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**Interaction of gender, mentoring, and power distance on career attainment:
A cross-cultural comparison**
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Interaction of gender, mentoring, and power distance on career attainment: A cross-cultural comparison

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Abstract
This article examines how demographics (gender) and cultural values (power distance) differentially moderate the relationship between mentoring (mentor presence) and career attainment (compensation and organizational position) among 390 managers and professionals in two contrasting cultures (Taiwan versus the USA). The four-way interaction of *gender x mentor x power distance x country* was significant for both dependent variables, supporting our hypotheses based on theories of power distance and gender egalitarianism. In hierarchical cultures such as Taiwan's, mentored women with high power distance reported higher career returns than did mentored women with low power distance. In contrast, in egalitarian cultures such as the USA's, mentored women with low power distance reported higher career returns than did mentored women with high power distance. Our findings demonstrate variation in mentoring outcomes, not just across, but also within, cultures for men and women. We discuss results along with implications for mentoring and cross-cultural theory, research, and practice.

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Introduction

Mentoring–career attainment relationships could differ as a function of individual and contextual variables. There is growing recognition in mentoring theory of the cultural contexts within which mentoring relationships operate (Carraher et al., 2008). Yet, we do not have a complete understanding of whether the facilitators or inhibitors of effective mentoring relationships, and the influence of mentoring on career outcomes, vary across cultures. Neither has the mainstream mentoring literature, nor have the few studies that have used Asian data (e.g. Aryee and Chay, 1994; Aryee et al., 1996), examined the role of cultural values in the career success of mentored men and women. Consequently, we do not know whether or how cultural factors affect mentoring dynamics or outcomes.

This article, therefore, addresses recent calls for mentoring research to use data from contrasting cultures where mentoring dynamics are studied within the backdrop of cultural context (Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Acknowledging that culture needs to be understood at both individual and societal levels (Tsui et al., 2007), in our comparison of mentoring among 390 employees in Taiwan and the USA we specifically ask the question: *How does power distance influence the relationship between mentoring and career attainment for men and women in different cultures?* We examine interactions of gender, mentoring, individual-level power distance, and country on career success indicators, such as compensation and organizational position (Ng et al., 2005). Contextualizing this interaction in contrasting cultures such as Taiwan and the USA makes important theoretical and empirical contributions to the literature.

Power distance is the extent to which a society expects and accepts unequal distribution of power (Hofstede, 2001). Power distance is relevant because it defines the nature of relationships and authority structures in traditional hierarchical Asian/Chinese cultures (Farh et al., 1997) that could influence mentor–protégé interactions and outcomes (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008; Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). The importance of gender and its implications for power dynamics in mentoring (Ragins, 1989, 1999; Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989) cannot be ignored. Power distance and gender assume increased significance as sociocultural variables that influence asymmetric role expectations and employee relationships. By focusing on power distance and gender, we also acknowledge the individual-level intracultural variation in values associated with the larger society (Au, 1999; Tsui et al., 2007; Tung, 2008). The study, thus, highlights person-situation interactions and the significance of cultural context in predicting outcomes of mentoring.

In essence, the study provides a culture-specific perspective on power distance and mentoring, rooted in the cultural orientations of the countries and samples examined, enabling us to know whether, where, and for whom hierarchical attitudes and traditional gender expectations might still play a role in how authority relationships such as mentoring influences career outcomes. Our central thesis is that: a) to attain mentoring benefits, aligning oneself with cultural expectations may be more important for mentored women than for mentored men; and b) how power distance moderates the career returns to mentoring for men and women may be a function of the cultural characteristics of the country they are working in.

The study also extends the sampling frame of mentoring research. The literature on mentoring and career attainment in the USA has already been extensively summarized in reviews and meta-analyses. Mentoring is associated with employee sponsorship and

career progress (Allen et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2008; Ng et al., 2005). However, a review of the literature suggests that we know little about mentoring and career attainment in Asian countries − we found just four studies (none using data from Taiwan; Aryee and Chay, 1994; Aryee et al., 1996; Dreher and Ryan, 2004; Gentry et al., 2008). Aryee and Chay (1994) showed that career satisfaction was higher among Singaporean employees with mentors compared to those without mentors. Aryee et al. (1996) found that, among Hong Kong Chinese professionals, career-oriented mentoring was positively related to promotions received and career satisfaction, but not to salary attainment. Although their study was conducted in the USA, Dreher and Ryan (2004) found that mentoring had no association with career attainment among Asian-Americans. While these were among the first studies to include Asian or Asian-American samples in mentoring research, they did not empirically test for moderating effects of demographic or cultural variables on mentoring-outcome relationships. An exception is Gentry et al.'s (2008) study using data from the Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness project that included Asian samples from China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand. They found that the positive relationship between managers' provision of career-related mentoring (rated by direct reports) and bosses' ratings of the managers' performance was stronger in countries that scored higher in performance orientation than in countries that scored lower in performance orientation. Their study focused on mentors' outcomes (and not protégés') and did not measure cultural values at the individual level. In sum, the literature on mentoring and protégé career attainment presents gaps in understanding the role of cultural values in such relationships, motivating us to probe this area.

