textbf{110} \text{ Ibid.}\]

\[\textbf{111} \text{ Ibid.}\]

\[\textbf{112} \text{ Ibid.}\]

\[\textbf{113} \text{ Ibid.}\]
position, “it communicates the company’s lack of confidence to foreign colleagues and clients as a lack of commitment.”114

Chinese local managers mirror American businesses’ behavior by also failing to take female expatriate managers seriously.115 International assignments can “become difficult, or can fail altogether” when American businesses “demonstrate a lack of initial confidence and commitment” in their selected female employees. As one female expatriate manager describes, “It is very important to clients that I am permanent.”116

**Sexism by Fellow Male Colleagues**

An interesting aspect of the issue of sexism and discrimination experienced by female expatriate managers in China is that a large number of female expatriate women in the Westwood study were of the opinion that most of the sexism they encountered “came from expatriate men, not from locals.”117 It was found that “western expatriate men exhibited more sexism and male chauvinism” than their Chinese counterparts and there were “few complaints

114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64
about Chinese male behavior, except for some older and more traditional
ones.”¹¹⁸

Adler echoed Westwood’s research, finding that American businesses
“assume their own employees are somehow less prejudiced than are
outsiders,”¹¹⁹ but in reality, female expatriate managers often find the opposite
to be true. She found that female expatriate managers in China “face more
problems from home country nationals within their own company than
externally from local clients and colleagues.”¹²⁰

Westwood’s female survey respondents felt that “paternalistic attitudes
persisted, especially from older expatriate men.”¹²¹ With the use of
expressions like “dearie,” female survey respondents often found that male
expatriate managers assumed the new female expatriate manager “must be
the new secretary.”¹²² Another common complaint was that assumptions were

¹¹⁸ Ibid.
¹¹⁹ Adler, “Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in the Triad,” 3
¹²⁰ Ibid.
¹²¹ Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with
Gender and Culture,” 64
¹²² Ibid.
made that the female survey respondents “had accompanied a spouse to Hong Kong and that the spouse’s career was the dominant one.”¹²³

*Marching Forward*

American businesses should take special care to ensure that they look not only at the desire of their employees and the perceived cultural challenges of sending their expatriates to China but also at the competency qualifications and personality traits of all the candidates, regardless of sex. By doing this, they may realize that a female expatriate manager may in fact be the best candidate available, rather than simply an equal opportunity requirement. Knowing that Chinese nationals’ perceptions of a Western female expatriate’s competence may be blurred by stereotypes, American businesses should also emphasize at home that she is the best person for the job.

¹²³ Ibid.
CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH OF INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

Background of Chinese Culture and Attitudes Toward Chinese Women Managers

One classic Chinese adage states that “it is a virtue if a woman has no ability.”¹ When a woman becomes a leader in the People’s Republic of China, it is sometimes said that it is like “a donkey taking the place of a horse, which can only lead to trouble.”² China has a history of discriminating against women in job allocation, as well as of denying them access to education and technical training. To make matters worse, women are virtually excluded from men’s social networks and male-dominated power structures that reinforce the “segregation of women into traditionally female roles that restrict their access to high-level managerial positions.”³

Sex-role stereotypes are prevalent in China and hinder women’s preparation for managerial roles and severely restrict their opportunities for promotion in the national workforce. Cultural stereotypes influence not only the


characteristics that women themselves display but also the attitudes that Chinese society in general hold about them.\textsuperscript{4} To understand why American corporations are skeptical of sending female expatriate managers to work in China, it is imperative to examine the social history and gender oppression of Chinese women.

**Confucianism**

Ancient traditional Chinese society was composed of an essentially masculine value system developed over thousands of years, based on the works of the philosopher Confucius (551–479 B.C.) Great educator, thinker, and founder of Confucianism, he is widely regarded as the man who had the greatest influence on the development of Chinese culture. A core philosophy of Confucianism is that human role relations are cultivated and developed within a male-centered world coupled with the concept of familial harmony.\textsuperscript{5} In Confucian thought, family serves as a paradigm of harmony, and an individual’s primary moral obligations are to social institutions such as the family and the state. In this social structure, a Chinese woman’s identity was

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid.

defined in terms of her unquestioning obedience and deference to the authority of her husband’s household at marriage and her eternal attachment to it.6

One Chinese proverb says that “if you are married to a chicken, follow the chicken; if you are married to a dog, follow the dog; if you are married to a monkey, you have to follow the monkey, running all over the mountain.”7 Therefore, the traditional Confucian gender concepts of “virtuous wife and good mother” and “exalting males and demeaning females” were fundamental tenets to assess a woman’s behavior and aspirations and her status relative to that of men.8 Because the family was the key social unit, women attained their own power by their central role in the family, often managing domestic finances and caring for the household but eschewing achievement in the external world.9

Feudalism and the Rise of Communism

For thousands of years, traditional Confucianism and feudalism reinforced the inferior status of uneducated peasants and women, who often

6 Ibid.


8 Ibid.

9 Granrose, Employment of Women in Chinese Cultures: Half the Sky
experienced a vicious cycle of constant poverty, especially in rural areas. It was also common for peasants to “sell their land to rich landlords on unfair terms, and sometimes even their children and wives, to avoid starvation.”\textsuperscript{10} As a result of generational poverty, the status disparity between the rich and the poor became greater and greater as time went by. Consequently, a minority of wealthy landlords largely dominated the ownership of land, and tenant peasants were kept in serfdom. The feudal system eventually paved the way for Communist ideals. The upcoming Communist Party reasoned that the key to China’s success was the ability to emancipate women and to offer the rural poor peasants access to land.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{The Communist Revolution}

