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**EXPLORING CULTURAL BOUNDARY SPANNING FUNCTIONS  
THAT BRIDGE ACROSS NATIONAL AND CULTURAL  
BOUNDARIES IN MNCS**

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**A Research Project  
Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graziadio Business School  
Pepperdine University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science  
In  
Organization Development**

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**by  
Tamara Downs**

**July 2023**

This research project, completed by

TAMARA DOWNS

under the guidance of the Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the faculty of The Graziadio Business School in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE  
IN ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT

Date: July 2023

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## **Abstract**

In multinational corporations (MNCs), cross-cultural interactions and collaboration are unavoidable. Cultural boundary spanning (CBS) is a behavior that has been shown to reduce conflict and ensure project success. It is a behavior that bridges internal and external organizational boundaries. This study examined if and how CBS functions (behaviors) change across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs. These boundaries were characterized by four demographic groups of people found within MNCs: (a) parent country nationals, (b) host country nationals, (c) third country nationals, and (d) parent country national expats. The findings of this research suggest that any of these demographic groups can perform CBS. Variances in the use of CBS functions between the groups were also identified. These variances seem to be influenced by the strength of the individual's social networks and the interdependent leadership culture within the MNC.

*Keywords:* cultural boundary spanning functions, multinational corporations, parent country national, host country national, third country national

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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
List of Tables .....	viii
1. Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Background and History.....	1
Purpose and Objectives .....	2
Significance and Application.....	3
Study Outline .....	4
2. Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	6
Boundary Spanning.....	6
Roles and Functions.....	6
Actors.....	8
Antecedents.....	9
Impacts.....	9
Boundaries.....	10
Cultural Boundary Spanning.....	10
Roles and Functions.....	11
Antecedents.....	12
Impacts.....	12
Demographic Groups in MNCs.....	13
Parent Country Nationals.....	13
Host Country Nationals.....	14
Parent Country National Expats.....	14
Third Country Nationals.....	15
Inpats.....	16

Repats.....	16
Summary.....	17
3. Chapter 3: Methodology .....	18
Research Design .....	19
Participants.....	20
Data Collection.....	20
Data Analysis Procedures.....	21
Summary .....	24
4. Chapter 4: Findings.....	25
Quantitative Survey Results.....	26
Pie Chart Analysis.....	27
Qualitative Data Overview.....	29
Information and Knowledge Management.....	30
Themes and Examples.....	30
Demographic Group Participation.....	33
Coordination.....	34
Themes and Examples.....	34
Demographic Group Participation.....	36
Representing and Influencing.....	37
Themes and Examples.....	37
Demographic Group Participation.....	37
Building and Maintaining Networks.....	39
Themes and Examples.....	39
Demographic Group Participation.....	41
Directionality of Activities.....	42
Social Networks.....	43

Emergent Data.....	44
Empathetic Comforting.....	45
Cultural Boundary Spanning Needs.....	46
Organizational Connectedness.....	47
Functions Overall.....	51
Summary.....	52
5. Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	53
Summary of Findings.....	53
Discussion.....	57
Limitations.....	58
Recommendations for Future Research.....	59
Recommendations for Practice.....	61
A Note for the Reader.....	62
References.....	64
Appendix A: Research Qualification Survey .....	80
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol .....	83
Appendix C: Invitation to Interview Participants .....	88
Appendix D: Social Media Invitation to Interview Participants .....	90
Appendix E: Digital Image Cover for Invitation to Research Study .....	92
Appendix F: Subject Consent Form .....	94



## List of Tables

Table 1. Boundary Spanning Functions.....	7
Table 2. Boundary Spanning Functions by Frequency.....	26
Table 3. Pie Chart: Time Spent on Functions.....	27
Table 4. Feedback: Time Spent on Functions.....	29
Table 5. Total Code Occurrences by Function Category.....	30
Table 6. Information and Knowledge Management: Themes and Examples.....	31
Table 7. Information and Knowledge Management: Demographic Group Participation.....	33
Table 8. Coordination: Themes and Examples.....	35
Table 9. Coordination: Demographic Group Participation.....	36
Table 10. Representing and Influencing: Themes and Examples.....	37
Table 11. Representing and Influencing: Demographic Group Participation.....	38
Table 12. Building and Maintaining Networks: Themes and Examples.....	40
Table 13. Building and Maintaining Networks: Demographic Group Participation.....	41
Table 14. Directionality of Activities: Themes and Examples.....	43
Table 15. Social Networks Across Demographic Groups.....	44
Table 16. Empathetic Comforting: Themes and Examples.....	45
Table 17. Empathetic Comforting: Demographic Group Participation.....	46
Table 18. Needs for CBS: Themes and Examples.....	47
Table 19. Organizational Connectedness: Themes and Examples.....	48
Table 20. Organizational Connectedness: Demographic Group Participation.....	51
Table 21. Total Demographic Group Participation Across All Functions.....	52

## Chapter 1: Introduction

As of 2019, 43.9 million people worldwide worked for a U.S. multinational corporation (*Activities of U.S. Multinational Enterprises, 2019; U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, n.d.*). These multinational corporations (MNCs) were responsible for \$5.7 trillion of value added to the worldwide economy. The parents or headquarters (HQs) of these companies accounted for 22.2% of the total private industry employment in the United States and this is just the U.S.-based ones. I am one of the employees in an MNC. This research was born of my personal experience that working in an MNC and collaborating cross-culturally on a global scale can be very challenging and full of conflict. When I sought to uncover what solutions might exist for these corporate powerhouses, what emerged was the leadership skill of boundary spanning.

### Background and History

Boundary spanning is the term used to describe the roles and functions that either teams or individuals use to bridge the divides inside and outside an organization (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). These behaviors have been summarized into the categories of information and knowledge management, coordination, building and maintaining networks, representing and influencing, and directionality of activities (Jesiek et al., 2018). Through these activities, the boundary spanner advocates for others, manages workflows, seeks out solutions, and protects their team from outside influences (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988, 1992). Cultural boundary spanning (CBS) is boundary spanning that is

enacted within cross-cultural environments (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018). Within MNCs, CBS has been observed to improve collaboration efforts, reduce conflict, and ensure project adoption and flexibility towards its environment (Di Marco et al., 2010; Kostova & Roth, 2003; Schotter et al., 2017).

Historically, boundary spanning research began in the context of R&D teams for corporations (Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Ancona & Caldwell, 1988). It was in these early studies that the behaviors (functions) of boundary spanners were initially observed and formalized (Ancona & Caldwell, 1988, 1992). Since then, research has sought to understand how boundary spanning functions change, what influences that change, and how different groups enact boundary spanning. But what has not been researched is how boundary spanning functions might vary depending on an individual's national and cultural position within an MNC.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

This study aims to further the knowledge base of CBS in MNCs by exploring how its functions may differ across national and cultural boundaries. These boundaries are reflected in common staffing positions in MNCs: parent country nationals (PCNs), host country nationals (HCNs), third-country nationals (TCNs), parent country national expats (XPT), inpats, and repats (Collings et al., 2008; Harzing et al., 2016; Levina & Kane, 2009). Most of the existing literature on CBS in MNCs is written from the perspective of HQs and XPTs, frequently overlooking the HCNs and TCNs. This study aims to address this gap and ethnocentrism in the literature by seeking to answer two questions:

1. Does the use of boundary spanning functions (Information and knowledge management, coordination, representing and influencing, and building and maintaining networks) vary in MNCs?
2. If they do vary, are the variances influenced by the person's national and cultural relationship to the HQs?

### **Significance and Application**

Conducting research on this topic is important first because of the global impact MNCs have. With greater information and tools at the ready, they might be equipped to navigate the choppy waters of geographically and culturally dispersed collaborations. Secondly this research is important because of its emancipatory nature to represent the underrepresented HCNs and TCNs in boundary spanning literature.

The dominant assumption in the existing literature is that those who span boundaries are either expats or inpats and are centrally connected to the HQ in some way, shape, or form. Harzing et al. (2016) writes that at the least this misrepresentation is limiting in perspective or at worst it is damaging to those who are not adequately honored or respected. Gratefully, some researchers have pointed out (e.g., Kuki 2021) that some of the most effective boundary spanners in the MNC construct are actually TCNs or HCNs. Their intimate knowledge of the local culture, ability to speak the language, and low ethnocentrism, have been highlighted as key drivers to high performance for boundary spanners.

It is this point that is personally relevant to me as well. As an American raised in the United States, I have humbly had the honor to live and spend significant time in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Without fail, every time I am abroad, it is the local people who have taught me the most about how to translate my context to theirs and how to understand their context. I have met many of these international boundary spanners who are so often overlooked. It is because of them that I am a better person today and they have taught me many valuable lessons. It is both my honor and my duty to find a way to offer them thanks even in this small way of representing them through research and to seat them equally at the table with their more popular counterparts.

### **Study Outline**

For this study, I will identify boundary spanners who work in MNCs across the previously identified demographic groups in MNCs. Due to limitations of access to all six categories, I will only conduct research on the first four categories: PCN, HCN, TCN, and XPT. It should be noted that the original design included inpats, however none could be identified in the time available and therefore this group was not included. This study will explore the use of boundary spanning functions in each category to observe what trends may exist and what can be learned about how boundary spanning is or is not affected by national and cultural relationships to HQs. Chapter 2 will cover a review of the existing literature on boundary spanning, its functions, and what we know of existing research on its variance on different types of people. Chapter 3 outlines the study's purpose and relevance of the research methods as well as research and

design specifics such as participant selection, interview protocol, and data analysis procedures. In Chapter 4 the qualitative and quantitative findings are described. In Chapter 5, the conclusions of the study are presented, restating the original purpose and reviewing the key findings and the assumed meanings of these findings. Recommendations, study limitations, and implications for further research are also discussed in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

In this chapter, existing literature that is pertinent to this study is reviewed. Boundary spanning, its origins, functions, actors, antecedents, and impacts are covered. In addition, a brief overview of the types of boundaries that have been observed within MNCs will be reviewed, leading to the more nuanced skill of CBS. CBS and the unique factors that set it apart from the more generic boundary spanning literature will be explored. Finally, staffing positions in MNCs and what we know about how CBS changes across these positions will be covered.

### **Boundary Spanning**

Boundary spanning has been referred to as a set of behaviors that serve in a linking fashion between the boundary of an organization and its external and internal environments (Aldrich & Herker, 1977). Thompson (1967) first discussed boundary spanning as a behavior that aided organizations in perceiving and adapting to contextual nuances. The term boundary spanning is the product of researchers attempting to define the actions that were taken at the boundaries of organizations (Adams, 1980). Since this term has been coined, much has been written about boundary spanning, describing it as a broad concept (Haas, 2015) with a manifold and largely unorganized set of identified roles, functions, actors, antecedents, and outcomes spanning a variety of environments.