With increasing globalization and international business relations, Taiwan is becoming an interesting geographical area, earning the reputation of being the 'hidden center of the global economy,' having risen to its current status through the confluence of western technical education and eastern values (*Business Week*, 2005). Despite Taiwan's economic and cultural changes, it still cherishes traditional values (Farh et al., 1997). Being representative of Chinese cultures, Confucian values pervade the Taiwanese way of life, which has traditionally been a high power distance culture (Bond and Hwang, 1987; Hofstede, 2001). Taiwan also represents a unique population that while being high on power distance now has a new generation of professionals who have been influenced by globalization, modernization, and industrialization, and thus moved to assimilate western culture and values (Yu and Miller, 2003). Due to these socio-economic forces, there might be individual differences in cultural values despite nationalistic cultural trends. This mix of traditionality and modernity makes Taiwan an interesting setting to explore the role of power distance in mentoring. Since Taiwan and the USA are cultural contrasts − for example, Taiwan scores higher on power distance and collectivism, and lower on gender egalitarianism than the USA (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004) − comparing them would provide insights into potential cultural differences in mentoring-outcome relationships.

Finally, employee development efforts may be enhanced if managers knew how and where mentoring phenomena are universal or culture-specific. Current research sheds little light on such factors. Studying the interactive effects of gender, mentoring, and power distance on career attainment can be invaluable in dealing with gender and

cultural diversity especially for organizations that have international employees and global operations.

Theory and hypotheses

We draw on the cultural theory of power distance (Hofstede, 2001) and a related concept of gender egalitarianism (House et al., 2004) to explain how normative expectations from men and women could be different but the career-related consequences of deviance − especially by women − from these expectations could be similar across cultures. Power distance is particularly important as it signals the inequality and power dynamics between social groups. In the context of understanding gender differences, it is pertinent to consider also the cultural characteristic of gender egalitarianism − the extent to which a society minimizes gender-role inequality and discrimination, and determines men's and women's roles in their homes, organizations, and communities (House et al., 2004).

Power distance and gender egalitarianism complement each other in describing the hierarchical culture of a society. Both variables capture underlying inequality between various traditionally hierarchical groups and classes, such as superior and subordinate, old and young, and man and woman. This is particularly relevant when considering Chinese Confucian societies, such as Taiwan, where inequality and hierarchy between social groups and classes is expected and accepted (Farh et al., 1997; House et al., 2004). In a sense, power distance and gender egalitarianism are intertwined in such contexts, especially on dimensions of status, hierarchy, and equality. Power distance also correlates negatively with gender egalitarianism. Indeed, 'high egalitarianism predominates in low power distance cultures. Low egalitarianism, in contrast, predominates in high power distance cultures' (Gudykunst and Lee, 2003: 20). Gender egalitarianism, therefore, adds further theoretical explanatory power for expecting gender differences between Taiwan and the USA, as it may qualify the interaction of gender, power distance, and mentoring on career attainment. The configurations of an individual's level of power distance and the level of power distance and gender egalitarianism attributed to a culture may result in different consequences of mentoring for men and women.

Due to conservative values and stereotypic sex-roles being more prevalent in low gender egalitarian, high power distant cultures such as Taiwan, than in high gender egalitarian, low power distant western cultures such as the USA (House et al., 2004), we suggest that high power distance (individual level) may be more important for positive career returns from mentoring for women than for men in Taiwan, and low power distance (individual level) may be more important for positive career returns from mentoring for women than for men in the USA.

This is because managers' assumptions and expectations of their employees are influenced by the socio-cultural environment (Aycan et al., 1999). In Taiwan's cultural context, relationships with superiors may be based on respect, deference, and fear, and decisions that have organizational and employee consequences are made by superiors without subordinates' consultation (Silin, 1976). In Taiwan, superiors at all levels may prefer to maintain interpersonal as well as professional distance between themselves and subordinates, and considerable formalism is expected and maintained in authority relationships. Such formalism, respect, and fear are normative expectations about interactions between a superior

and a subordinate, and more so for women than for men due to low gender egalitarianism and clear and distinct gender roles (Gupta et al., 2002; Hofstede, 2001). Thus, in Taiwan, women, more than men, would be expected to be modest, less assertive, and more deferential and power distant. Female protégés' attempts at creating an informal atmosphere may be interpreted by superiors as efforts to convert authority relationships into those of equality or friendship, thereby undercutting superiors' or the culture's prerogatives (Silin, 1976). Socialization, sexist ideologies, and social roles (Eagly et al., 2004) may sustain such gender inequality. Thus, while power distance may be expected from protégés, Taiwan's cultural context may also demand that women display more of this value than do men.

However, in the context of workplace interactions in a relatively more egalitarian and less power distant culture such as the USA, women's demonstration of so-called masculine traits of non-submissiveness, confidence, and assertiveness − characteristic of low power distance − signal women's legitimacy and fit in the workplace (Hoobler et al., 2009), in line with 'Think Manager Think Male,' the masculine stereotypes associated with leadership (Eagly and Carli, 2007). Consequently, low power distant women signal better fit to mentors and decision makers for managerial roles in the American workplace and, thus, are likely to have higher career attainment.

On the other hand, high power distant women may be less likely to be perceived as ready for managerial roles (e.g. Eagly and Carli, 2007), and consequently report lower career attainment.