Mao Zedong was a Chinese military and political leader whose controversial political philosophies had a small bright spot that led to the beginning of female social and political sexual equality. Mao led the Communist Party of China to victory against the Kuomintang in the Chinese Civil War and was the leader of the People’s Republic of China from its establishment in 1949 until his death in 1976. With regard to gender issues, Mao’s policies sought to construct a type of socialism in which women were to


\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.
be treated as rational beings who would readily respond to any reforms to bolster the cause of social development.\(^{12}\)

Mao alleged that “women would be liberated from the customs and habits of a feudal society through their participation in paid work as well as through the processes of marriage and land reforms.”\(^{13}\) As is common with Communist political thought, Mao’s ideology sought to create a country with a more equitable distribution of resources and emphasized the importance of women’s relationship to work. Women were expected to put the production of goods first and the needs of their families second. Mao believed that women’s status in the family consisted primarily “in terms of their contribution to greater social and economic activities.”\(^{14}\)

Despite the initial success in widening the context of the women’s movement, Mao’s chief concern was class struggle and mass support. He stated that a “man in China is usually subjected to three systems of authority (political authority, clan authority, and religious authority).”\(^{15}\) As for women, in addition to being dominated by these three authorities, they were subject to the


\(^{13}\) Ibid.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

authority of their husband. These four authorities—political, clan, religious, and masculine—are the “embodiment of the whole feudal-patriarchal system and ideology” \(^\text{16}\) and are the “four thick ropes binding the Chinese people.” \(^\text{17}\)

In an attempt to re-impose his authority on the Communist party, Mao launched the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. It began with state policy shifting to an emphasis on class differences. The aim of the Cultural Revolution was to “attack the Four Olds.” \(^\text{18}\) To bring the areas of education, art, and literature in line with Communist ideology, “old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits” needed to be redefined. \(^\text{19}\) Anything that was “assumed of being feudal or bourgeois was to be destroyed,” including gender stereotyping. \(^\text{20}\)

To counter feudal beliefs, women undertook what was previously considered to be men’s work. Women were “positioned anew as both producers and political activists.” \(^\text{21}\) They were encouraged “to be vocal, to be

\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Ibid.


\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

active in politics,"22 and they even participated in the military with the creation of the Red Women’s Army—women from south China who were “organized to fight for a new and equal China.”23 But even with an emphasis on equality, there remained a great deal of skepticism about the value of female contributions to intellectual achievement and business professions, including management.24

**Open Door Policy**

Upon Mao’s death, Deng Xiaoping served as the de facto leader of the People’s Republic of China from 1978 to the early 1990s. His reform process became known as the Open Door Policy, and he began to shift Communist China toward a more socialist market economy. Deng instituted a program of reforms “designed to quickly bring about modernization so that China could compete in the world economy.”25

Increased globalization and an emphasis on industrialization had given rise to significant changes to all aspects of life in China, but it especially played a major role in expanding the need for commerce and employment in urban

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22 Ibid.

23 “Cultural Revolution,” 1


25 Ibid.
More specifically, Deng’s reforms were accompanied by increased discrimination against women in terms of hiring, rewards, promotion, and pressure to withdraw from the labor force. When state-owned enterprises or collectives took measures to streamline their operations, women, especially those who were unskilled, became “less able than men to defend their own economic interests.”

Accession to the World Trade Organization

Global trade continued to grow at a rapid pace in the last decades of the twentieth century. One result was the elimination of many domestic economic and regulatory barriers to trade. Another was that the demand for the production of goods created a need to actively include women in the Chinese workplace. After a long period of negotiations, China acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 with much controversy. Accession to the WTO has created a massive global economy; according to a 2008 WTO report, China has the second largest exports in the world and continues to grow.

Accession to the WTO has had both a positive and a negative impact for working women in China. Alicia Leung found that “while the number of Chinese

26 Ibid.

working women is currently more than 330 million, accounting for 46.7 percent of the total working population in the country, most are working in the agricultural or industrial sectors, and especially the garment industry.”

Globalization in China is believed to widen the gap “between urban and rural; between men-as-men and women-as-women.” Research has shown that Chinese men “largely do not support gender equality” because the large-scale entry of women into the workforce has been seen as “a threat to patriarchal authority, whereas women belonging to the new middle class are content with their own (middle-class) cultural forms.”

**Challenges of Chinese Women Managers**

Although women’s labor force participation rates in the Asian economies are ranked among the world’s highest, women’s presence in the managerial ranks is less impressive, and their near absence from executive positions renders them almost invisible. It is believed that “the attempt to achieve equality through the economic emancipation of women has met with only limited success” and that “although there has been a long-standing

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 Adler, "Asian Women in Management," 3
constitutional commitment to sexual equality, the Chinese Communist Party has neither successfully eliminated the remnants of feudal thinking nor implemented a viable feminist theory."

**Lack of Research on Women Managers**

For several reasons, little direct knowledge is available about women managers in the People's Republic of China. During the Cultural Revolution, "social science research fell into disfavor, and China closed its doors to foreigners." Therefore, until recently, "it was culturally unacceptable for Chinese scholars to carry out research on managerial women" and "impossible for Westerners to obtain permission to do so." In addition, current conditions in China often affect the quality of information that researchers can obtain. The vastness of the country makes getting a geographically diverse sample "impractical" and a "Nonrepresentative sampling is the rule" because "access to managers is frequently controlled by the government."