### ***Roles and Functions***

In boundary spanning, the terms roles and functions are sometimes used interchangeably or without delineation of where one begins and the other starts

(Corsi et al., 2021). At the organization level, Adams (1980) described boundary spanning functions as (a) transacting the acquisition of organizational inputs and the disposal of outputs, (b) filtering inputs and outputs, (c) searching for and collecting information, (d) representing the organization to its external environments, and (e) protecting the organization and buffering it from external threat and pressure. Internally, Ancona and Caldwell (1992) identified the team functions of *Ambassador*, *Task Coordinator*, *Scout*, and *Guard*. Through these functions, the boundary spanner advocates, manages workflows, seeks out solutions, and protects their team from outside influences.

Over time, many researchers have worked to identify just exactly what boundary spanners do and how they do it. Because of this, there is an extensive, albeit disorganized, library on the various ways that boundary spanners go about doing their work. Jesiek et al. (2018) analyzed 72 scholarly papers and organized the boundary spanning functions into five main categories: (a) information and knowledge management, (b) coordination, (c) representing and influencing, (d) building and maintaining networks, and (e) directionality of activities. Table 1 builds on their work and outlines these categories and their corresponding themes and sub-themes. Additionally, listed literary works have been added that have become relevant to this research on boundary spanning functions.

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INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

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## **Actors**

Boundary spanning is commonly thought of as a behavior possessed at the individual level and much of the research that has been conducted has taken this singular focus (Adams, 1980; Au & Fukuda, 2002; Birkinshaw et al., 2017; Heskin & Heffner, 1987; Johnson & Duxbury, 2010; Kuki et al., 2021; Levina & Kane, 2009; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). Others have explored the shared responsibility of boundary spanning amongst teams and their individuals (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Gladstein, 1990; Golden & Veiga, 2005; Levina & Vaast, 2005). Regardless of whether boundary spanning is being considered at the individual or group level, it has been observed that not all potential boundary spanners enact the behaviors of boundary spanning. This has led to research on boundary-spanners-in-practice (Levina & Kane, 2009; Levina & Vaast, 2005) and boundary-spanning-activity (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

The findings from this and other research identified that actors of boundary spanning can be designated, self-initiated (Roberts & Beamish, 2017), formal, or emergent (Jesiek et al., 2018). These findings have observed that some of the designated or formal boundary spanners become boundary-spanners-in-practice due to things like their view of themselves, their social network, or a global mandate from their job. The self-initiated, emergent boundary spanners tend to be born out of a perceived need, lack of information, or complex and volatile environments. Sadly, research has shown that individuals or teams who perform boundary spanning are rarely recognized for the skill they bring and the role it plays in organizational functioning (Makela, 2019).

### ***Antecedents***

Boundary spanning has many antecedents that produce boundary-spanners-in-practice. Most notable among these antecedents is the boundary spanners' tendency to possess strong social networks (Brion et al., 2012). These networks are so strong and critical to boundary spanning behavior it has been said that the modus operandi of true boundary spanners is network enhancing or networking, which has been attributed to social capital theory at work (Kostova & Roth, 2003; Obstfeld, 2005; Williams, 2002). Other antecedents include a lack of access to information, misaligned corporate priorities, and perceived threats in the environment (Johnson & Duxbury, 2010; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978).

### ***Impacts***

On the individual level, those who fulfill the role of a boundary spanner have been observed to experience job satisfaction, high morale, promotions, and possess both informal power and status within their organization (Au & Fukuda, 2002; Kuki et al., 2021; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981). At the team or group level, boundary spanning has been identified as a better predictor of team performance than frequency of communication (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). Drawing upon chaos and complexity theories (Shaw, 2002; Wheatley, 2006) the mere presence of boundary spanning behaviors has a ripple effect on the shaping of the external environments they encounter long after the work is done, creating new potential futures (Adams, 1980). Similarly, in changing environments, boundary spanning has been identified as a means for creating organizational agility, generating the

capacity for an organization to adapt in this complex and ever-changing world (Baskerville et al., 2011; Beckett, 2021; van Waardenburg & van Vliet, 2013).

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries are the invisible and visible lines that clearly separate one group from another. These are things like lines drawn on a map to chart countries and continents or less visible lines like those between social in-groups and out-groups. In their systematic review, Jesiek et al. (2018) summarized boundaries into four categories: (a) organizational - things like collaboration across sectors or intraorganizational divides like rank and authority; (b) occupational or functional; (c) knowledge boundaries - who has access to what information; and (d) other boundaries like geographical and cultural boundaries common in MNCs. According to Hofstede (1993), 50% of the discrepancies experienced in values, beliefs, and attitudes for individuals from different countries have been attributed to differences between nationalities among them, making the work of the cultural boundary spanner doubly challenging.

### **Cultural Boundary Spanning**

CBS incorporates the same attributes as its more generic counterpart. However, it differs in that CBS is set within a unique environment in which culture, language, and even geographic boundaries are spanned to come to a collaborative end (Au & Fukuda, 2002; Di Marco et al., 2010b; Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Holtbrügge & Engelhard, 2016). Like its generic counterpart, CBS does not have a clear, unified set of functions, roles, and antecedents determined. First among the differences is the variety of names it can be

identified under, starting with bridge individuals (Sekiguchi, 2016), pipe role (Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), global boundary spanning (Roberts & Beamish, 2017), or even intercultural boundary spanning (Barmeyer et al., 2020). More notably in CBS, an individual has to go to great lengths to translate, interpret, and create bridges across cultural contexts (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Heskin & Heffner, 1987; Kuki et al., 2021; Sekiguchi, 2016).

### ***Roles and Functions***

The roles of CBS consider the additional skills that are required to span boundaries when conducting cross-cultural work. Much of the existing literature on CBS has been studied in the context of expatriate management and is where much of the existing frameworks come from (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018). In one attempt to summarize the existing themes, from the perspective of an XPT, CBS functions have been described as a bridging process that includes gaining information, achieving influence, exchanging with others, and cooperating with host nationals with respect to resources and networking. It also includes acting as a cultural broker or mediator (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Heskin & Heffner, 1987). From the perspective of a third country national, CBSers play the roles of Disembedded Cosmopolitan, intermediary, third-party, and team-related boundary spanners (Barmeyer et al., 2020). Or in the context of Chinese Universities, the roles of Dual Cultural Bridger and International Network Enhancer were observed as unique to the existing literature (Corsi et al., 2021). Similarly, there is a smaller library on the functions of CBS which is paired with the other literature in Table 1.

### ***Antecedents***

In the complex environment of cross-cultural organizing, there are several antecedents for CBS. Demographic antecedents are those which include age, command of languages, gender, the quantity of international work experience, or duration of the assignment (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Orsini, 2019; Sekiguchi, 2016). Psychographic antecedents consist of things like motivation, ethnocentrism, personality, cultural identity, and self-monitoring (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011). Organizational antecedents consist of such things as compensation satisfaction, cross-cultural training, mentoring, and corporate language policies (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Pedersen et al., 2019; Reiche, 2011). Environmental or situational antecedents include climate, cultural and institutional distance, or country risk (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; Reiche, 2011). Finally, personal behavioral antecedents, such as communication behaviors, cross-cultural knowledge, and ability to contextualize or adapt to other cultures (Engelhard & Holtbrügge, 2018; A. Schotter & Beamish, 2011; Yagi & Kleinberg, 2011), are listed among direct or indirect antecedents for CBS. The most mentioned and advocated antecedents are cultural and language skills to cross cultural boundaries. Some have gone as far as to argue that true cultural boundary spanners are, at a minimum, bi-lingual and possess a deep or native knowledge of the cultures being spanned (Orsini, 2019; Sekiguchi, 2016).

### ***Impacts***

These superstars or, as Barner-Rasmussen et al. (2008) likes to say, these kingpins, can have an incredible impact on MNCs or contexts of

multicultural organizing. Schotter and Beamish (2011) observed that the mere presence of boundary spanners was directly related to the corporations' ability to effectively resolve conflict. Kostova and Roth (2003) observed that the social capital earned by boundary spanners "increases the effectiveness with which the interdependence between MNC HQs and subunits is managed" (p. 302).

Others observed that performance and the ability of an organization to adapt to its environment and across cultures was largely determined by the extent of and nature of CBS present within the organization (Di Marco et al., 2010b; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978). Despite its positive impacts, much is yet to be known about CBS and how it works within MNCs. Where some have started is in examining the behaviors of the different demographic groups found within MNCs, organized to represent their cultural and geographical distance from the MNC.

### **Demographic Groups in MNCs**

There are potentially endless ways to slice and outline the types of demographic groups that exist in an MNC across its HQs and foreign subsidiaries. At the intersection of cultural origin and geographic location, there are a few roles that are clearly defined in the literature: PCN, HCN, TCN, XPT, Inpats (Collings et al., 2008), and Repats (Harzing et al., 2016). These roles are distinguished by the origin of the person, the location of the HQ, and the person's current geographic location in relation to the HQ.

### ***Parent Country Nationals***

PCNs are people who live and are from the nation where the HQs are located. These are commonly thought of as HQ Executives, although HQ

Executives can technically be XPTs as well (Birkinshaw et al., 2017) and an individual can be a PCN but not an HQ Executive. Similar to HCNs and TCNs, PCNs are not commonly considered cultural boundary spanners and not much literature focuses on them either. However, much of the PCN and HQ perspective is still represented from an ethnocentric perspective of the XPT literature that is covered at length (Collings et al., 2008; Fan et al., 2021). When PCNs take on the role of CBS, they have been observed to spearhead, reconcile, facilitate, and lubricate relationships to bridge the cultural divides in the MNC (Birkinshaw et al., 2017).

### ***Host Country Nationals***

These individuals are people who live and are from the nation where the foreign subsidiary is located, in other words the host country (Collings et al., 2008). Very little literature exists to acknowledge HCNs as possessing CBS skills or filling its roles. Much of the credit for global talent has centered around XPTs, where in reality the HCN can actually be the person holding the most power, influence, and skill in bridging the cultural divides in MNCs (Kuki et al., 2021).

### ***Parent Country National Expats***

The overwhelming majority of the literature on CBS in MNCs has been conducted from the viewpoint of this particular staffing position, most commonly referred to as expats (Harzing et al., 2016). In fact, according to Fan et al.'s (2021) review of the International Human Resource Management (IHRM) literature, the IHRM literature can be summarized into three categories: expatriate management, global human capital, and politics and practices transfer.

The largest of these clusters is expatriate management symbolizing a preference for research on expatriates. In the global human capital cluster, a sub-set cluster focuses on knowledge transfer, a function of boundary spanning, and this too is discussed from the perspective of the expat, symbolizing again the singular focus on this one demographic group.

XPTs are individuals whose origin is from the country of the HQ who are sent to live and work in a host country where a foreign subsidiary is located. In the CBS literature, some unique functions they fill are delivering and representing (Johnson & Duxbury, 2010), and they have been observed to lean into relationship building as the key feature of their work. Those expats who do act as CBSers have been observed to experience higher job satisfaction and greater informal and formal power in their organization (Au & Fukuda, 2002). While in most cases, XPTs are typically referred to as expats, this term can be misleading as it tends to omit the acknowledgment of other types of expats like the TCN.