Thus, mentors in both Taiwan and the USA may be attentive, and therefore have a negative reaction, to women's violations of power distance norms. That is, regardless of whether one is in Taiwan or the USA, the positive relationship between mentoring and career attainment would be stronger for women who display the normatively expected levels of power distance than for women who do not. In Taiwan, high power distance in women improves their returns from mentoring because only high power distant women (in contrast to low power distant women) conform to cultural norms; the opposite may hold for women in the USA. Consequently, mentors may be comfortable with the relationship and senior-level decision makers may be willing to promote 'culturally right-type' women subordinates, particularly if they are being sponsored by a mentor. Our argument is that female protégés with cultural alignment on power distance will be viewed as behaving appropriately and that such cultural alignment is required before women in Taiwan or the USA will reap mentoring benefits. Thus, we offer the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Gender, mentoring, power distance, and country have a significant interaction on compensation. Among women in high power distant cultures (Taiwan), the positive association between mentoring and compensation will increase as individual power distance increases, while in low power distance cultures (USA), this positive association will increase as individual power distance decreases. Among men (in both cultures), there will be a positive association between mentoring and compensation that will not be sensitive to individual levels of power distance.

Hypothesis 2: Gender, mentoring, power distance, and country have a significant interaction on organizational position. Among women in high power distant cultures (Taiwan), the positive association between mentoring and organizational position will increase as

individual power distance increases, while in low power distance cultures (USA), this positive association will increase as individual power distance decreases. Among men (in both cultures), there will be a positive association between mentoring and organizational position that will not be sensitive to individual levels of power distance.

Because these hypotheses consider the interactive effects of gender, cultural values (cultural power distance, gender egalitarianism), individual-level power distance, and mentoring, testing for the significance of four-way interaction terms will be the focus of subsequent analyses.

Method

Sample and procedure

US data were collected from alumni and part-time MBA students at a large public university, and also from employees of an industrial manufacturing company. Completed questionnaires were returned to a university address in the USA in stamped, pre-addressed return envelopes or emailed directly to the first author. Two weeks later, all sample members were sent reminders requesting their participation. The total number of surveys received was 225 (10.66% response rate). All respondents were employed full time. The analysis sample's mean respondent age was 35.58 years, 42 percent were male, average years of work experience was 11.57, and 60 percent had a graduate degree. Taiwan data were collected through a survey of graduates of a Taiwanese university. Respondents' completed questionnaires were returned to a university address in Taiwan in stamped, pre-addressed return envelopes. With reminder letters sent approximately three weeks after the original mailing, we received 293 questionnaires (15% response rate). Since all US respondents worked full time, part-time employees were deleted from the Taiwanese sample resulting in 232 cases. Mean respondent age was 41.14 years, 59 percent were male, average years of work experience was 17.07, and 34 percent had a graduate degree. In both samples, respondents were employed in a variety of industries.

The low response rates may be attributed to the use of primarily postal surveys to alumni (majority of the final US sample). We did not find serious response bias. For example, for the US sample, with respect to sex (the only demographic data easily available for all sample members) − 52 percent of those contacted were male, compared with the 41.89 percent of males in the final respondent sample. While there is an underrepresentation of males in the final US respondent sample, it is unlikely to bias results. For Taiwan, the gender composition (59% male) and average age (41.34 years) of the respondent sample were comparable with those of the initial survey sample, which was 60.99 percent male with a mean respondent age of 43.46 years. US respondents represented 42 percent of the combined US and Taiwan sample.

Measures

For the Taiwanese sample, the survey was translated from English into Chinese by the second author and back-translated by another bilingual Chinese researcher unassociated with the study to ensure item equivalence.

Compensation. We gathered data on total annual cash compensation (salary, commission income, supplemental cash compensation, excluding benefits or indirect compensation). For the US sample, 12 categories beginning with '$50,000 and below' coded as 1, with $20,000 increments were used (the last category being '$251,001 and above,' coded as 12). Salary in Taiwan was measured in Taiwanese dollars. To make the Taiwanese and US salary data comparable, we performed the following transformation: we converted salaries from Taiwanese dollars to US dollars based on purchasing power parity (Center for International Comparisons of Production, Income, and Prices, 2009), and assigned cases to their respective salary category from 1 to 12, as measured for the US sample. Given this coding system, the distributional problems associated with salary data are minimized.

Organizational position. Respondents indicated their hierarchical position in their organization using the following scale: 1) Professional-technical/non-managerial position, 2) Manager, 3) Director, 4) Vice president, and 5) Senior-level executive (e.g. CEO, operating-company president, executive VP, CFO, COO, etc.).

Country. US respondents were coded as 1, and Taiwanese respondents as 0.

Gender. Men were coded as 1, and women as 0.

Mentor yes/no. We defined mentoring and asked respondents to indicate whether they had experienced, in their careers to date, such a relationship. Respondents provided information about the person they considered to be their primary mentor and about the nature of this mentoring relationship. Following previous mentoring research, we defined a mentor as a senior, experienced individual with advanced experience and knowledge who is committed to providing upward mobility and support to the respondent's career. Recent research also suggests that mentoring is described similarly in Taiwan, and other Asian countries, compared with the USA (e.g. Hu et al., 2011; Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). Protégés were coded 1 and others as 0. Seventy-one percent of mentors were internal mentors (within the same organization as the protégé) and 83.1 percent of the mentoring relationships had a duration of at least one year (only 7.7% had a duration of less than six months, and 61.7% had a duration of more than two years), allowing opportunity and time for the anticipated benefits of mentoring to occur.