Further, managers’ awareness that their answers "may be scrutinized by persons associated with the government may affect their responses." During

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32 Korabik, "Managerial Women in the People’s Republic of China: The Long March Continues," 47

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.
Korabik’s first trip to China in 1985, she reported that “personnel from the All-China Women’s Federation were always present during the interviews that my research team carried out with Chinese women managers.” 36 Similarly, Mathison reported that all the envelopes containing completed questionnaires that were returned to him for his survey “looked like they had been opened.” 37

Foreigners conducting research in China also “encounter difficulties due to language and cultural barriers.” 38 Adler also found by that “western concepts and research methods are often not meaningful in the Chinese context.” 39 Further, a researcher’s “own cultural bias always affects the choice of research methodology and the manner in which data are interpreted.” 40

Given these problems, it is not surprising that scholars have conducted so few studies on Chinese women managers. Despite these obstacles, the overall picture that emerges from the existing research, however, is remarkably consistent. Moreover, it is also consistent with information from research on other topics carried out in the People’s Republic of China by Chinese scholars.

36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Adler, "Asian Women in Management," 3
and by foreign scholars using a variety of different methodologies. Research consistently shows that (1) Chinese belief in male superiority continues despite radical social reorganization and constant ideological crusades aimed at its abolition and (2) stereotyped views about the nature of women and men are still ubiquitous and often serve to perpetuate discrimination and keep women in inferior positions.41

**Access to Men’s Networks**

For those women who do make it into the ranks of women managers, research has shown that to develop future career opportunities in China today it is imperative for women to develop a network of contacts and obligations known as “guanxi.”42 In China, guanxi involves “implicit social and interpersonal connections and mutual obligations for exchange of favors based on trust, credibility and reciprocity.”43

Guanxi is similar to the Western idea of networking in that it “involves developing social ties with others that may help one in business or career

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41 Ibid.


43 Ibid.
advancement." But guanxi significantly differs from networking in that it is a social tie is long term, slower to develop and dissolve, and involves a deeper sense of obligation and reciprocal loyalty than is usually present in a Western individual’s concept of a network tie.

Guanxi is a relationship between two people who are expected, more or less, to give as good as they get. A Chinese individual with a problem, personal or organizational, naturally turns to his or her guanxiwang, or “relationship network” for assistance. Further, an individual is not limited to his or her own guanxiwang, but may tap into the networks of those with whom he or she has guanxi. Although guanxi is essentially an interpersonal relationship, there is still need to develop intercompany relationships to be successful in China. There is a risk that a company may lose its guanxi if an individual leaves the organization.

For the Chinese, “emotional trust is more important than cognitive trust” and is “based on sentiment-based ties between individuals which may also be

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45 Ibid.


47 Ibid.
extended to others through the relationship network,” guanxiwan.48 Xinyong (trust) literally means “the use or usefulness of trust” but also refers to the “integrity, credibility, trustworthiness, or the reputation and character of a person.”49 Moreover, when an individual helps one’s guanxi, that individual’s reputation is raised and trust and mianzi (face) won from others.50 Trust is also associated with the importance of one’s word over legal documents. When trust has been established, one’s word can be taken in business transactions, and “to go against one’s given word is to lose face and trust and ultimately one’s good guanxi.”51 Reciprocity is also linked to guanxi and trust with an unwritten rule that “one must Payback +1 when a favour has been provided.”52

Even though both sexes use guanxi is used by, one study found that in government positions, a man could rise on the basis of seniority alone, whereas a woman would need guanxi as well as seniority for promotions.53 Therefore, it is important for Chinese women to obtain guanxi early in their

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid.
professional lives in order to use it successfully as a career strategy; an example can be found in one study that demonstrated that the career advancement of women was almost always related to some form of favoritism.\textsuperscript{54}

\section*{Discrimination}

\textit{Job Recruitment and Assignment}

It is reported that over two-thirds of Chinese companies “prefer male to female employees” and that “80–90 percent of female university graduates have difficulty securing work assignments.”\textsuperscript{55} Other research has found that “if a woman and a man apply at the same time for a job, they'll consider the man; they won’t talk to the woman.”\textsuperscript{56} The negative effect of sexual politics reaches deep. One Chinese manager said that “if a woman is talented and you promote her, there is always the suspicion that you are favoring her for ulterior motives, because you are attracted to her.”\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{55} Leung, "Feminism in Transition: Chinese Culture, Ideology and the Development of the Women’s Movement in China," 359

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
China has responded to the increase in employment discrimination against women by introducing an anti-discrimination law in 1993 to protect women from discrimination in employment, housing, and education. Although the enactment of this law signaled an improvement in the status of women in society, the protection can be seen as paternalistic and restrictive. In concrete terms, it might be seen as inhibiting women from attaining working conditions and wages equal to those of men. For example, state figures show that 63 percent of employees laid off by state enterprises in 1995 were women and that they had only a one in three chance of finding a new job.\(^58\) In addition, Leung found that “women are employed in half as many professional jobs as men and in about 11 percent of the number of managerial jobs in which men are employed.”\(^59\)

Employers in one study, by Bulger, offered various reasons why they prefer hiring men: “women do not make good leaders; male employees will resist having to report to a female boss; and women are not as “capable” as men in terms of physical strength or intellectual ability.”\(^60\) In addition,

\(^{58}\) Ibid.

\(^{59}\) Leung, “Gender and Career Experience in Mainland Chinese State-Owned Enterprises,” 602

\(^{60}\) Christine M. Bulger, “Fighting Gender Discrimination in the Chinese Workplace,” Boston College Law School, http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/law/lwsch/journals/bctwj/20_2/03_TXT.htm (accessed March 12, 2009).
employment agencies “denied that discrimination was involved in the decision of companies to hire only men: ‘This is not discrimination, women really can’t do these kinds of jobs.’”61

Although the Communist leadership created legislation to ensure the equal treatment of men and women in the workplace, the actual practices in a work setting are left to the discretion of employers. Leung indicated that a high proportion of women in state-owned enterprises at one point or another were assigned to the type of occupations, either sex-neutral or female-dominated, where managerial discretion was unimportant. For instance, female union managers were expected to take care of workers’ welfare. They would, for example, organize entertainment and allocate housing within work units. Because a written job description for these routine jobs was lacking, promotion prospects were not based on quantifiable achievements; rather, seniority and work experience were important. 62