### ***Third Country Nationals***

Unlike its sister role, the TCN expat is significantly underrepresented in CBS literature. A TCN is a person who is from one country, living in a separate host country, on behalf of the parent country (Collings et al., 2008). For example, a German living in China, working for an American company would be a TCN. Despite being underrepresented, data has shown that the use of TCNs in MNCs is on the rise and has been shown to be more effective in knowledge transfer than its sister role, the XPT (Harzing et al., 2016). These multicultural individuals whose experience is in working across multiple cultures are particularly adept at



thinking ethnorelativistically, bridging cultural mentalities, and fostering collective learning. These skills have been labeled as the disembedded cosmopolitan, intermediary, third-party, and team-related boundary spanner roles (Barmeyer et al., 2020). One of the interesting observations about these individuals is that they often develop a hybrid identity that lends them to belong to many places rather than just one (Barmeyer et al., 2020).

### ***Inpats***

Inpats are individuals from a host country within the MNC, brought to the parent country for a time to work, but to represent the host country at the HQ. This is the second most common role explored in CBS literature and IHRM literature as it is a somewhat common alternative option to XPTs (Levina & Kane, 2009). Much of the existing literature on inpats highlights that their success or failure to become a CBSer depends much more on their cultural identity and status at both the HQ and foreign subsidiary. In fact, the inpat can only succeed as a representative for the host country if they are recognized by the individuals in the host country (Levina & Kane, 2009; Schuster et al., 2019). It was observed that if an inpat is mentored by a PCN from the HQ, their perception will be impacted positively and result in them being more likely to succeed as a CBSer (Reiche, 2011).

### ***Repats***

These individuals are the fourth and final group among those on international assignments within the MNC. Repats are inpats who have returned home to the host country. They started as an individual working in the MNC host

country, were brought to the HQ for some time as an input to represent their country, and now have returned to the host country with the hopes of taking the relationships from and understanding of the HQ with them (Harzing et al., 2016). Notably, using repatriation has been identified as an outperformer of the XPT in terms of facilitating knowledge transfer within an MNC (Harzing et al., 2016). However, to limit the scope of this research study, repats were not considered.

### **Summary**

In summary, there is much left to be discovered in CBS. It is built upon the foundation of the existing literature on boundary spanning but it is set apart in that its context is more complex because of its cross-cultural nature. To date, no research has covered an expansive study on the nuances of CBS functions across the demographic groups within an MNC. Specifically, there is still much to be desired when it comes to fair representation of the TCN and HCN groups. CBS has been observed to serve an MNC by helping it make significant strides toward collaboration and contextualization of its foreign subsidiary efforts. This research study aims to contribute to the existing literature on CBS within MNCs by expanding the knowledge base of how its functions and roles may vary across these demographic groups. This chapter has reviewed the existing literature, key definitions of boundary spanning, CBS, and the demographic groups within MNCs. Chapter 3 will describe the research methods used to collect data for this study and its procedures.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to further the knowledge base of CBS in MNCs by examining how its functions may differ across national and cultural boundaries. The research questions were twofold: first, that CBS functions might vary in MNCs, and second, this variance might be impacted by an individual's national and cultural relationship as represented by the roles of PCN, HCN, TCN, and XPT to the HQs. The objective of this study is also twofold. First, it aims to add to the existing knowledge base concerning variances in CBS across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs. Second, it aims to engage in the emancipatory work of recognizing the often overlooked, significant contributors to MNCs: the HCNs and TCNs. This chapter describes the research design, participants, data collection, and data analysis procedures used to conduct this study.

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research approach whereby an initial quantitative survey was utilized to set the stage for further exploration of the proposed theory through a set of qualitative semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To derive basic means and standard deviations of the variable of CBS functions across the groups of national and cultural staffing combinations in MNCs, a quantitative survey was employed. A thorough review of the literature revealed five categories of boundary spanning functions which encompass a breadth of individual actions taken or skills employed as a CBSer. These categories are information and

knowledge management, coordination, building and maintaining networks, representing and influencing, and directionality of activities (Jesiek et al., 2018).

These five categories shaped the survey design (Appendix A), which used close-ended, Likert scale-designed questions to measure frequency and derive trends in the five categories of CBS functions across the groups of national and cultural staffing combinations in MNCs. Building on the quantitative frame, in line with the explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach, an interview protocol was designed (Appendix B) with a grounded theory lens to further explore the perspectives of each group on an individual level and then derive themes amongst them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The result was a blended approach using qualitative and quantitative research methods allowing for a richer data set through which themes and frequency might be derived for CBS functions across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs.

### **Participants**

For relevant data to be captured via the mixed-methods approach, it was imperative that the study participants were boundary-spanners-in-practice (Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Levina & Kane, 2009), which is to say that regardless of their hierarchy, job function, years of experience or other potential qualifiers, the most critical qualification was that the participants actively engaged in the behaviors of boundary spanning in a cross-cultural setting within an MNC. The study participants comprised of 17 working professionals, 19 years of age and older, who acted as cultural boundary spanners working for an MNC across national and cultural boundaries. The national and cultural boundaries were represented

by four different staffing position categories: PCN, HCN, TCN, and XPT.

Participants were verified as boundary-spanners-in-practice through the qualification survey previously mentioned. They were also currently fitting this description in their role or they had fit this description within the past year.

Participants varied in their job function, seniority, MNCs they worked for, length of experience as working professionals, cultural origin, geographic location, gender, and other demographic characteristics.

### **Data Collection**

The potential subjects were identified through a purposive sample base within my professional network (i.e., first-degree connections or recommendations made by first-degree connections). Building on the purposive sample, referrals were requested, employing the snowball method to recruit other potential candidates. The recruitment method consisted of an email invitation (Appendix C) and social media post with a digital image cover (Appendix D and Appendix E) explaining the purpose of the research, desired commitment from the study participants, and the qualification survey. Interested participants self-selected by independently completing the qualification survey included in the initial invitation. By doing this, they indicated their interest in participation, completed a subject consent form (Appendix F), and self-identified as boundary-spanners-in-practice through the close-ended questions. Per the previously outlined criteria, those who qualified were invited to participate further in the research study via semi-structured interviews. In total, five PCNs, four HCNs, five TCNS, and three XPTs agreed to participate. Later, one TCN was reassigned as

“Other” because their context was different from the other participants and produced unique responses to the study.

The interviews were recorded using Zoom and Otter.AI for optimal data collection and transcription and were approximately 60-90 minutes long, following a previously crafted interview protocol. The interview protocol was designed to orient participants around the purpose of the study, the topics to be covered, and three sections of semi-structured interview questions. The first section contained questions about the candidates’ background, view of self, and demographic information to set the context from which they came. The second section referenced their responses to the survey questions, building on the information about their use of CBS functions within their current position. Finally, the third section was crafted to capture any emergent data that may have surfaced within the participant during the conversation. All questions were semi-structured and intended to be flexible enough to capture emergent data from the individual participants’ perspectives.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

Transcripts from these interviews were organized by the four groups of staffing positions and then cross-analyzed by the observed functions. Working from an inductive and deductive lens, a high-level coding methodology and computer-assisted qualitative data software strategy was applied to draw out themes across the roles concerning their use of CBS functions.

Initially, the Otter.AI transcripts were reviewed and revised to match word-for-word what the interview participants said and labeled with unique individual

identifiers to protect their identity and organize them into groups. Next, the transcripts were uploaded into the MAXDQA software for coding and analysis. Here, the transcripts were placed in sets according to their self-identified roles of PCN, HCN, TCN, and XPT. At this stage, the transcripts were ready for analysis.

First-level codes were applied using a deductive method of assigning the five main function categories as they applied to the text. Second-level codes were applied using an inductive approach, which relied upon previous literature in this phenomenon. This resulted sub-themes among the texts in the categories. Then the second-level and third-level codes were revised and generated using inductive and deductive reasoning. The deductive portion referenced the many existing identified functions already found in literature, and the inductive portion made way for any new themes and connections to emerge. Taking this approach allowed the data to connect with but not be married to the existing literature so that it could affirm and add to it. During this process, new previously unidentified categories emerged and new categories, codes, and subcodes were applied using an inductive approach.

Following the finalized coding process, the categories of functions and their sub-themes were analyzed using means and standard deviation. To do this, each sub-theme of the categories was examined according to demographic groups. Because the sample size was small, the frequency of use was not measurable; instead, however, groups were analyzed according to the number of participants mentioning the sub-themes through which a percentage of participation was derived. For example, if three of four HCNs mentioned a sub-

theme, this group was rated at 75% participation for the sub-theme in that group. After calculating participation for each demographic group by sub-theme, means were calculated on group participation. Following this, the standard deviation was calculated in like fashion.

The data collection process also generated two forms of quantitative data for analysis. The first form was the initial survey data, which qualified participants as boundary spanners and created an initial sample of frequency variances by demographic groups. To capture this, the survey questions were designed using a Likert scale where participants ranked the frequency of use for each function on the scale of Never-Always. This was exported through Excel, and answers were verified during the corresponding interview with the participant.

For the analysis process, a legend was created for the corresponding Likert scale options to create a numerical value that could be calculated. The legend is as follows: Never = 1, Sometimes = 2, About Half of the Time = 3, Most of the Time = 4, and Always = 5. Referencing the legend, the individual participants' responses were converted into numerical values and sorted according to demographic groups and function categories. Having organized the data, the mean for frequency of use was calculated across each demographic group for each function category.

The second form of quantitative data came from one of the interview questions. It asked participants to quantify the time spent between each category comparatively in the form of a pie chart equaling 100%. It should be noted that the directionality of activities was not included in this question because this



category is a consequence of acting on these functions and happens throughout them all (Jesiek et al., 2018). Including a measurement in this category would have skewed the actual comparison of the functions and was left out to protect the integrity of the data.

In like fashion to the survey, the participant responses were captured according to demographic groups and function categories. No coding or legend process was required as participants provided the data directly (i.e., I spend 25% of my time on building and maintaining networks). Once the data was organized according to demographic group and function, means and standard deviations were calculated across each demographic group for each function category (e.g., TCNs, on average, spend 30% of their time on information and knowledge management with a standard deviation of 0.23 for this demographic group).

### **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the research methodology for this research project, including the research design, data collection, sample, and data analysis. This study used a mixed methods approach with both qualitative and inductive methods on the frequency of use of boundary spanning functions. Chapter 4 reports on the results and analysis.

## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter reports the results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the survey and interview data. These results supported the research questions: (a) does the use of CBS functions vary in MNCs, and (b) if they do vary, are the variances influenced by the person's national and cultural relationship to the HQ? Analysis of this study identified that all four categories of demographic groups performed all five categories of functions with a minor deviation between the groups and categories. Adding to the existing research, a sixth function category was identified in addition to the original five functions outlined by research. This new category is empathetic comforting.