Power distance. This was measured at the individual level of analysis, avoiding the problem of levels confusion and ecological fallacy (Hofstede, 2001). We used a five-item measure by Yoo and Donthu (2002), rated on a five-point scale by the Taiwanese sample (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*), and a seven-point scale by the US sample (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). We rescaled the Taiwanese five-point scale to a seven-point scale (by multiplying the score on each item by 7/5), to adjust for the different rating scales used and potential response bias (Colman et al., 1997; Van de Vijver and Leung, 1997). A representative item includes – 'People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.' Full sample α = .73, Taiwan sample α = .63, and US sample α = .67. The mean for the Taiwanese sample (*M* =

2.90, SD = .83) was significantly higher (t = -13.22, p <.001) than that of the US sample (M = 1.90, SD = .75).

We examined measurement invariance (configural and metric) of this construct using multi-group (Taiwan versus USA) confirmatory factor analysis in LISREL 8.8. Apart from the chi-square, other well-accepted indices such as non-normed fit index (NNFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) were used to judge model fit. While the chi-square of the configural invariance model was significant (χ^2 = 20.52, d.f. = 10, p < .05), other indices indicated adequate fit (NNFI = .95; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .07). Item loadings were significant at minimum p < .01 in both samples. The metric invariance model was then run with all item loadings constrained to be equal across both groups (χ^2 = 39.50, d.f. = 15, p < .001, NNFI = .91, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .09). Item loadings were again significant at minimum p < .01. These results suggest that item loadings can be reasonably assumed to be invariant across samples.

Control variables. Given the difficulties in perfectly matching samples from different cultures, Schaffer and Riordan (2003) suggest that researchers should statistically control for non-culture related demographic and work-related variables as a 'best-practice' approach for establishing sample equivalence and comparability. To the extent that such demographic and work-related characteristics of the Taiwanese and US samples are controlled for, there should be more confidence in attributing cultural differences between countries in hypothesized relationships to theoretical dimensions of interest than to alternative explanations or extraneous factors.

We introduced six control variables that could co-vary with both mentoring and career attainment. First we included years of *work experience* and *graduate degree* (1 = any type of graduate degree, including MBA, 0 = undergraduate degree) as controls. We reasoned that human capital accumulation (Becker, 1975), including one's professional experiences, would be sensitive to one's educational qualifications. Research suggests that educational qualifications may signal potential when allocating developmental resources (Whitely et al., 1992), and that mentors are more likely to choose protégés and provide mentoring based on the perceptions of the protégés competence, ability, and potential rather than need for help (Allen et al., 2000; Mullen and Noe, 1999). Training and educational level of employees may also signal increasing commitment to the career or organization. Highly educated employees may have more opportunities to get promoted or move geographically to another organization site (Higgins et al., 1992). Age and work-experience were highly correlated (full sample r = .85, Taiwan sample r = .88, US sample r = .77); so, we did not add age as an additional control.

Developmental opportunities and career outcomes cannot be fully understood without considering work-life or non-work variables (Powell and Mainiero, 1992). In one study, managers' perceptions of female subordinates' person-job fit and person-organization fit mediated the relationship between managers' perceptions of these women's work–family conflict (whether or not such conflict actually existed) and their nominations for promotion and manager-assessed promotability (Hoobler et al., 2009). In another study, managers perceived receiving the most benefits by mentoring, and were more inclined to mentor, married men and single women (Olian et al., 1993). Given such evidence, we

constructed a dummy coding sequence for family status such that those who were *married with children* (a 0-1 code) and *married without children* (also, a 0-1 code) were contrasted with all other respondents.

Recent meta-analytical reviews (e.g. Ng et al., 2005) note the importance of considering individual difference variables in predicting different career outcomes. Therefore, we included *hours worked per week* as a control as it may be a proxy for personality traits and career priority that signal one's drive and motivation to be involved in one's job and succeed in one's career (Turban and Dougherty, 1994; Whitely and Coetsier, 1993; Whitely et al., 1991).

Previous research suggests that career success and dynamics of mentoring relationships may be influenced by organizational structure and environmental variables (e.g. Bozionelos, 2004; Ramaswami et al., 2010). Since data were gathered from individuals in multiple industries, we wanted to control for macro-level organizational context effects. Those in *service* industries (coded 1) were contrasted with those in other industry positions (coded 0).

Analyses and results

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics and correlations among analysis variables separately for the Taiwanese and US samples. Descriptive statistics and correlations for the full sample are provided in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, among the independent and control variables, all correlations were below .30, except that between *married without children* and *married with children* ($r = -.62$), *work experience* and *married with children* ($r = .37$), *work experience* and *country* ($r = -.37$), and *power distance* and *country* ($r = -.51$). Variance inflation factor (VIF) values for each independent variable revealed no problems of multicollinearity.