American businesses operating in China have also had an influence on Chinese women’s aspirations to become managers, but it has not always been positive. Until recently, foreign multinationals have provided primarily low-level employment for women workers, often paying them a minimum wage for

61 Ibid.

repetitive manual labor” and that “they rarely selected women for managerial or executive positions.”63 Today, however, intensified global competition is forcing firms to adopt new business strategies and, consequently, to develop new human resource strategies. These strategies are already beginning to have a profound positive impact on the managerial opportunities of Asian women and can be predicted to have an even greater positive impact in the future.64

Education and Training

Although modern Chinese women have learned to embrace self-development through education, the traditional values and structures in Chinese society continue to impede their development. Because of limited educational resources, political leaders normally give priority to male applicants. For instance, women who are interested in pursuing a career in engineering or a technological field have to obtain the approval of their political leaders to apply to universities or technical institutes to complete an education that would help them toward subsequent assignment as technical specialists.65

63 Adler, “Asian Women in Management,” 3
64 Ibid.
Many Chinese parents consider spending money on educating daughters “a poor investment” because daughters “usually leave their parents’ home after marrying, and they continue to receive lower wages and salaries than men.”\textsuperscript{66} With high unemployment rates and low demand for educated female workers, Chinese women’s education is viewed as” being much less important than a man's and of too high a cost.”\textsuperscript{67}

Chinese women also have unequal access to higher education and training, further impeding workplace equality.\textsuperscript{68} In 1990, “twice as many men as women were enrolled in post-secondary schools.”\textsuperscript{69} It was also reported that “women must score higher than men on entrance exams to gain admission.”\textsuperscript{70} Female college graduates “frequently experience discrimination in job assignments and interviews,” and they are often “encouraged to seek jobs traditionally considered suitable for women, such as teaching.”\textsuperscript{71} One example cites a Chinese University graduate with a degree in economics who decides to teach aerobics classes because “only her male peers received

\textsuperscript{66} Bulger, “Fighting Gender Discrimination in the Chinese Workplace,” 1

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
decent job offers; she complained that she was only offered secretarial positions.”

Unequal Pay

Chinese women “earn much less than men, for doing the same work,” according to one survey. It showed that “in the last 10 years the income gap between Chinese men and women has widened by 7.4 percent in the urban areas and 19.4 percent in the rural areas.” The study asserted that across thirty provinces, Chinese women “continue to work in lower paying jobs though their income levels have risen over the years” and that even in white-collar jobs, there was “gender disparity in the pay levels.” For instance, Chinese women executives were paid “59.9 percent of the salary their male colleagues get” and senior Chinese women professionals “earn only 68.3 percent.”

Bulger found that Chinese employers pay higher wages to men “because male employees’ work performances will be less affected by the

72 Ibid.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
demands of home and children.”77 One section head at a government agency stated:

I don’t advocate hiring women, they are too much trouble. They get married, get pregnant and have children, and after that it’s an endless round of domestic responsibilities. You can’t expect them to deal with any work matters at all. Anyone who is a leader doesn’t wish to have too many women working under him.78

**Family Planning in the Workplace**

Certain Chinese practices go beyond discrimination to the point of bordering on being violations of human rights.79 To alleviate social, economic, and environmental problems in China, the Chinese government introduced the one-child policy in 1979.80 The policy states that urban couples are permitted to have only one child, with certain exceptions made for rural couples, ethnic minorities, and parents without any siblings themselves.

The enormous burden of carrying out such a strict government policy puts many prohibitions on a woman’s opportunity to work and rise in the ranks

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77 Bulger, “Fighting Gender Discrimination in the Chinese Workplace,” 1

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Ibid.
of management.\textsuperscript{81} It is not uncommon for a female university graduate to interview for a government job and to be offered the position on the condition that she agree not to marry or have children for three years.\textsuperscript{82} The state also intrudes on women’s reproductive freedom by “telling them when they may have children” and “causing women to disproportionately bear the burden of population control policies.”\textsuperscript{83}

**Balancing Work and Home Life**

In spite of the factors hindering advancement, women managers in China still are able to balance work and home life responsibilities. In some instances, they do so better than their U.S. counterparts.\textsuperscript{84} In Asia, unlike in North America, almost all senior women managers have the assistance of live-in household help and an extended family, as well as grown-up children. For most Asian women executives, provisions for maternity leave and child care were not considered particularly important because the majority of those women had already raised their family and no longer had young children living at home. As one female executive responded to Adler’s query about

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{84} Korabik, "Managerial Women in the People’s Republic of China: The Long March Continues," 47
household, family, and child care arrangements, “I would not be at this senior a level unless I had a supportive husband, live-in household help, and grown-up children. Now I relax after a stressful day at work by going to my daughter’s home and playing with my grandchildren.”

The Chinese women executives in Adler’s research also emphasized, however, that most Asian female managers have access to many more social support systems than do the majority of their North American counterparts. As one Chinese woman partner in a major international accounting firm explained, “It was no problem when I had the twins, I just got two nannies.” Whereas such paid support personnel are beyond the reach of most American women workers, they are available to many of Chinese women managers and to almost all Chinese women executives.

With their strong social support systems in place, helping them with their household work and/or childcare, Chinese women managers also have better access to ensuring their children’s education and often have stronger relationships with their husbands. Most Chinese mother managers, in a study by Iiris, happily hired tutors to help with their children’s homework and talked

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85 Adler, "Asian Women in Management," 3
86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
about how supportive their husbands were. A few of them even pointed out that “their husbands were their mentors” in their career development and contributed much to their success.  