Among the six categories, 16 sub-categories were identified: sharing, sharing with an explanation, gathering, and assembling (for information and knowledge management), task coordinator, negotiating, mediating, generating social capital for collaboration, and feedback (for coordination), influencing, representing, and protecting (for influencing and representing), creating networks and maintaining networks (for building and maintaining networks), and showing concern and active listening (for empathetic comforting). Adding to the supporting research, a new category emerged concerning the environment where cultural boundary spanners work. This category is organizational connectedness with two subcategories, connected and disconnected. Additionally, in alignment with the existing literature two themes were identified as needs for CBS in the workforce: recognition and training. The following sections describe these themes in detail and their use between the demographic groups.

## Quantitative Survey Results

All survey participants confirmed that they use all five of the original function categories. Across demographic groups (except for HCNs), representing and influencing was the highest used function with an overall mean of 4.45. Among these demographic groups, XPTs ranked highest in representing and influencing, with a mean of 5.0 and a standard deviation of 0 (all participants reported Always). The second highest-rated function was directionality of activities, with an overall mean of 4.4 and a standard deviation of 0.29 across the demographic groups. HCNs and TCNs tied in ranking the highest in this category, with a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 0.55 for both groups. Table 2 highlights the results of all demographic groups by function categories.

**Table 2**

### ***Boundary Spanning Functions by Frequency***

Demographic Group		Information & Knowledge Management	Coordination	Building & Maintaining Networks	Representing & Influencing	Directionality of Activities	Group Overall
PCN	Mean	3.33	3.5	3.83	4	4	3.73
	SD	1.21	0.84	1.17	0.63	1.1	0.30
HCN	Mean	4.2	4	4.2	4.6	4.6	4.32
	SD	1.3	1.22	0.45	0.55	0.55	0.27
TCN	Mean	4.2	4	3.8	4.2	4.6	4.16
	SD	0.84	1	1.1	0.45	0.55	0.30
XPT	Mean	4.5	3.75	3.75	5	4.3	4.26
	SD	0.56	1.26	1.5	0	0.5	0.53
Function Overall	Mean	4.1	3.8	3.9	4.45	4.4	
	SD	0.5	0.24	0.21	0.44	0.29	

*Note.* 1 = Never; 5 = Always

N=20; (PCN – N=6, HCN – N=5, TCN – N=5, XPT N=4)

### Pie Chart Analysis

Comparatively, when asked during interviews to curate a pie-chart depicting how participants divide up their time across four of the functions, the demographic groups also, with the exception of the HCNs again, self-reported representing and influencing as the category they spent the most time on. Similarly, the XPT group ranked highest among groups in representing and influencing, the same as what was reported in the survey data. It is worth noting that while the average is the highest (50%) the standard deviation is also the highest overall 44.4. For clarity, directionality of activities was not included because it is a byproduct of the other four functions (Jeseik et al., 2018). For full results of the time spent on functions, see Table 3.

**Table 3**

***Pie Chart: Time Spent on Functions***

		Information & Knowledge Management	Coordination	Building & Maintaining Networks	Representing & Influencing
PCN	Mean	23%	22%	20%	35%
	SD	9.7	7.6	7.07	7.9
HCN	Mean	35%	18.75%	25%	21%
	SD	10	10.3	4.08	14.36
TCN	Mean	23%	25%	21%	31%
	SD	9.57	7.07	9.4	2.5
XPT	Mean	30%	38%	25%	50%
	SD	5	12.5	21.8	44.4
Function Overall	Mean	28%	28%	23%	34%
	SD	5.85	6.13	2.6	12.03

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

This high deviation is the result of one XPT who approached this question differently by saying that representing and influencing is always happening through all functions. Therefore, they provided a count of 100% for this category and then gave percentages for the other categories as if they were in a pie-chart on their own. This accounts for the unusually high mean and standard deviation for XPTs in representing and influencing. It also accounts for why across all the functions for the XPT group, they rank the highest of all groups and have the highest standard deviation too. While this may have skewed the data for this group, it is an interesting point to reflect on and elaborate on later.

In contrast, in representing and influencing the TCNs reported a mean of 31% and the lowest of all standard deviations 2.5. In information and knowledge management, HCNs reported the most use of time in this category, with a mean of 35% and a standard deviation of 10. They also reported a mean of 18.75% of time spent on coordination, the lowest of all times for all functions in all groups. The highest-ranking group for this category is again the XPT with a mean of 38% and a standard deviation of 12.5 but the TCNs again ranked second with a mean of 25% and a lower standard deviation of 7.07 for this function. Building and maintaining networks had the lowest overall ranking with a mean across the groups of 23% and the lowest overall standard deviation of 2.6. In this category, HCNs rank the highest with a mean of 25% and a low standard deviation of 4.08.

During the interview process, some participants also volunteered information saying which functions they would like to do more of and which they would prefer to do less of (Table 4). Interestingly, they said they would like to

spend less time on information and knowledge management and coordination and more time building networks and influencing others.

**Table 4**

***Feedback: Time Spent on Functions***

		Information & Knowledge Management	Coordination	Building & Maintaining Networks	Representing & Influencing
PCN	More	0	0	2	1
	Less	1	1	0	0
HCN	More	0	0	0	0
	Less	0	0	0	0
TCN	More	0	0	2	0
	Less	0	1	0	0
XPT	More	0	0	1	1
	Less	1	1	0	0
Total	More	0	0	5	2
	Less	2	3	0	0

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

**Qualitative Data Overview**

In total 17 people were interviewed: PCN (N= 5), HCN (N=4), TCN (N=4), XPT (N=3), and Other (N=1). Among them, there were 315 years of cross-cultural work experience. One conversation was categorized as “Other” because it did not fit a typical boundary spanning experience. Across the remaining 16 participants, the total number of cultures the group worked with, by their account, was 343; however, this number is much greater depending on what counts as culture (e.g., entire continents, individual countries, tribes). On average, the number of languages spoken by each demographic group was as follows: PCN =

1.2, HCN = 4.5, TCN = 3, and XPT = 2\*. For added context, one XPT acted as a translator between the differences of cultures but only spoke one language.

The participants came from seven different MNCs; however, 41% came from one MNC. All the represented MNCs' HQs were based in the United States or Australia. The range in size of the MNCs the participants came from is as follows: Small 200-500 (N = 2), Medium 2,000-10,000 (N = 3), and Large: 60,000+ (N = 2). Table 5 shows the number of overall occurrences of the five boundary spanning function categories across all 16 interviews. Overall, information management had the greatest number of occurrences at 181, consistent with the existing research (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014).

**Table 5**

***Total Code Occurrences by Function Category***

	Information & Knowledge Management	Coordination	Representing & Influencing	Building & Maintaining Networks	Directionality of Activities	Empathetic Comforting
Occurrences	181	109	97	74	28	31

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

***Information and Knowledge Management***

**Themes and Examples.** The function category of information and knowledge management produced the greatest number of codes and consistent with other research experiences (Backmann et al., 2020). Among these codes were four main themes outlined by Jesiek (2018): sharing information, sharing information with explanation, gathering information, and assembling information. As exhibited in the literature review, there are extensive amounts of sub-themes already identified, and I have attempted to consolidate them through this research. Table

6 showcases paraphrased examples for information and knowledge management themes and sub-themes. It should be noted that all examples in this study are paraphrased or generalized to protect the identity of the participants.

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INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

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In information gathering, the first sub-theme is mapping, scanning, and scouting, which was first identified by Ancona and Caldwell (1992). This sub-theme seeks to understand the environment by searching for and collecting information. The second sub-theme is receiving information/access to information, which is a sub-theme I have carved out to express the mere receiving of information (i.e., “I have so many emails...”).

The second theme is sharing information where a common lexicon exists, as outlined by Jesiek et al. (2018) and the first sub-theme identified is transacting. This sub-theme represents the action of plainly sending information (e.g., emails, newsletters, meetings) which was inspired by Barner-Rasmussen et al.’s (2014) work on four boundary spanning themes of linking, transacting, facilitating, and intervening. The second sub-theme is Filtering/Buffering (Jesiek et al., 2018), which is withholding or deciding which information to share, when, and with whom.

The third theme is sharing information where an explanation is needed (Jesiek et al., 2018). The first sub-theme here is display and represent information. This sub-theme centers on making a case by providing data or



storytelling so that another party might be represented. Interpreting centers on conveying the meaning behind an interaction or information given and can be heavily focused on cultural aspects or can be functional (i.e., explaining financial matters to non-financial people). Providing information on values, norms, and ways of working is specifically connected to cultural nuance. It serves as an educating and influencing tool to create a shared understanding. It is different from display and represent information and interpret information in that it uniquely focuses on cultural aspects. Providing the birds eye view was a new sub-theme identified. Interviewees mentioned having the ability to see the bigger picture from their vantage point and used that to help others see how they fit into it by “laying out the map” for them. Reframe, clarify, and explain serves the purpose of addressing misunderstanding and confusion in the mind of the recipient and is different from interpreting in that it is centered on the need to understand and not to be informed. Translate and transform has to do with changing the information in some way, either by literally changing it into another language or by changing its format. All these sub-themes except for providing the birds eye view were consistent with Jesiek’s (2018) work on boundary spanning functions.

Lastly, the theme of assemble information concerns the sense-making a boundary spanner engages in when they look at the wealth of information, they have access to. There is an element of integrating and assimilating the data so they can clearly see how it’s connected and what it means (Jesiek et al., 2018). Overall, the data showed that all the boundary spanners had significant access to and responsibility for managing information.

**Demographic Group Participation.** Table 7 displays the number of participants in each demographic group who mentioned the corresponding theme. In each of the categories (i.e., sharing, sharing with an explanation, and assembling) all participants, except for one, mentioned the use of the theme. Gathering information is the theme mentioned the least across groups with a mean representation of 83%. Of note, the XPT group mentioned all themes across all participants (mean = 100%, SD = 0) and had the highest level of participation among the groups.

**Table 7**

***Information and Knowledge Management: Demographic Group Participation***

Group	Sharing	Sharing with Explanation	Gathering	Assembling	Mean	SD
HCN	75%	100%	75%	100%	88%	0.14
PCN	100%	80%	80%	100%	90%	0.12
TCN	100%	100%	75%	75%	88%	0.14
XPT	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0.00
Mean	94%	95%	83%	94%		
SD	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.13		

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

Three participants commented that managing the flow of information was a large portion of their role and work. Two HCN participants discussed making boundary objects or information systems to increase access to information for others and to minimize their work on sharing and being responsible for all communication of information. Some made the connection that information was just a tool to support their real objectives, such as influencing an outcome or

representing others. One HCN even went as far as to say that if they communicated well, it would reduce the frequency of negotiation and mediation they had to engage in.