We used ordinary least squares (OLS) moderated multiple regression to test the four-way interaction hypotheses. Power distance was standardized before creating the interaction terms. Table 3 presents the regression results. The cross-product term for *gender × mentor × power distance × country* was introduced last, after all control and independent variables, two-way interaction terms, and three-way interaction terms had been entered. *Gender × mentor × power distance × country* was significant for compensation ($\beta = .36$, $p < .05$) and organizational position ($\beta = .53$, $p < .01$). For compensation, significant main effects were *work experience* ($\beta = .17$, $p < .001$), *hours worked per week* ($\beta = .21$, $p < .001$), *service industry* ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$), *mentor* ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$), *gender* ($\beta = .15$, $p < .01$), and *country* ($\beta = .43$, $p < .001$). The two significant two-way interaction terms were *gender × country* ($\beta = .24$, $p < .01$) and *mentor × country* ($\beta = .28$, $p < .01$). For organizational position, significant main effects were *work experience* ($\beta = .22$, $p < .001$), *hours worked per week* ($\beta = .15$ $p < .001$), and *mentor* ($\beta = .14$, $p < .01$). Two- and three-way interaction terms were not significant.

For each country, we plotted graphs of solved equations for the interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance* on compensation using unstandardized regression coefficients, using data from cases between 10th and 90th percentile of compensation (for Taiwan, $n = 219$; for USA, $n = 171$). Figures support the hypothesized direction of the *gender × mentor × power distance* interaction in both countries. In Taiwan (Figures 1 and 2), having high

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations for Taiwanese and US samples separately.

Taiwan sample

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Married without children [a]	.09	.28										
2	Married with children [a]	.76	.43	-.55**									
3	Work experience	17.02	6.80	-.22**	.39**								
4	Hours worked per week	48.78	8.56	-.03	.00	-.03							
5	Graduate degree [a]	.34	.47	-.01	-.01	-.06	.07						
6	Service industry [a]	.52	.50	-.03	.08	.01	.01	.00					
7	Mentor yes/no [a]	.44	.50	.09	-.05	-.04	-.01	.05	-.10				
8	Gender [b]	.58	.49	-.04	.21**	.24**	.19**	.11	-.09	-.10			
9	Power distance	2.87	.83	-.03	.06	.01	.03	-.04	-.05	.03	.02		
10	Compensation	1.76	1.35	.01	.11	.35**	-.03	.02	-.08	.07	.18**	-.12	
11	Organizational position	1.83	1.11	-.03	.14*	.28**	.16*	.04	-.13	.11	.20**	-.10	.53**

US sample

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	Married without children [a]	.28	.45										
2	Married with children [a]	.51	.50	-.64**									
3	Work experience	11.66	6.29	-.12	.19*								
4	Hours worked per week	43.65	11.59	.02	-.07	.10							
5	Graduate degree [a]	.60	.49	-.06	-.01	.07	.11						
6	Service industry [a]	.61	.49	.07	-.11	-.03	-.05	.22**					
7	Mentor yes/no [a]	.74	.44	-.07	.01	-.07	.06	.21**	-.01				
8	Gender [b]	.42	.50	-.14	.13	.23**	.26**	.10	-.05	.14			
9	Power distance	1.93	.73	-.16*	.04	.04	.10	.00	.05	.08	-.05		
10	Compensation	3.16	2.61	-.18*	.21*	.17*	.40**	.13	-.18*	.22**	.35**	.10	
11	Organizational position	1.94	1.18	-.04	.05	.17*	.18*	.08	-.04	.14	.12	.03	.35**

Note: Taiwan $n = 219$, USA $n = 161$ (list–wise deletion). [a] 1 = Yes, 0 = No, [b] 1 = Male, 0 = Female.* $p < .05$,** $p < .01$ (two–tailed).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics and correlations for the full sample.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Married without children [a]	.17	.37											
2 Married with children [a]	.66	.48	-.62**										
3 Work experience	14.75	7.10	-.24**	.37**									
4 Hours worked per week	46.61	10.26	-.06	.03	.12*								
5 Graduate degree [a]	.45	.50	.03	-.08	-.10*	.02							
6 Service industry [a]	.56	.50	.05	-.03	-.04	-.05	.11*						
7 Mentor yes/no [a]	.57	.50	.08	-.10	-.16**	-.06	.18**	-.03					
8 Gender [b]	.52	.50	-.13*	.21**	.27**	.25**	.06	-.09	-.05				
9 USA versus Taiwan [c]	.42	.49	.25**	-.26**	-.37**	-.25**	.26**	.10	.30**	-.16**			
10 Power distance	2.47	.91	-.21**	.18**	.20**	.17**	-.15**	-.06	-.11*	.07	-.51**		
11 Compensation	2.35	2.10	-.03	.07	.08	.15**	.16**	-.09	.23**	.20**	.33**	-.16**	
12 Organizational position	1.88	1.14	-.02	.08	.19**	.15**	.07	-.08	.13**	.15**	.05	-.07	.40**

Note: $N = 380$ (list-wise deletion). [a] 1= Yes, 0 = No, [b] 1= Male, 0 = Female, [c] 1 = USA, 0 = Taiwan. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

Table 3. OLS regression results for *gender × mentor × power distance × country*.