Although Chinese women executive do have a perceived advantage over their American counterparts in terms of social support systems, Iiris found that work and career development were usually a priority only when everything was going well in their “personal sphere.” If there were negative aspects to their personal lives, the issues of work and career were perceived as less important. Because in traditional China a woman’s role focused on family responsibilities (especially taking care of her parents and parents-in law, serving her husband, and educating the children), if a woman failed to take care of her family responsibilities, she would not be portrayed as an ideal woman no matter how successful she might be in her career life. This, in one way or another, continues to affect modern Chinese women’s attitudes to life, and there is a risk that a transformed identity may “cost her emotionally in her closest network.”


89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.
In addition to the balancing act of self vs. family, ISIS found that although it appears that Chinese women executives “have it all” in terms of child care and household help, in fact the lifestyle of most of the mother managers in this study was characterized by “little or no personal leisure time.” Chinese female managers spent as much of their leisure time as possible with their family “to enact their family role,” which is in stark contrast to American female managers, who often engage in outside socializing and networking.

**China’s Future**

A mixed society of feudal, socialist, and autocratic features describes the current state of China. While rampant globalization and industrialization continues to flourish, China remains a collectivist society with Confucian values. Despite a seemingly long-standing constitutional commitment to sexual equality, the Chinese Communist Party has neither successfully eliminated the remnants of feudal thinking nor implemented a viable feminist

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91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.


Belief in male superiority continues, despite radical social reorganization and constant ideological crusades aimed at its abolition. Narrow-minded views about the nature of women and men are still ever-present and often serve to bring about discrimination and keep women in inferior positions.\textsuperscript{96}

Recent political and economic changes in China will most likely both help and hinder the progress of Chinese women managers. Although the changes are opening up new economic opportunities for women, they neither appear to counteract the inequitable treatment that Chinese women often encounter in the work force nor facilitate Chinese women's ascendance into top-level positions.\textsuperscript{97}

On the brighter side, the dynamic entrepreneurialism of the region can be expected to continue to provide Chinese women with managerial opportunities, and the continued presence of many family-owned firms bodes well for the small but growing number of Chinese women executives. Increased educational opportunities have been seen, and whereas "more men


\textsuperscript{97} Korabik, "Managerial Women in the People's Republic of China: The Long March Continues," 47
than women in Hong Kong receive university degrees, 75 percent of those graduating in international business from one university are now women."\textsuperscript{98}

A combination of societal factors, such as increasing educational levels, the region's dynamic entrepreneurialism, and the continued influence of family-owned business enterprises, will be a factor in the continued march forward for Chinese women's rights. In the future, "there will be no shortage of cheap labor in Asia" but "there will be a serious shortage of educated, skilled people" thus positioning Chinese women well for more professional and managerial jobs.\textsuperscript{99}

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\textsuperscript{98} Adler, "Asian Women in Management," 3
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\textsuperscript{99} Korabik, "Managerial Women in the People's Republic of China: The Long March Continues," 47
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CHAPTER 3
OVERCOMING CULTURAL CHALLENGES

Many American businesses believe that the historic discrimination against local Chinese women managers is a valid basis for predicting American expatriate women’s success or failure as international managers. Almost three-quarters of human resource managers interviewed by Adler said that “foreigners are so prejudiced against women that women managers would not succeed if they were sent.”¹ Despite this, almost all the women managers’ (97 percent) reported that their international assignments in China were successful.

Not only were they mostly successful, their success rate was considerably higher than that of their American male expatriate colleagues. In light of their successes, most companies “promoted the women on the basis of their performance abroad,” and many “offered them other international assignments after the first one.”² And most of the firms, after experimenting with their first female international manager, decided to send other women abroad.³

¹ Adler, "Pacific Basin Managers: A Gaijin, Not a Woman," 169
² Ibid.
³ Ibid
Their success was not accomplished easily. American female expatriate managers face a multitude of cultural challenges associated with their assignments in China. Hong Kong can be expected to provide a very different type of working environment for Western expatriates; “cultural toughness” is very high.\(^4\) Despite long colonial rule and a plethora of foreign influences, Hong Kong remains fundamentally Chinese, and deep aspects of Chinese culture persist. There are often vast differences in Chinese organization and management practice, behavior, and style that may generate cross-cultural disjuncture in management situations involving expatriates and locals.\(^5\)

**Gender Related Chinese Challenges**

*Sexism in Chinese Society and Business*

A study by Westwood and Leung found that most female expatriate managers “had encountered some overt sexist or discriminatory behavior in Hong Kong, the severity of which varied considerably.”\(^6\) At least twelve made “explicit reference to such behavior in a clear work-related context,” either in

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\(^4\) ibid

\(^5\) Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64

\(^6\) Ibid.
“gender differentials in terms and conditions of employment or in recruitment
and selection procedures.”7

Most (58 percent) American women maintained that they had encountered some overt sexist or discriminatory behavior in Hong Kong, the severity of which varied considerably. Much of the sexism came from the behavior and comments of Chinese individuals, which “troubled some” but were merely seen as “irksome” by others.8 Many asserted that China, as a society, exhibited a higher level of “structural sexism/discrimination” but a lower level of “interpersonal and work-specific sexism/discrimination.”9 Others suggested that there was lower levels of sexism/discrimination in work settings than in the social context of their expatriate adjustment.10 Also suggested was that the Chinese “preference for some men to deal with other men” still existed.11

The general impression by the American female expatriates interviewed was that although the existence of sexism and discrimination in Chinese society was recognized, it was not seen to be such a problem in their work

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
domain, especially at the managerial level. About two-thirds “did not feel there were any specific barriers or resistances to American women in management” in China.\(^\text{12}\)

An interesting barrier that Chinese sexism posed to American female expatriates was the effect it had on their social lives. A number indicated dissatisfaction with their social lives, particularly single women. Many pointed to the difficulty of establishing good social relations in China, attributed by some to the transitory nature of the place, by others to the perceived coolness and social distance of the Chinese. Male-female relationships were seen as especially problematical both for the reasons above and because it was felt that many Western men were either married or not interested in Western women and that there was no perceived interest from local men. Such aspects of people’s personal lives are not irrelevant because non-work lives cannot be separated out from work lives.\(^\text{13}\)

In terms of business relations, local Chinese male managers were seen as “more open-minded and pragmatic” toward American female managers, which they attributed to the growing number of Chinese women in senior

\(^{12}\) Ibid.