Information and knowledge management seemed to show up everywhere. As examples, in meetings where updates were given and received, preventing actions by providing critical details, ensuring a project was set up to succeed through providing a fuller picture, and even creating a sense of comradery by filtering or withholding information until all parties felt understood. Filtering and assembling information was a key feature of how the PCNs approached resolving conflict and creating alignment in their organization.

### ***Coordination***

**Themes and Examples.** The category of coordination had the second greatest number of mentions across the five categories and is comprised of five themes: feedback, task coordinator, negotiating, mediating, and creating social capital for organizing. These themes and their associated sub-themes can be found in Table 8. The task coordinator theme carries no sub-themes and represents the general acts of coordination, organizing, problem-solving, and planning that comes with completing work or projects. The negotiating sub-theme shares no sub-themes; in this context, it represents the work of compromise and conversation between two parties one-on-one to come to some sort of agreement or plan. Providing feedback also has no sub-themes and is the act of providing feedback or correcting a person's perspective, responses, behaviors, etc. Mediating is like negotiation but is different in that the boundary spanner

plays the role of the third party (Barmeyer et al., 2020), acting in the middle as a negotiator between two parties. In mediating, there are three sub-themes: showing neutrality, being an intermediary, and utilizing others (locals) for mediation. Finally, creating social capital for organizing was identified by Jesiek (2018) as a precursor to coordination by creating shared identities and identifying joint interests across parties. This theme has two sub-themes: identify joint interests and seek understanding.

**Table 8**

***Coordination: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Providing Feedback		"I provided feedback", "Can I correct your thinking on this?" "Honest confrontation is critical"
Generating Social Capital for Coordination	Identify Joint Interests	"I look for what is common between us to help us move forward" "Whatever you do, it needs to benefit both sides" "We need to find the middle ground" "what do we have that we can both work with?"
	Seek Understanding	"Can you tell me how you see it from your perspective?" "I ask a lot of questions to be sure I understand first" "I just try to practice listening"
Mediating	Intermediary	"I am a facilitator between them" "Peacemaker" "I'll go and talk to one group to try to understand then I talk to the other group and try to create understanding, it's a lot of back and forth between the groups" "Mediating"
	Showing Neutrality	"I withheld my own opinions" "I agree with you and I agree with them"
	Utilizing Others (locals) for Mediation	"Sometimes, I bring in another person from that culture to help explain to both groups between the groups because I'm not knowledgeable enough" "I relied on local people to help with my interactions"
Negotiating		"Getting people to compromise can be really hard", "There is frequent negotiation, I'm trying make sure what we need is taken care of" "Figuring out what we need to do, how we do it, and without compromising too much"
Task Coordinator		"I'll go to them, ask them to do this, and then arrange the details with everyone else too", "Hey, you do this, and then I can do that, and we'll get it done together", "I've got to coordinate everything to ensure the work gets done"

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

**Demographic Group Participation.** Table 9 displays the percent of participants in each demographic group who mentioned the coordination theme. The themes of task coordinator, mediating, and generating social capital for coordination tied for most consistently mentioned across groups. Negotiating and providing feedback tied for least mentioned themes. The demographic group with the greatest representation across themes was the PCN group with 100% mention of the theme during the time of their interview. By far, PCNs utilized the sub-theme of seeking understanding most. All five participants mentioned this action, describing it as pausing, asking questions to generate understanding, and just taking the time to listen to the concerns of others before acting on a decision. Conversely, the HCNs mentioned these themes the least among the groups. When coordinating, the HCNs mentioned the mediating theme and associated sub-themes most. It seemed that they would receive instructions that were not appropriate for their context and took on the role of going between the groups to generate new paths and solutions for project success. Following this, they took on the role of the Task Coordinator to organize and roll-out projects.

**Table 9**  
***Coordination: Demographic Group Participation***

Group	Task Coordinator	Negotiating	Mediating	Generating Social Capital	Feedback	Mean	SD
HCN	75%	75%	100%	75%	75%	80%	11%
PCN	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%
TCN	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%	95%	11%
XPT	100%	67%	100%	100%	67%	87%	18%
Mean	94%	86%	94%	94%	86%		
SD	0.13	0.17	0.13	0.13	0.17		

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)  
% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

### ***Representing and Influencing***

**Themes and Examples.** Representing and influencing had three themes: representing, influencing, and protecting. The representing theme depicts actions taken passively or actively to represent the broader organization or others. Some participants mentioned feeling a sense of always being “on” because people saw them not as themselves but as figureheads representing something greater. Representing and influencing were shown to have the greatest frequency across all groups and functions in both the survey and pie chart data. This data was further supported by participants’ comments saying representing and influencing was the essence of their role, that their leadership was done purely by influence. Table 10 outlines the themes and examples of how boundary spanners go about representing and influencing in their work. Representing carried three sub-themes: ambassador, representing other cultures, and representing the interests of others. Influencing has two sub-themes: ensuring project success and molding activities. Protecting has no sub-themes.

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INSERT TABLE 10 ABOUT HERE  
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**Demographic Group Participation.** Representing was the theme with the highest participation across all themes with a mean of 95% and a standard deviation of 0.10 (Table 11). The XPT group showed 100% participation across all themes and had a standard deviation of 0, making them the group with the highest participation across the demographic groups. This result is also in alignment with the results from the survey and pie chart data. This was displayed

in their confidence in the strength of their relationships to block actions that could negatively impact the host country, reflect what the context is like in the host country, and then use their ability to influence and mold others to bring about a necessary change. They seemed to use all three sub-themes interchangeably to influence the desired outcome. The theme of protecting showed the least participation across all groups with a mean of 68% and a standard deviation of 0.34. The PCN group showed the least participation in the protecting theme with a 20% participation rate.

**Table 11**

***Representing and Influencing: Demographic Group Participation***

	Influencing	Representing	Protecting	Mean	SD
HCN	75%	100%	75%	83%	0.14
PCN	80%	80%	20%	60%	0.35
TCN	100%	100%	75%	92%	0.14
XPT	100%	100%	100%	100%	0.00
Mean	89%	95%	68%		
SD	0.13	0.10	0.34		

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

This participation surfaced in a middle-level manager whose position was responsible for going between the foreign subsidiaries and HQ to represent both sides. They commented that they witnessed frequent behavior from the HQ to treat the subsidiaries with less regard and felt the guilt and burden of preventing the perpetuation of this behavior. The HCN and TCN groups also showed less participation in this theme. Some commented that instead of pushing back, they

felt they did not have enough power or were not considered equal enough to be able to intervene and opted to go along with what was expected of them instead.

While Table 11 displays a low participation rate for the PCNs in the protecting sub-theme, PCNs were still observed to enact a protecting type of behavior by managing the flow of information and seeking understanding. In contrast, all other individuals who mentioned the protecting behavior commented that it was rarely well received when they enacted it. Several participants commented that taking this behavior resulted in criticism or being shut down outright. Despite its poor reception, protecting was viewed as a critical action participants had to take to ensure project success.

### ***Building and Maintaining Networks***

Building and maintaining networks is the function that had the least frequency. Ironically, four participants mentioned that the success of their work was dependent upon the strength of their relationships, and eight (50%) of the participants said that networking and building relationships was their greatest strength and the modus operandi of their work. This irony is affirmed by five participants who mentioned wanting to do more relationship-building in their role.

**Themes and Examples.** When building and maintaining networks is being acted on, there are two main themes: creating networks and maintaining networks. In creating networks, there are three sub-themes that use the words of the participants: creating bridges, network enhancer/reticulist (a person who creates and services networks), and *tertius iugens* (a third who joins). These all have to do with creating new pathways between people where they did not exist



before. It may be creating entire systems of connection, connecting disconnected individuals, or bringing two people together for a certain purpose. In maintaining networks, there are two sub-themes: connected to external networks, which refers to the extent of the already existing relationships, and connecting internally, which refers to the actions taken to continue to develop these existing relationships. See Table 12 for details.

**Table 12**

***Building and Maintaining Networks: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Creating networks	Creating bridges	"I'm constantly creating bridges", "I'm always thinking about how I can connect people with others", "When someone asks for help, I know who to connect them to and will point them in that direction", "I try to pair people up so that they can learn from each other"
	Network enhancer/Reticulist	"I created a meeting where all these people could meet and connect regularly, we all work in a similar field and there is much we can learn from each other", "I hold weekly meetings where people across the continent can meet and get to know each other"
	<i>Tertius iugens</i>	"I once brought in this guy from a totally different department because I knew he would be critical for success", "I brought them in and they introduced themselves", "these people wouldn't usually be included, but I felt it was important that they were connected"
Maintaining networks	Connected to external networks	"I work with the board, global forums, headquarters, and my local teams, I'm very well connected", "there is a lot of stakeholder management"
	Connecting internally	"It's important for me to know my people", "I regularly connect with others, we have weekly meetings and I take the time to hear how they are doing and to get to know them", "I spend a lot of time traveling so that I can know people and the context they are operating in", "Relationships are invaluable", "I can't do anything without my relationships", "I'm always trying to build relationships and unity on my team"

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

**Demographic Group Participation.** Looking at the demographic group participation for building and maintaining networks, shown on Table 13, maintaining networks was the most represented theme at 100% by both the HCNs and the TCNs. Overall, the TCNs showed 100% participation for both themes and had the greatest participation of all demographic groups. While the TCNs utilized both creating and maintaining networks, they tended to emphasize creating networks where they did not exist previously. This looked like creating focus groups across their organization or even including members outside of their organization to create support and solutions for others in similar situations. They also used their ability to see the big picture to ensure that those who might have been forgotten were consulted and invited into necessary projects. Sometimes they connected individuals who would not usually communicate with each other due to cultural or economic differences. In general, the depth and breadth of their relationships served as the basis through which they created new networks in service of solution finding, perspective taking, and sharing resources.

**Table 13**

***Building and Maintaining Networks: Demographic Group Participation***

	Creating Networks	Maintaining Networks	Mean	SD
HCN	75%	100%	88%	0.18
PCN	80%	80%	80%	0.00
TCN	100%	100%	100%	0.00
XPT	100%	67%	84%	0.23
Mean	89%	87%		
SD	0.13	0.16		

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

The group with the least representation was the PCNs. When the PCNs enacted building and maintaining networks, they tended to lean into maintaining networks most often. This seemed to be connected to the need to create trust, increase familiarity with, and source understanding of the parties they worked with across the national and cultural divides. They mentioned using travel and frequent meetings where they took the time to listen and get to know others. This behavior served the purpose of being able to later design appropriate solutions or have the necessary social capital required to draw upon when they needed to make requests of others.

In general, when asked, there was some confusion among some of the demographic groups concerning this category. Some participants alluded that they already have strong existing relationships and no longer needed to dedicate as much time to this. While others considered this to be networking in terms of what one might do to get a job or get an “in” somewhere where a relationship might not already exist. However, when prompted that building and maintaining relationships could be as simple as talking to people and hearing about their day, many changed their tune to say something like, “Oh, I’m always doing that, I couldn’t do anything without it”. It seemed that building and maintaining relationships was almost like the water they were swimming in, and it was so integrated that they never had to think about it.