Variable	Compensation[a]	Organizational position[a]
Married without children	−.02	.03
Married with children	.09	.06
Work experience	.17***	.22***
Hours worked per week	.21***	.15***
Graduate degree	.04	.03
Service industry	−.10*	−.06
Mentor yes/no	.14**	.14**
Gender	.15**	.07
Country	.43***	.11
Power distance	−.02	−.07
R^2, ΔF	.28, 14.38***	.11, 4.93***
Gender × Country	.24**	−.11
Mentor × Country	.28**	.13
Mentor × Gender	.03	.05
Gender × Power distance	.06	−.03
Mentor × Power distance	.11	.10
Country × Power distance	.12	.05
R^2, ΔF	.32, 3.74***	.13, .74
Gender × Country × Power distance	.14	.17
Mentor × Country × Power distance	.03	−.09
Gender × Mentor × Power distance	.03	.11
Gender × Mentor × Country	.11	.25
R^2, ΔF	.32	.14, 1.71
Gender × Mentor × Country × Power distance	.36*	.53**
R^2, ΔF	.33, 4.38*	.16, 7.75**

Note: *N* = 387–390 (list–wise deletion). [a] Standardized beta weights. *p < .05, **p < .01 (two–tailed).
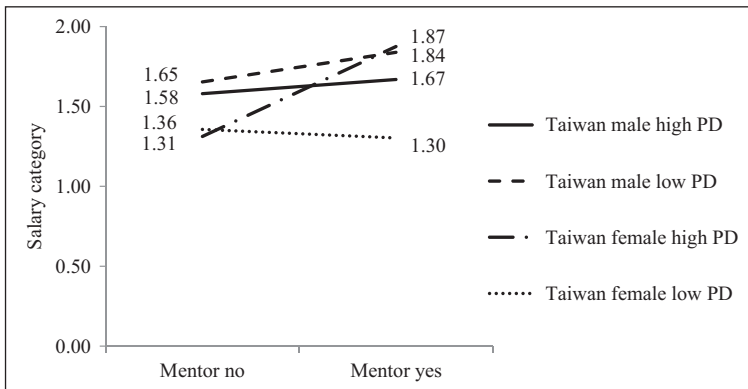
Figure 1. Three-way interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance* on compensation for the Taiwanese sample.
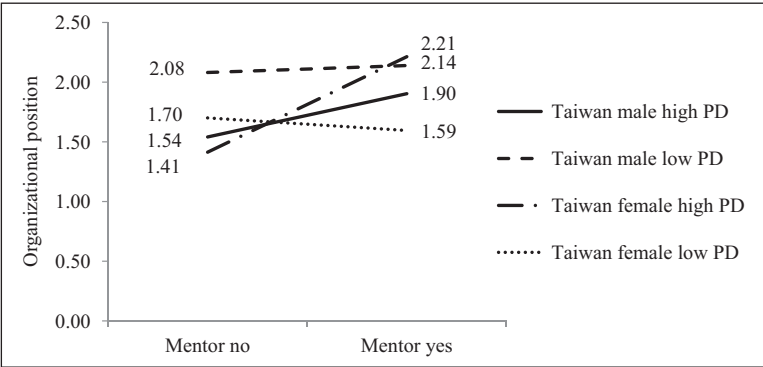
Figure 2. Three-way interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance* on organizational position for the Taiwanese sample.
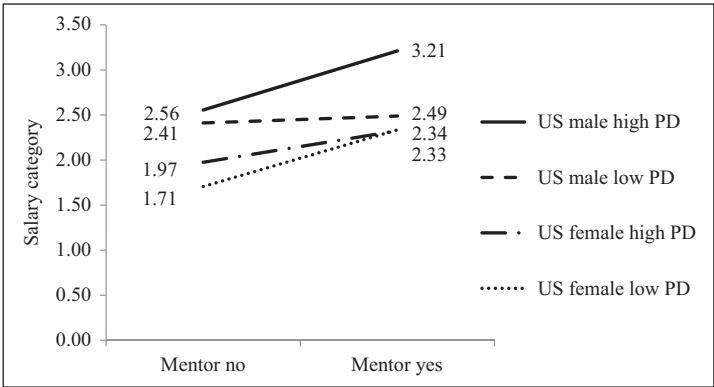

Figure 3. Three-way interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance* on compensation for the US sample.

power distance was particularly important for women. Mentored women with high power distance reported higher salary than did mentored women with low power distance. When comparing those with and without mentors, the return associated with having high power distance was stronger for women than it was for men. Men report higher salary when mentored, regardless of power distance levels. Also, mentored women with low power distance reported having lower organizational positions than non-mentored women with low power distance; low power distance did not make much difference to the organizational positions of mentored versus non-mentored Taiwanese men. In the USA (Figures 3 and 4), the opposite was true: having low power distance was more important for mentored women's career attainment than for men's. Mentored men and women report higher salary than non-mentored counterparts, and mentored women with high and low power distance report almost the same salary level. However, when comparing mentored versus non-mentored women with high and low power distance, the positive slope for compensation is steeper for women
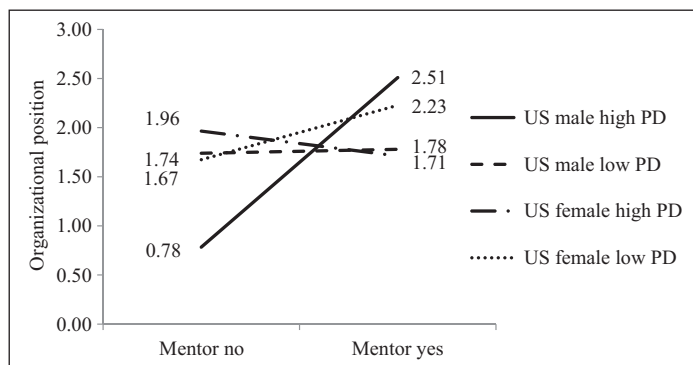
Figure 4. Three-way interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance* on organizational position for the US sample.

with low power distance. Indeed, mentored women with high power distance reported lower organizational positions than non-mentored women with high power distance. Mentoring again helped men regardless of their levels of power distance.