\(^{13}\) Ibid.
positions in Chinese organizations.14 Despite the lack of severity of Chinese sexist behavior toward them, these women felt that “glass ceilings were still apparent” with respect to their gaining ground with Chinese locals and that although there may be increasing numbers of Chinese female managers, the “senior levels are still mostly occupied by men, with the strategic level being the ultimate barrier.”15

Although overt sexism still exists in China today, Chinese culture is highly pragmatic. Westwood asserts that the practical requirements of surviving in a tough environment seem capable of overriding ideological constraints.16 The exigencies of China’s remarkable economic development have required the increasingly full participation of not only Chinese women but also American expatriate women in the work force. Further, although a Chinese women’s realm is principally defined as the domestic one, families have always been considered as economic units to which women have been expected to make an economic contribution. The persistent patriarchal culture together with vigorous economic pragmatism go some way toward explaining

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
the apparently paradoxical treatment of American female expatriates who work in management in China.

**A Foreigner, Not a Woman**

Premier research supporting the findings that Chinese sexism toward American women is not as extreme as perceived was conducted by Adler. Her interviews revealed that both male and female managers working in Asia are perceived first and foremost as foreigners, or “gaijin.” As one American expatriate working in Hong Kong said, “I don’t feel discrimination in general from males. I feel a bit like an alien, separate completely, treated apart because I am foreign.”

Like their male colleagues, women expatriates are seen as foreigners, not as local people. A woman who is a foreigner (a gaijin) is not expected to act like the local women. Therefore, the cultural norms limiting the access of local women to managerial positions and responsibility do not apply to foreign women. Although women are the “culture bearers” in all societies, foreign women are not expected to assume the cultural roles that societies traditionally reserve for their own women.

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Local managers see women expatriates as foreigners who happen to be women, not as women who happen to be foreigners. The difference is crucial. Given the uncertainty involved in sending women managers on international assignments, our mistaken assumption about the greater salience of sex (female/male) over nationality (foreign/local) causes us to make false predictions concerning women’s potential to succeed as executives and managers in foreign countries.¹⁹

Both Adler and Westwood found that despite the perceived cultural obstacles of being a female expatriate manager, there was a strong consensus that being a woman sometimes created an advantage over male peers. Adler found that almost half of the women expatriates in her survey reported that being female was more an advantage than a disadvantage; only one in five found it to be primarily negative.²⁰ The most commonly mentioned advantage was greater “visibility” and a curiosity on the part of the Chinese, which led to greater access and to “simply being more noticed and remembered.”²¹

¹⁹ Ibid.
²⁰ Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy," 52
²¹ Westwood and Leung, "The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture," 64
Chinese clients were often “curious about women,” wanted to meet them, and remembered them after the first meeting.\footnote{Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy," 52}

Women also gained an advantage because of their interpersonal skills. Adler’s respondents found that the “local men can often talk more easily with them about a wider range of topics than with their male colleagues.”\footnote{Ibid.} Westwood found that this might prove later to be “problematic since it may imply the perceived low power of women or it may be another variant on not being taken seriously.”\footnote{Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64} A related view is that “people are more courteous and friendly towards women and less aggressive or abrasive.”\footnote{Ibid.} This makes business relations with female expatriates and meetings much “easier to deal with and control.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Women often receive special treatment not given to their male colleagues and also benefit from a “halo effect.”\footnote{Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy," 52} The Chinese local community is usually highly aware of how unusual it is for North American firms
to send women managers abroad. Local managers therefore assume that the women expatriates would not have been sent unless they are “the best.”\(^{28}\) One respondent in the Adler survey said, “There are many expatriate and foreign women in top positions here. If you are good at what you do, they accept you.”\(^{28}\) Another woman said that “there was some real shock when my female pilot friend came to work here. Female pilots are rare. But she was respected because she is an expatriate.”\(^{29}\)

Another perceived advantage, which is usually a subconscious decision, is that of sex appeal. Richard Stone surveyed female expatriate managers in China to identify factors that contributed to their success, and one surprising factor of his findings was that physical appearance often existed in the selection process for American women. American businesses felt that in China, “women can have a distinct advantage opening doors in Asia,” especially if they are “attractive with vivacious personalities.”\(^{30}\)

\(^{28}\) Ibid.