### ***Directionality of Activities***

The directionality of activities category was present throughout the interviews and was exhibited by all participants. All participants talked of going

back and forth between groups, looking to external groups for answers, or representing different groups. These descriptions of directionality of activities showed up when participants described behaviors of sourcing information or acting as a representative. See Table 14 for themes and examples.

**Table 14**

***Directionality of Activities: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Paraphrased Examples
Directionality of Activities	“Going back and forth”, “Taking the information up the chain”, “Talking to this group about them and then on the flip side talking to them about this group”, “Going between both sides” “Middle manager”

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

***Social Networks***

Finally, during the interviews participants were asked to reflect on their view of themselves and their relationship to the HQs they worked for. Answers resulted in clues pertaining to where the individuals’ formal and informal relationships lie across the HQ and foreign subsidiary boundaries. Formal relationships were things like organizational structures, role responsibilities, and decision-making power. Informal relationships were things like family, friends, and general connectedness to people inside and outside the organization.

Table 15 summarizes whether participants mentioned formal or informal relationships with either the foreign subsidiaries and/or the HQ. The XPT’s group possessed the greatest number of social networks and had strong formal and informal relationships in both the HQ and with foreign subsidiaries. The group with the least number of social networks was the HCNs. This group overall

seemed to voice the greatest amount of distance and disconnect from the HQ and many of their relationships were more informal in nature. The TCNs had slightly more relationships than their HCN counterparts. This was because some of them had spent time living in the country of the HQ, providing them with more informal networks. Positionally, as a group, their roles also tended to have more formal connections to the HQs. The PCN group possessed the second-highest number of social networks. Many PCNs worked for the HQ but their roles were formally connected to the foreign subsidiaries resulting in a similar experience to the XPT group by being well connected across both sides of the fence.

**Table 15**

***Social Networks Across Demographic Groups***

	Informal		Formal		Mean	SD
	Subsidiary	HQ	Subsidiary	HQ		
HCN	100%	75%	100%	25%	75%	0.35
PCN	80%	80%	100%	100%	90%	0.12
TCN	100%	75%	100%	75%	88%	0.14
XPT	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	0.00

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

**Emergent Data**

This study applied a deductive and inductive method to coding. This enabled the integration of current research as well as made room for new findings to emerge. In this process, three new categories were identified in the data and are detailed in the following sections.

### ***Empathetic Comforting***

The first category to emerge was empathetic comforting. Throughout the interviews, participants in each demographic group continued to mention asking questions, listening, seeking understanding, and ensuring that all parties felt heard and understood. This study was able to identify empathetic comforting as a behavior the boundary spanners performed which was exhibited in two themes: active listening and showing concern. See Table 16 for themes and examples.

**Table 16**

#### ***Empathetic Comforting: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Paraphrased Examples
Active Listening	“I ask a-lot of questions, I want to be sure I understand what’s really going on before I do anything else”, “I’ll often just listen for a long time before I ever say anything”, “It requires patience, but it is important to listen, ask, and understand”
Showing Concern	“I want to know what their concerns are and I want to them to feel that I have understood them”, “I wanted to created empathy and understanding between everyone involved”

*Note.* N = 16; (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

In Table 17, HCNs had 100% participation in both categories of active listening and showing concern. They did this by utilizing listening, allowing others to voice their concerns, and providing a sense of acknowledgment to concerned parties so that they could move forward regardless of the situation. This seemed to stem from situations where they might not be able to influence the outcome or the situation, but still needed to enlist buy-in from parties despite the situation at hand. They used this as a means of enabling themselves to act as an effective Task Coordinator when enacting projects that had been passed on to them.

Table 17

***Empathetic Comforting: Demographic Group Participation***

	Active Listening	Showing Concern
HCN	100%	100%
PCN	100%	40%
TCN	50%	50%
XPT	67%	33%
Mean	79%	56%
SD	0.25	0.30

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

For the PCNs, they all mentioned using active listening as a means of empathetic comforting. This looked like collecting information, checking for understanding and adapting where they were able depending on the feedback received from other parties. As the ones frequently making decisions concerning projects that would impact others, they chose to listen, seek out divergent thought, and check for understanding to ensure project success.

***Cultural Boundary Spanning Needs***

Half of the participants commented that they wished there was greater recognition for the work it takes to do boundary spanning (Table 18). This was exhibited by mentioning feelings of relief when they realized they were not alone or moments of clarity realizing there was a term to explain what it was that they were doing in their everyday lives. In addition to this, participants mentioned the need for greater training in their organization for how to navigate and execute the CBS skill. This was expressed by voicing burnout or the failure rate of people who leave as soon as the pressure turned up in cross-boundary work.

**Table 18**  
***Needs for CBS: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Paraphrased Examples
Need for Recognition	“I didn’t know that there was a term for what I do”, “this is really important work and most people don’t even think about it being something that is important”, “I’ve never thought about my work in this way”, “I have learned something new today and now I’ll go back and re-evaluate how I’m doing my work and where I’m spending my time”
Need for Training	“There is a huge need for training on this topic. Somebody needs to be talking about it so that we can figure out how to do this better”, “this is my everyday life, but it isn’t something that gets acknowledged in my company”, “we need to learn how to become a truly global company, not just a multi-national one”, “not working together is a missed opportunity, if only we talked about how to do it”

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

It was expressed that there were collaborative opportunities and potential value propositions that were not being explored simply from of the lack of emphasis on collaboration globally. Some mentioned they were the first to pioneer this type of work and were eager to participate in the study so that they could learn more about it to support their ongoing efforts. Table 18 depicts need for recognition and need for training as emergent findings in this CBS study. Building on the need for recognition and training, the data also surface another dynamic that was happening simultaneously with the boundary spanning functions: organizational connectedness.

### ***Organizational Connectedness***

Organizational connectedness is a category this study carved out to explain what seemed to be impacting the boundary spanning behaviors and sentiments in either a positive or negative way. Over time, it became obvious that



while boundary spanning can be difficult to execute in general, some environmental elements seemed to make it harder or easier to carry out. The theme of being disconnected was created to refer to the elements that seemed to cause negative sentiments or outcomes for the boundary spanners. The theme connected refers to the elements that seemed to cause positive sentiments or outcomes for the boundary spanners. See Table 19 for themes and examples.

**Table 19**

***Organizational Connectedness: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Disconnected	Causes	Language Policies, Organizational Structure, Ethnocentric Points of View, Neglect, Racism, Time Pressure
	Artifacts	Time Zone Blindness, Silos, Misaligned Priorities, Derogatory Names, Working on Assumptions, Last Minute Communication, Lack of Trust, Criticism of Others
	Methods	One-Size-Fits-All-Approach, Withholding Information, Not Answering Questions, Disregarding Concerns, Suppressing Divergent Thought, Inequity, Acting Without Consulting Others
	Impacts	Feeling Overlooked, Feeling Crushed or Overburdened, Feeling Inferior, Feeling Outsourced, Feeling Not Understood, Feeling Suspicion Towards Others, Fear of Speaking Up, Failure to Succeed, Rumors, and Rebellion
Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Connected	Causes	Communication Safety, Time and Resources Allocated, Organizational Structure, Thinking Ethnorelativistically
	Methods	Creating Opportunities to Invite Divergent Thought, Building on What Capabilities Already Exist, Treating Others Equally, Strong Information Networks, Explaining the Why, Listening to Others, taking a Collaborative Global Approach, Appreciating Differences
	Impacts	Increased Agility, Reduced Conflict, Feeling Heard and Supported, Buy-In, Project Success, Feeling Understood, Ability to See the Whole Picture, Feeling Connected, Feeling Equal

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

In disconnected, four sub-themes emerged: causes, artifacts, methods, and impacts. In causes, participants talked about others not wanting to take the time to explore the challenges they might be facing, being asked to implement something that had no consideration for its context and was not transferable, being cut off from the broader organization and its information, and the expectation for all employees to be able to speak English. The causes were further supported by artifacts that hinted at a disconnected environment.

Among these artifacts were things like doubt and lack of trust between parties, derogatory names used to jest about other groups, misaligned priorities and working in different directions, and criticism of those who tried to speak up, push back, and voice critical information for project success. Some methods that were mentioned that perpetuated the disconnected environments were: taking a one-size-fits-all approach to a global organization, disregarding voiced concerns, acting and planning without consulting the environment it was intended for, and favoring one geographical location over all the others. The impacts of the causes, artifacts, and methods mentioned were described as feeling overlooked, not cared for, overburdened, inferiority, suspicion, and eventually rebellion.

One TCN participant put it plainly:

There's a lot of focus on diversity and inclusion in my company, and I think that this is a type of diversity that sometimes ... nobody's looking at it, right? I sometimes wonder if the company I work with is a US company, with remote sites in other countries, or is it truly a multinational company?

In the positive outcomes or sentiments, the theme of being connected emerged. In connected, three sub-themes were identified: causes, methods, and impacts. In causes for connectedness, things like communication safety, the existence of room for divergent thoughts to be heard without judgment or fear of retaliation, taking the time to survey the context, hearing others' concerns, investing in others, considering differences in culture as equal rather than good or bad, and creating intentional spaces for people to be globally connected were all mentioned as elements which created positive results. In methods, people made efforts to invite others to speak up and share their true thoughts and opinions, they sought out what resources might already exist that could be used to reach the ends desired, created pathways for people to have greater access to information, and appreciated others just as they were. The impacts of these methods were the organization's ability to move faster, succeed more, experience less conflict, and design products suited for their intended environment. The emotional impact was that people felt seen and heard, even if their concerns could not be met, and they felt understood and connected to the organization. One HCN participant summed it up nicely, "If I had to put a macro level on the topic today, it is: "How We Treat Others." More specifically when multiple cultures combine."

All participants mentioned elements of the connected theme in the interview process. Only one participant, a PCN, did not mention any disconnected theme elements. What is interesting is that no matter what side of the proverbial fence a participant sat on, HQ or foreign subsidiary, all groups

mentioned the challenges and solutions to enacting CBS across national and cultural boundaries (Table 20).

**Table 20**

***Organizational Connectedness: Demographic Group Participation***

	Disconnected	Connected
HCN	100%	100%
PCN	80%	100%
TCN	100%	100%
XPT	100%	100%
Mean	95%	100%
SD	0.10	0

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

% = Number of participants who referenced this theme in their interview

**Functions Overall**

Looking across the six function categories (Table 21), the standard deviation for each function category is quite small with zero deviation for directionality of activities and the highest deviation in representing and influencing (SD = 0.17). Representing and influencing had the lowest participation because the PCN group rarely used the protecting sub-theme, yielding a lower overall participation rate. This is why the PCNs show the lowest participation of boundary spanning functions across all groups. Overall, the XPTs exhibited the highest participation in boundary spanning behaviors and were followed closely by the TCNs and HCNs. All demographic groups showed minor deviations in their participation rates, with PCNs having the highest standard deviation of 0.15. Some of this deviation between the PCNs may have been influenced by the differences in their roles. Some were HQ Executives with

significant decision-making power and others were middle managers with less power and greater responsibility to act as a go-between for both groups. Overall, though, each demographic group performs each function with little variances between both the groups and the boundary spanning functions.