Discussion

This study examined the influence of power distance in the context of mentoring and career attainment for men and women in contrasting Taiwanese and US cultures. Our findings address a question we raised earlier regarding the role and relevance of traditional hierarchical values such as power distance in authority relationships like mentoring. The four-way interaction of *gender × mentor × power distance × country* was significant for both compensation and organizational position. By demonstrating variation, not just across cultures but also within the same culture, in career attainment for mentored men and women who deviate from power distance norms, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how culture and cultural values influence mentoring-outcome relationships.

For women in Taiwan and the USA, having culturally expected levels of power distance increased the positive association between mentoring and career attainment. Specifically, in Taiwan, the positive return associated with mentoring requires that women conform to hierarchical traditions and prescribed female role requirements and expectations, and have high power distance to reap the benefits of mentoring. If a junior female protégé displays modesty and deference to a mentor's status or position, the senior person may expend more effort in furthering her career. However, in contrast to mentored women, mentored men with low power distance still had higher salaries and organizational positions than mentored men with high power distance. Because mentoring is typically a hierarchical relationship between individuals of unequal power, low power distance likely enables male protégés to build a stronger relationship with their mentors, especially in a highly traditional and low gender egalitarian culture. These results suggest that the possibility for friendship to be the 'bedrock' of mentoring (Kram, 1988) may exist for Taiwanese men, but not Taiwanese women. Indeed, such gender

differences were also found in the USA, a low power distant and high gender egalitarian culture – the positive return associated with mentoring requires that women be less power distant, signaling less deference and more assertiveness with hierarchy or senior individuals. For men, mentoring had a positive association with career attainment, regardless of their power distance level.

Theoretical and managerial implications

Our study has several implications for mentoring theory, practice, and future research, as explained below. First, the results highlight the importance of *person × situation* interactions in the context of mentoring, especially since we observed variation in the positive and negative consequences of mentoring depending on the gender and power distance of the individual and the level of power distance and gender egalitarianism attributed to the larger cultural context (here, country). Just having a mentor may not automatically reap positive career returns for women. While one would expect mentors to (ideally) have protégés' interests in mind, it is indeed an interpersonal relationship with complex power dynamics that may also have negative consequences for protégés. For example, mentored Taiwanese women with low power distance (and therefore in violation of cultural norms) have negative returns from mentoring, compared with high power distance women. It is possible that mentors might perceive protégés' low power distance to be threatening or undercutting their authority, leading to negative mentoring dynamics. A lack of fit between female protégés and cultural norms may result in mentors engaging in manipulative or distancing behaviors, including neglect, abuse of power, or sabotage (Eby et al., 2004). We speculate that when mentored Taiwanese women have low power distance, their mentors might be particularly sensitive to cultural norm violations in a traditional society and may want to stay consistent with social norms to demonstrate their endorsement of mainstream values.

Second, following the above, the results suggest that the use of mentoring as a developmental tool from a white-male perspective precludes our understanding of cultural perspectives on effective mentoring and career success (Dreher and Ryan, 2004; Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010). Asian models of mentoring and career attainment could be different from what is known in the west. Additional questions on the role of cultural norms and mentoring dynamics for men and women may be worthy of future inquiry. Combinations of micro-, macro-, and multi-level perspectives may provide interesting explanations for mentoring-outcome variations for men and women within and across cultures. The combined influence of socio-cultural characteristics of individuals and the culture at large on mentoring dynamics deserves further investigation, and might be particularly interesting and useful in the context of 'cross-cultural interfaces' (Gelfand et al., 2007) between mentors and protégés who are culturally different or are located in cultures different from their own. Culturally influenced aspects of mentoring, thus, need further clarification. Until then, precise predictions of its relation to other variables cannot be made (Ramaswami and Dreher, 2010; Tsui, 2004).

Third, mentoring theory lacks adequate consideration of boundary conditions, and systematic explanations for possible cultural variations are not fully articulated. As this study demonstrates, one way to better understand the role of culture in mentoring

relationships is through the theoretical and empirical consideration of the role of cultural values, such as power distance in relationships between senior and junior employees. Although the power distance variable had low alpha values (in the subsamples), the strength of our study lies in examining the role of power distance (especially at the individual level) in mentoring relationships using a cross-cultural sample. We also only measured power distance at the individual level and equated country with cultural characteristics of power distance and gender egalitarianism. Culture-as-nation studies still offer potential tests of theory about cultural influences on mentoring dynamics. Given that there are other potential cultural moderator variables apart from power distance, such as individualism/collectivism, this study only begins to explore the domain of value dimensions. As mentoring phenomena intersect with culture and demographic variables, mentoring theory would become more culturally inclusive by taking into account the diversity of individuals as well as the cultural contexts in which mentoring occurs. The real challenge for future research may be to understand where, and for which demographic groups, cultural norms differentially apply within the same culture in a specific organizational or social domain. We also ran analyses with just the Taiwanese sample, but found non-significant results for mentoring main effects and its interactions with gender and power distance on the dependent variables. Thus, while single-country studies are useful, cross-cultural comparative research on mentoring is essential since we might miss critical insights if we do not compare samples from different countries.