\(^{29}\) Wright, , 1

Gender-Neutral Chinese Challenges

Language Barriers

Language and communication difficulties, not surprisingly, were issues raised by the vast majority of female respondents in the Westwood study. A tiny minority spoke Cantonese, and although English language standards are quite high in Hong Kong, it was clearly felt that many problems arose because of language differences.\(^{31}\)

For American expatriates accustomed only to Western languages, Chinese proves to be an exceptionally difficult language to learn. Even those who often excel in learning new languages find that the Chinese language is very different from English and challenging to learn. Exacerbating the situation, China is a country with one office language, Chinese or “Han Yu,” but with thousands of local dialects. Thus, even those with Chinese language skills have difficulty communicating with their Chinese colleagues.\(^{32}\)

Chinese Communication Styles

Comprehending the differences between American and Chinese communication styles is crucial for women managers to succeed. Americans tend to use a direct communication style in which “yes” means “yes” and “no”

\(^{31}\) Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
means “no.” In China, however, a direct “no” would cause the person whose proposal is being rejected to lose face, so an indirect style of communication prevails. Thus, a nod of the head could mean either “yes” or “I hear you, but I disagree,” and silence does not necessarily imply consent.33

Knowing how to interpret indirect cues and nonverbal gestures is particularly important when working in China. As more-direct communicators, many women need to learn to distinguish the subtle ways of saying “no” in Chinese. For instance, “We will think this over again” (women kaolu, kaolu), “That is an interesting idea” (you yisi), or “It’s not very convenient” (bu tai fangbian) are actually indirect ways of saying “no,” and the Western businessperson should learn to recognize them and what they really mean.34

Learning how to maneuver through this language takes time and attention to indirect nonverbal cues. The Chinese complex character for “listen” comprises the ear, eye, and heart radicals, implying that listening uses not only the ears but also the heart and eyes. This is important for American women to

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34 Ibid.
keep in mind at a business meeting. Much can be missed in a meeting if the American manager fails to notice these subtle gestures.\(^{35}\)

*Workforce Differences*

One common stereotypical view of Chinese people is that they have a strong work ethic, are hard workers often working long hours, and have a high task commitment. Although Westwood respondents found these attributes to be true in their Chinese workforce, it was also found that Chinese people “work hard but not smart or effectively.”\(^{36}\) This posed a significant problem in properly crafting a conducive managerial style because the Chinese workers “may work late but come in late and take extended lunch breaks, have an impoverished notion of service and quality, cannot prioritize, and cannot distinguish between urgent and non-urgent issues.”\(^{37}\)

As one respondent in the Westwood study put it, “I was expecting the efficient working machine but I was disappointed; people may work long hours, but they are not as productive as in the West.” In American business, standing out in a crowd is imperative to being recognized and getting ahead, but

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

\(^{36}\) Westwood and Leung, "The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture," 64

\(^{37}\) Ibid.
Chinese workers are often “unwilling to take initiative” and are “risk-averse.” Respondents believed that they “lacked creativity and had no vision; they were inflexible, rule-bound, procedure-driven, and change-resistant.”

**The Importance of Authority and Organization**

As is common in collectivist societies, Chinese businessmen prefer to make decisions as a collective rather than as individuals. Westwood’s American female respondents found this aspect of the culture challenging and “seemed uncomfortable with the lack of open discussion, and with the ritualistic nature of meetings in which everything is decided in advance.” The “subtlety, implicitness, and indirectness of Chinese interpersonal style,” as well as the “social distance and aloofness,” were other aspects of Chinese culture that the respondents felt were challenging as well.

The inability of Chinese colleagues (especially subordinates) to question authority, or to confront and be confronted, was also widely mentioned by Westwood’s respondents as difficulties in their management. This Chinese cultural phenomenon is presumably linked to other traditional perceptions,
such as the pressure to maintain harmonious relations and an inclination toward compromise and conflict avoidance.\textsuperscript{42}

\textit{Face}

Another set of Chinese cultural issues concerned “face,” which is defined as “denoting an individual’s social position or prestige” and is gained by “successfully performing one or more specific social roles that are well recognized by others.”\textsuperscript{43} The Asian concept of face is similar to the Western concept of face, but it is far more important in most Asian countries. Chinese face is widely recognized as being of pressing significance in Chinese culture and in organizational contexts. Chinese businesspersons use various communication strategies to save face and give face, including indirectness, intermediaries, praising, requests, and shaming.\textsuperscript{44}

The collective nature of most Asian societies means that the loss of face affects not only the individual but also his or her family, village, or even country. If one member of a group loses face, the whole group loses face.\textsuperscript{45} Because face is associated with honor, dignity, and a deep sense of pride,

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Fox, "China’s Changing Culture and Etiquette," 1
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
causing someone to lose face, even if the offense was unintentional, could cause serious damage to a relationship.\textsuperscript{46}

It is important for American female expatriate managers to understand the Chinese concept of face because in China, “rank and hierarchy are more important than they are in most Western societies” and “sending someone of lower status to receive a high-ranking guest could cause the guest to lose face.”\textsuperscript{47} Even a seemingly innocent gesture such as seating someone of high rank inappropriately at a banquet, where guests are seated according to rank, “could damage that person’s sense of honor and dignity.”\textsuperscript{48} Thus, to succeed financially, it is very important for American managers to adapt to this tradition.

\textit{Guanxi Then and Now}

While the importance of Chinese networking of guanxi was discussed previously, it is becoming less important in twenty-first century Chinese business. This is good news for both Chinese women and American female expatriates because as the closed doors of previously imperative closed networks are slowly starting to open, chances are increasing steadily for the success and mobility of female managers.

\textsuperscript{46} Westwood and Leung, "The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture," 64

\textsuperscript{47} Fox, "China’s Changing Culture and Etiquette," 1

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Because China’s “Generation Y”—people age 35 and under, particularly in urban centers—spent their formative years in a vastly different society, their focus has shifted from the group to the individual. These young urbanites are “more likely to put their own careers and nuclear families before their extended families or communities.”\textsuperscript{49} As a result of the one-child policy, most members of this generation are only children, raised without siblings but with incredible pressure to succeed and become rich.