**Table 21**

***Total Demographic Group Participation Across All Functions***

	Information & Knowledge Management	Coordination	Representing & Influencing	Building & Maintaining Networks	Directionality of Activities	Empathetic Comforting	Mean	SD
HCN	88%	80%	83%	88%	100%	100%	90%	0.08
PCN	90%	100%	60%	80%	100%	100%	85%	0.15
TCN	88%	95%	92%	100%	100%	75%	92%	0.09
XPT	100%	87%	100%	84%	100%	100%	95%	0.08
Mean	92%	91%	84%	88%	100%	94%		
SD	0.06	0.09	0.17	0.09	0	0.13		

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

**Summary**

In summary, this chapter reviewed themes and examples and demographic group participation across the five main function categories. It also reviewed the quantitative data of the initial survey and pie chart responses to measure means and deviations between the demographic groups' use of the functions. Generally, there was significant representation from all groups in each of the function categories, and while there were variations in their use, these variations were small. Additionally, it reviewed three types of emergent data that surfaced during the interviews: empathetic comforting, needs for CBS, and organizational connectedness. Chapter 5 will provide a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on this analysis of the data.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to further the knowledge base of CBS in MNCs by exploring how its functions may differ across national and cultural boundaries. Understanding these potential differences can enable an MNC to account for and support boundary spanners in their efforts of global collaboration. A secondary purpose of this study was emancipatory in nature. The research on CBS has largely overlooked potential contributors to this skill and this study addressed this by representing the underrepresented voices. The hope is that it may inspire future researchers to include these voices in research and create a more diverse and holistic body of research on CBS. This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the findings and interpreting the results. Study limitations, recommendations for future research, and implications are explored.

### **Summary of Findings**

The first question this research study aimed to answer was: does the use of CBS functions vary, in MNCs? The data would suggest that yes, it does vary, however only slightly. This was further affirmed throughout the interviews and can be assessed by referencing the demographic participation T tables for each of the six functions. An important finding this data suggests is that all the demographic groups (i.e., PCN, HCN, TCN, XPT) enact CBS with little variation between them. This is a critical point because of the tendency for cultural boundary spanning research to only focus on XPTs in its endeavors. There is potentially much to learn and add to the existing research because of this historically exclusive perspective.

However, if the use of boundary spanning functions does vary between groups, then the question becomes what might be driving that variance? Which brings us to the second question this study aimed to address: if there is variance in the use of CBS functions, are the variances influenced by the person's national and cultural relationship to the HQs of the MNC? Looking at the standard deviation for each demographic group, there is very little deviation within the demographic groups. This result infers that each demographic group is sharing a similar, but unique experience based on their national and cultural relationship to the HQ. This leads to the question, what might be influencing the unique experience these demographic groups are having, leading to such small differences in their use of boundary spanning functions?

Boundary spanning is built on the premise of social capital theory (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Kostova & Roth, 2003; Sitar & Katja Mihelič, 2018), and studies on expatriate boundary spanning have linked knowledge transfer and the ability to boundary span across the organization to the strength of an individual's social networks (Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2008, Brion et al., 2012). XPTs, the group with the highest participation rate in boundary spanning overall, also possessed the greatest number of social networks, affirming previous research on social networks being an indicator of boundary spanning performance. However, PCNs, the group with the lowest participation rate in boundary spanning, possessed the second highest number of social networks. This suggested that something else might be influencing boundary spanning performance.

For clues, the emergent data that surfaced during the interviews, organizational connectedness, was useful. Almost all participants shared the woes of working across global boundaries and the challenges they faced in creating alignment across national and cultural issues in their corporations. Returning to the literature, Cross et al. (2013) describe another factor impacting an individual's ability to boundary span: leadership cultures within organizations. They identified three types of leadership cultures in organizations: interdependent, independent, and dependent.

Dependent leadership cultures look to people in positions of authority for leadership and operate in a hierarchical manner. Independent leadership cultures lean on expertise and emergent leadership within the group, assuming leadership will arise when necessary. Interdependent leadership cultures are intentional about sourcing information across groups, inviting divergent thought, and "view leadership as a collective activity" (Cross et al., 2013, p. 89). Each type of leadership culture, starting with the lowest level of connectedness (dependent), increases in organizational capacity and ability to boundary span. According to Cross et al. (2013):

Interdependent leadership cultures generally have stronger informal network and boundary spanning capabilities than dependent or independent ones. As the leadership culture becomes more interdependent, leading change through informal networks and reaching, bridging, and collaborating across internal and external boundaries will become increasingly natural. (p. 89)



Is the variance in boundary spanning functions influenced by a person's national and cultural relationship to the HQs? The data suggests that the answer is a qualified yes. However, this seems to be influenced by the extent of how strong their social networks are and how interdependent or not the organizational culture is. Returning to the "Other" participant whose interview was not included in the main body of this research; their organizational context was so diverse and connected globally that the issues of working cross-culturally seemingly vanished. There was no "I'm from this country and you're from that one" but rather, they were a group of global individuals working together towards a common cause: a highly interdependent culture. This is an interesting comparison when looking at other participants who experienced strong us and them environments and leads me to wonder what might MNCs be missing out on by not addressing the issues of organizational leadership cultures?

Finally, looking again across the demographic groups' participation in boundary spanning, the XPT group can be excellent at boundary spanning and research is not wrong to look to them for answers concerning effective CBS behavior. However, by widening the perspective to include other actors, a fuller picture comes into view. While on the surface PCNs demonstrated less boundary spanning participation, they shared stories of withholding their executive power and taking on organizational connectedness behaviors to create alignment in their organizations. The HCNs and TCNs shared powerful stories of the lengths they went to to bring disparate groups across the HQ and foreign subsidiary divide together, eliminating conflict and creating shared goals and identities.

Each group were powerful examples of boundary spanning-in-practice and are deserving of equal recognition.

## **Discussion**

This research contributed to the field of organization development by bringing a deeper understanding of how boundary spanning functions might vary across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs. It added to the existing literature in several ways, which are discussed further in this section.

First, this study seems to be the first of its kind to examine boundary spanning functions across multiple, commonly found demographic groups in MNCs, within the same study (i.e., PCN, HCN, TCN, XPT). This is a step toward emancipatory work and equal representation and treatment of groups globally. The results suggest that all people can be boundary spanners, regardless of their geographical or cultural relationship to the HQ. The question remains, what are the differences in how they perform CBS and what enables this performance? The demographic groups this study observed all exist within our MNCs today, so if there are differences in how they use boundary spanning functions, then perhaps we are missing important information within our research.

Second, this study begins to address the question of does the use of boundary spanning functions vary across these demographic groups by measuring and identifying individual behaviors applied in each group. It adds to the research by suggesting that, yes, the use of these functions does slightly vary across these groups. It then affirms and adds to the research by linking existing literature on social identity theory and organizational leadership cultures to some

of the symptoms of the variances identified in this study. The data suggests that the demographic groups found in MNCs are either empowered or diminished in their boundary spanning ability depending on how strong their social networks are and how interdependent the organizational leadership culture is.

Third, this study adds to the research by linking and adding to the existing functions identified in the boundary spanning literature. It adds to the literature by building on the work of Jeseik et al. (2018) through a table showing the relationships between the existing boundary spanning functions and adding more articles to this review of the literature. It also adds to the literature by connecting Backman et al.'s (2020) work on cultural gap bridging in multicultural teams to the boundary spanning literature by identifying empathetic comforting as a behavior exhibited in boundary spanning functions. By noting that similarly, Backman et al.'s (2020) integrating behavior was also identified in the interviews of three participants. Finally, it adds to the literature by identifying a new boundary spanning behavior: Providing the Bird's Eye View. This was categorized as a sub-theme of information and knowledge management.

### **Limitations**

Due to the lack of time and first-degree connections available, this study is limited by the small sample size. This limits the study in two main ways. First, the demographic groups are not large enough to accurately represent the characteristics and experiences of the entire population for each group. Second, the data are easily changed because of the small sample sizes (i.e., if one HCN doesn't mention a behavior, the group representation can shrink from 100% to

75%) meaning that the variances reflected may not be providing an accurate picture of the entire population's use of boundary spanning functions.

Furthermore, there were other demographic groups found in MNCs that were not able to be identified or included in the research (e.g., Inpats, Repats, others).

Additionally, 41% of the participants came from one MNC, meaning that the participants may not be an accurate reflection of MNCs collectively and overrepresent one perspective.

The other limitation would be the quantity of data collected. Due to the brevity of the length of this study, only a self-selected qualification survey and one-hour interview were collected from 17 participants. Frequently, boundary spanning researchers have used multiple interviews from peers and colleagues to act as a qualifying method for identifying participants who not only self-identify as boundary spanners but also are recognized by others as boundary spanners. This is another limitation of the study; applying greater rigor to qualifying the participants as boundary spanners. Due to the lack of data to analyze, only basic calculations of means and standard deviations could be run on things like the number of participants mentioning a certain behavior. While this does provide some level of a litmus test for what might be happening, it is a far cry from being able to perform robust data analysis.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the limitations, it is highly recommended that this study be conducted again on a much larger sample size, for a longer period of time, and collecting more types of data from different people multiple MNCs. There is also

opportunity to expand this research to include the repat and inpat demographic groups in addition to the groups already included in this study. Verification of all participants as boundary-spanners-in-practice would be helpful through interviewing others to confirm a perceived boundary spanning behavior in the participants. After identifying boundary-spanners-in-practice, there could be an assessment of their use of boundary spanning functions, the depth and type of their social networks, and identification of the organizational leadership culture they are operating in. This would be helpful to understand if a relationship exists between boundary spanners' social networks, organizational leadership culture, and their performance across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs. A study to look for any connections between boundary spanning and Global D.E.I. strategies for MNCs would be an offshoot of the research on CBS.

Additionally, this study simply provided a litmus test to assess if variances existed between the demographic groups in MNCs and did not assess the antecedents, effectiveness, or impacts of CBS behaviors in each group. While this study shows that the groups perform CBS almost equally, its limitations did not allow for a deeper examination of how the execution of these functions might vary between the groups. Because research is generally very limited on a comparative study of these groups, the opportunity to understand how CBS is utilized, its antecedents, and its effectiveness might across each demographic group is quite vast and is recommended for future research.

## Recommendations for Practice

As suggested by one participant in the interview process, recommendations for OD would be to examine our organizational structures, policies, reward systems, information systems, and decision-making processes to assess if they are serving the needs of global MNCs from an inclusive and ethnorelativistic point of view. 31% of the participants mentioned a desire to spend more time networking and building relationships. Several remarked that they would not be able to perform their jobs without their relationships and boundary spanning research affirms this strongly as one of the key antecedents for boundary spanning success. However, mentions of time pressures and the need to perform edged out this critical piece of boundary spanning success. A recommendation for employers is to prioritize making time for relationship-building to improve collaboration efforts.