Moreover, understanding cross-cultural models of mentoring may inform us about contextually appropriate best practices in mentoring systems. A failure to examine how mentoring interacts with gender and cultural values such as power distance, especially in eastern cultures, may limit our understanding of employee development and career outcomes in cross-cultural contexts. Given the multi-cultural nature of today's workforce, the findings of this study would be particularly applicable to understanding high-quality mentoring relationships and be of practical value to human resource managers interested in gender and career attainment issues, and in creating culturally sensitive developmental initiatives. Identifying and developing protégés who not only possess the knowledge, skills, and potential for success that mentors often desire (e.g. Allen et al., 2000), but are also 'culturally right-type', is essential for mentoring relationships to be successful or to yield positive returns to protégés. Employees and managers need to be sensitive to how cultural context influences the career attainment of mentored men and women with or without certain types of 'valued' qualities. This is important because, interestingly, it appears that in the context of mentoring, Taiwan still cherishes traditional values such as power distance. Given Taiwan's exposure to western values and customs due to globalization, as noted in the introduction, other questions are ripe for exploration: are junior (importantly, female) employees and protégés in agreement with the importance placed on traditional values? Despite the career benefits of being 'culturally right-type', do changing cultural values and the mix of traditionality and modernity represent relationship fault lines between senior and junior employees? In what organizational contexts and how are culturally non-conforming, but capable, individuals rewarded?

One such reward, for example, is a valued expatriate assignment sponsored by a mentor. A lack of attention to cultural factors and the mentoring dynamics they produce could create problems in expatriate selection, development, and adjustment, especially given

the importance of host-country mentors and their influence on expatriate effectiveness (Carraher et al., 2008; Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Understanding differential cultural expectations from men and women will not only help in getting the most out of a mentoring relationship, but might also reduce the stress associated with adjusting to relationships in a new cultural environment. Displaying normatively expected values through attitudes and behaviors may be essential to achieving certain career related outcomes, and perhaps more so for one gender than the other. However, by monitoring such culture related influences on mentoring outcomes, organizations may also stem potential sources of gender bias and discrimination in employees' career advancement.

Limitations

We were unable to gather data directly from mentors on values or mentoring functions to have a fuller understanding of the mentoring–career attainment relationship. Recent meta-analyses (e.g. Allen et al., 2004; Eby et al., 2008) also provide justification for measuring mentoring as a dichotomous variable instead of mentoring functions, since the former was found to be a stronger predictor of career outcomes than the latter, and measures of mentoring functions may be deficient in capturing all mentor behaviors (Allen et al., 2004). While we described mentoring similarly in both cultures, mentoring could mean different things for different people across or even within the same culture (Haggard et al., 2011). Different cultures may have different mentoring needs, desires, provisions, and outcomes as well (Ragins, 1999) and these may play a key role in how mentoring influences and interacts with individual and context variables.

While we acknowledge that the dynamics of formal and informal mentoring may differ (Ragins and Cotton, 1999), we also included formal mentoring cases in our analyses because we did not have a strong theoretical rationale to expect gender and power distance to simultaneously interact in different ways with formal versus informal mentors. Therefore, the data included both formal and informal mentoring cases, and the pattern of results does not change if the formal cases are excluded. We did not consider the interaction of mentor gender and protégé gender in our analyses. Of all mentors, male mentors represented 71 percent (83% in the Taiwan sample, and 63% in the US sample). Furthermore, in the Taiwanese mentored sample, 90 percent of men and 74 percent of women had male mentors, and the rest had female mentors; in the US mentored sample, 88 percent of men and 48 percent of women had male mentors, and the rest had female mentors. If only those with male mentors (contrasted with those with no mentors) were included in analyses, we would have lost cases, and consequently power for analysis. Regardless of this limitation, we believe our arguments would be robust to the gender of the mentor since research indicates that male and female superiors have similar perceptions of and expectations from female subordinates (e.g. Allen et al., 2000; Hoobler et al., 2009). We also did not examine variation in respondents' respective organizational cultures (although we controlled for industry), which could impact the path of career success for men and women. The data were collected through self-report surveys using a cross-sectional design. However, since the main analysis variables were mostly binary and/or objective (gender, mentor, country, compensation, and hierarchical position), they may not be susceptible to common-method or response biases. Lastly, we used data from

only two countries. Future research could use larger samples of countries for better theory building efforts and generalizations (Franke and Richey, 2010).

Conclusion

Despite limitations, this study has many positive features and the comparison of mentoring in Taiwan and the USA is certainly informative. Also, rather than comparing randomly chosen countries, we selected countries that represent variability in the theoretical concepts of interest. Specifically, we accessed the individual level variance of a cultural value such as power distance and tested our hypotheses in two distinct cultural settings: the high power distant, low gender egalitarian Taiwanese culture and the low power distant, high gender egalitarian US culture. Our findings demonstrate variation in mentoring outcomes across, as well as within, the same culture for men and women who do not conform to power distance norms. Such continued examination would enable us to know how individual and contextual features together influence the outcomes of mentoring. There seems to be no articulated theory or documented literature on cultural variables moderating mentoring-outcome relationships, and this article brings forth the important need to develop such theory to more thoroughly understand developmental phenomena from a cultural perspective.

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