Thus, although it is essential for foreign businesspeople to have a deep understanding of face, guanxi, and the more subtle aspects of Chinese culture when meeting with older Chinese colleagues, those concepts are slightly less important when interacting with younger urbanites. Also, new female networks are emerging, and while male networks are typically viewed as “tight and exclusionary,” female networks are increasingly viewed particularly positively, being seen as “active, supportive, and valuable.”\textsuperscript{50}

The rising importance of sound business principles and credentials are making it easier for American female expatriate managers to accomplish things without relying exclusively on guanxi connections in contemporary China. As

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50} Westwood and Leung, "The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture," 64
China’s shift toward the rule of law weakens the need for guanxi, it is allowing more American women to accomplish their business objectives in China.51

**Overcoming Cultural Issues**

Overcoming Chinese cultural issues is essential to American female expatriate managers’ success in their international assignments and thus encouraging American businesses to send more women managers abroad. To accomplish goals and succeed, most respondents of Westwood’s study worked longer hours at a faster, harder pace, took more care in communicating and explaining things to their Chinese colleagues, took extra care to be sensitive to “face” problems, and developed more tolerance and patience toward sexist behaviors.52

The most commonly referenced stylistic change, however, was in the overall interpersonal style. Many suggested that they needed to “tone down their normal style so as not to be perceived as abrasive, direct, and confrontational, and to cultivate a more restrained, indirect, and accommodating style.”53 Perhaps as part of this accommodation, a number also said that they “felt it necessary to focus on building up relationships, being

51 Fox, “China’s Changing Culture and Etiquette,” 1

52 Westwood and Leung, “The Female Expatriate Manager Experience: Coping with Gender and Culture,” 64

53 Ibid.
diplomatic, and maintaining harmony within their units.⁵⁴ Thus, by making slight and sometimes drastic changes in their managerial style, they were able to successfully accomplish their assignment goals.

⁵⁴ Ibid.
CHAPTER 4
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations

Selection

By seeing through gender and looking at qualifications, companies can recruit the right person for the job. In order for American businesses to create a competitive advantage over their foreign counterparts, it is necessary for them to send their best people overseas to conquer and infiltrate a new market.

Because the vast majority of American businesses target mostly male managers and executives, companies can gain a competitive advantage by differentiating themselves from the majority and actively recruiting women. In China’s highly competitive, fully employed economies, “the cost of prejudice is becoming just too high to limit selection to men.”

- American businesses should not assume that women managers are not interested in international assignments and actively seek out and advertise their international opportunities abroad.

- American businesses should not confuse the role of manager with that of mother. Just because a female employee is committed to her family does not mean she will be any less committed to her career.

- American women are not Chinese women. Understanding that local Chinese cultural standards for behavior and role do not necessarily affect the treatment of American females is imperative.

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1 Adler, "Women Managers in a Global Economy," 52
• The proof is in the pudding. Most research studying Western female expatriate managers working in China shows that female success rates far outweigh the rates of their male counterparts. If more women are sent abroad, further studies can be conducted to fully investigate the personality and managerial traits of a successful expatriate manager.

Preparation

• Intercultural training on Chinese cultural norms, values, and traditions with regard to Chinese women and Chinese female managers is imperative to provide female expatriates with realistic expectations for interpreting host nationals’ behavior toward the female expatriates. Training female expatriate managers to interpret such behavior from foreign colleagues as a reaction to a new, ambiguous, and unexpected situation, not as necessarily an expression of prejudice, will allow fewer communication issues and misunderstandings. This will allow them to adapt their management style and excel in social and business situation.

• A happy family equals a happy employee. Family preparedness is just as important as that of the individuals being sent abroad. By looking at the happiness and success of the whole family, American businesses can create a blanket insurance policy on the success of their female expatriate.

  o American businesses need to consider the career needs of the male spouses of female expatriates. Every effort should be made to secure their foreign working permits and employment opportunities in China. High-powered women most often have equally talented and intelligent spouses. Companies should not overlook the capabilities that the male spouses of their female expatriates could add to their corporate value.

  o The overall adjustment of the children of female expatriates should be considered vital to American businesses. By providing Chinese cultural activities an American-based education, and social networks with other American children and families for families with children, companies can create a culturally enriching experience for the whole family, rather than typical childcare support often provided.
**Assignment**

American businesses should assume that selecting and assigning female managers will work. Positive thinking is an incredible force, and by giving female expatriate managers the same scope and length of assignments as their male peers, American businesses can stop the vicious cycle of setting their women managers up for failure.

- American businesses should create perceptions of competence, status, and authority for female expatriates on assignment in China. By giving women their full status at the outset of their assignment and banishing even the slightest hint that their position is a temporary or experimental assignment, companies can communicate their commitment to female expatriates not only to the local Chinese managers but also to their American male colleagues.

- It should be conveyed to all American male expatriate colleagues that when local Chinese colleagues and clients initially direct their comments to male managers, they should explain to them the status of their female colleague and direct conversations and decisions to the new female expatriate during their first meeting with her. They should not accept such behavior.

**Support**

Companies must be aware of how status is conveyed in China and create a support network for female expatriates that is consistent with high status.

- For an American female manager in China to be successful, she must have autonomy and direct access to her superiors back home.

- Her job title should be consistent with a high position of power in China to create a positive perception among Chinese managers.
• Companies should provide an in-country mentor to provide guidance for matters of protocol. A mentor can help a female expatriate determine appropriate ways to project an image of competence, authority, and trustworthiness and avoid perceptions of low managerial status.

**Conclusion**

Because of the inherent Chinese cultural stereotypes of women as managers and the extraordinary growth of business opportunities in today’s global marketplace, expatriate assignments in China represent an exceptional challenge for American female managers. By eliminating selection discrimination policies based on misconceptions rather than evidence, increasing effective pre-departure training and in-country support for the whole family, and supporting American female expatriate managers while on assignment in China, companies can create a competitive edge and ensure the success of their employees abroad. By actively engaging in enthusiastic efforts to revitalize selection, training, growth, and support of female managers, American businesses will not only enhance the effectiveness and success of their organizational performance but live up to the principles of equal opportunity our country stands by.


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