In addition, many participants remarked that they had never thought of the work they did in the ways this study challenged them to think about it. They expressed gratitude to have this new lens to be able to understand what it is that they were doing in their everyday work. They expressed relief to know that they were not alone and that someone (the researcher) cared about this skill they were bringing. These remarks were consistent with Makela (2019), who identified that boundary spanning is widely unrecognized in the workforce. Based on this, another recommendation for employers is to adjust job descriptions to include boundary spanning skill sets and to create training programs or support groups for people who are likely to be filling boundary spanning roles.

What is remarkable about boundary spanners is their ability to see the world from a variety of perspectives and to hold them all as equal. What is unfortunate is that rarely their skill is recognized, resourced, or coached so that they might be able to do it better over a sustained period. Recalling that boundary spanning behaviors have been linked to organizational agility, reduced conflict, and ensuring project success (Schotter & Beamish, 2011; van Waardenburg & van Vliet, 2013), one cannot help but imagine how working in a global context might be transformed if MNCs created systems that supported and championed boundary spanners around the globe.

#### **A Note for the Reader**

What is D.E.I really? At this time, I notice that much of what has been marked as “good enough” for D.E.I. initiatives has been rolling out D.E.I. classes, making a few more diverse hires, wearing pins, and hanging signs in our windows. But sitting here with this research, pouring over the stories again and again, I know it is not nearly close to enough. If we want to see real diversity, equity, and inclusion take place in our places of work and living, then we must begin to create systems, global and local, that solicit the voice of others, invite divergent thought, take the time to really get to know and understand each other, and then design and act on systems that include each other.

I am afraid that until we begin to do this, our work towards D.E.I. will continue to do little more than lip service in the name of D.E.I. These statements are my own sentiment and are not made as statements of research, but simply to portray the message that rings loud and true for me as I sit with the stories of my

brothers and sisters around the globe. You may take these sentiments or leave them, but it is my hope that they may give you pause and challenge you to consider what voices you may have unintentionally or intentionally ignored and then move you to action to include them going forward.



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## Tables

**Table 1**

### ***Boundary Spanning Functions***

Information and Knowledge Management		
Themes	Examples	Author(s)
Sharing information	Filtering or buffering (decide what information should be shared, when and with whom)	(Adams, 1980; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Brion et al., 2012; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1982; Carlile, 2004; Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Meyer, 2010; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981)
	Transferring – where a common lexicon occurs and no explanation is needed. Also known as “Travel”	
	Reframe, explain, and clarify information	(Pawlowski & Robey, 2004)
	Process information	(Mehra & Schenkel, 2008)
	Adapt information	(Leifer & Delbecq, 1978; Lundberg, 2013)
	Codify information	(Cillo, 2005)
	Translate and transform information Bridge between language groups, provide and translate nuance communication	(Bechky, 2006; Carlile, 2004; <b>Orsini, 2019</b> )
Themes	Examples	Author(s)
	Display and represent information	(Kellogg et al., 2006; Shaw, 2002)
	Provide information about work and cultural values, norms, translation of language and meaning, sensemaking	<b>(Kuki et al., 2021)</b>
	Interpreter: translate language, translating and conveying meaning, context, tone etc.	<b>(Heskin &amp; Heffner, 1987; Sekiguchi, 2016)</b>
	Expats: relay local info, identify opportunities	<b>(Au &amp; Fukuda, 2002)</b>
Gathering information	Scouting, mapping, scanning, (especially outside of one's immediate team environment)	(Adams, 1980; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2010; <b>Engelhard &amp; Holtbrügge, 2018; Johnson &amp;</b>

		<b>Duxbury, 2010</b> ; Tushman & Scanlan, 1981)
Assembling information	“Emerging collage of diverse elements” Integrate knowledge from different disciplines, occupations, or systems of meaning Integrate elements into a more meaningful and complex whole	(Kellogg et al., 2006) (Andersen et al., 2013; Pennell Kelly G. et al., 2013; Ratcheva, 2009)
Coordination		
Task coordinator	Facilitate coordination Effective problem solving (through negotiating differences)	(Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; <b>Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014</b> ; Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2010; <b>Johnson &amp; Duxbury, 2010</b> )
Reconciling, lubricating	Overcoming differences with external partners, overcoming differences with internal partners	(Birkinshaw et al., 2017)
Cross-boundary organizing	Identifying problem boundaries Orchestrating collective responsibilities Developing systematic understanding	(Hsiao et al., 2012)
Theme	Examples	Author(s)
Generating social capital for coordination	Motivating, aligning identities, creating shared understanding and goals, fostering mutual respect, generating trust, facilitating social bonding, harmonizing, identify joint interests, build shared practices, define a joint identity, and negotiate the relationship between parties involved for collaboration	(Andersen et al., 2013; Du & Pan, 2013; <b>Engelhard &amp; Holtbrügge, 2018</b> ; Hepsø, 2008; Hoffer Gittell, 2002; Hustad & Bechina, 2012; Kidwell, 2013; Levina & Vaast, 2005; Maaninen-Olsson et al., 2008; Mudambi & Swift, 2009; Ratcheva, 2009; Williams, 2002)
Coordinating multicultural teams	Mediating cultural differences Mitigating conflict Negotiating cultural identity Intervening	<b>(Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Di Marco et al., 2010b; Engelhard &amp; Holtbrügge, 2018; Heskin &amp; Heffner, 1987; Mahnke et al., 2008; Sekiguchi, 2016; Yagi &amp; Kleinberg, 2011)</b>

Intermediary	Bridging language barriers, bridging cultural mentalities, mediating conflicts, showing neutrality (Third Party Role)	<b>(Barmeyer et al., 2020)</b>
Disembedded cosmopolitan	Reflecting the presuppositions, sensing others, thinking ethnorelativistically	
Dual Cultural Bridger	Facilitate mutual understanding between two parties whose goals and objectives are not aligned	<b>(Corsi et al., 2021)</b>
Multicultural organizing	Stimulant, catalyst, mobilizer, enabler, trainer	<b>(Heskin &amp; Heffner, 1987)</b>
Cognitive scaffolding	Foreign language and culture, building conceptual scheme, mentoring.	<b>(Roberts &amp; Beamish, 2017)</b>
<b>Building and Maintaining Networks</b>		
Maintaining networks	Connecting externally	(Abbott et al., 2013; Ansett, 2005; Fellows & Liu, 2012; Hirst & Mann, 2004)
	Connecting internally	(Birkinshaw et al., 2017; Lundberg, 2013)
	Other forms of connection i.e. HQ and foreign subsidiaries	<b>(Reiche, 2011)</b>
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>
	(Relational scaffolding) external benchmarking, hosting foreign partners, direct involvement in relationship development.	<b>(Roberts &amp; Beamish, 2017)</b>
Creating networks // networking	Bridging or creating bridges (networking), linking	<b>(Barner-Rasmussen et al., 2014; Bullinger et al., 2010; Cross et al., 2013; Pennell Kelly G. et al., 2013; Sekiguchi, 2016)</b>
	<i>Tertius iungens</i> : introducing disconnected others and forging stronger ties with those who are already connected	(Obstfeld, 2005)

	Reticulist – a person who creates, services and manipulates communication networks	(Williams, 2002)
	Network enhancer – creating, extending and maintaining local networks to serve a global MNC	(Corsi et al., 2021)
	(Spearheading) opening up new relationships, brokering existing relationships, generating broader visibility	(Birkinshaw et al., 2017)
<b>Representing and Influencing</b>		
Influencing	Exploring the political landscape Molding activities	(Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Andersen et al., 2013; Ansett, 2005; Brion et al., 2012; <b>Engelhard &amp; Holtbrügge, 2018; Johnson &amp; Duxbury, 2010;</b> Marrone, 2010)
Representing	Ambassador External representation	(Adams, 1980; Aldrich & Herker, 1977; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Beechler et al., 2017; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; <b>Johnson &amp; Duxbury, 2010;</b> Marrone, 2010)
Protecting / buffering	Gatekeeping, buffering, intervening	(Adams, 1980; Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Brion et al., 2012; Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2010; Friedman & Podolny, 1992; Johnson & Duxbury, 2010)
<b>Directionality of Activities</b>		
Theme	Examples	Author(s)
Engaging in directional activities	Outside-in, inside-out, and inside-in	(Jesiek et al., 2018)

*Note.* Adapted from Boundary Spanning and Engineering: A Qualitative Systematic Review by B. K. Jesiek, A. Mazzurco, N. T. Buswell, & J. D. Thompson, 2018, *Journal of Engineering Education*, 107(3), 380–413.

*Note.* **Bolded** authors specifically focused on cultural boundary spanning

Table 6

***Information and Knowledge Management: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Gathering information	Mapping, scanning, scouting	“I spend a lot of time trying to understand the context that everyone else is working in”, “I create spaces where people can gather so we can talk about what is happening in our part of the world, what we are working on etc.”, “I ask a lot of questions to help paint a fuller picture” “I went to great lengths to understand both perspectives” “I keep a pulse on what’s happening across the departments I supervise”, “I’m testing out new ideas to see how they might be received”
	Receiving information, access to information	“I get sent a lot of information”, “I’m receiving orders from above and collecting information from below and hearing from my peers too, I’m the center of it all” “all information comes to me so that it can go through me”
Sharing information	Transacting	“communicating” “passing” “sending” information, “communication hub” “sending information around the world” “I’m communicating information nearly every day”
	Filter/buffer	“I hold back information because they don’t need to know” “I’m trying to protect my team from all the information out there, I don’t want them to be overburdened” “when people ask for more information, I will tell them they already have enough”
Theme	Sub-theme	Paraphrased Examples
Sharing information where an explanation is needed	Display and represent	“Look at these reports, they show a different story because things are different here”, “it’s hard for people to understand, so I try to provide data”, “I represent my department’s needs at the global table” “if I see a piece of important information is missing, I will bring it up”
	Interpret	“If I understood you right, I think you meant “this””, “I’m constantly helping others understand what context they were coming from”

Provide information on values, norms, ways of working etc.	“There is a lot of educating I have to do on history, culture, and how things work around here”, “I’m often explaining that these are good people, this is just the way their culture does things”, “cultural translator”
Providing the “Birds eye view”	“Okay, if you do this and this it’s going to have an impact over here on this”, “I’m telling them the bigger initiatives that are driving some of the changes they see”, “the world is a wide and big place, let me tell you what it’s like” “I’m thinking about the big picture and trying to help people see it in their context”
Reframe, explain, clarify	“You have to take the time to explain things properly to people” “the why is so important and people need to know it” “I am looking for new ways to explain so that they might be able to capture the essence of what I’m trying to say”
Translate and transform	“I’m always acting as a translator and thinking about how we can provide information in people’s native languages”, “I’m checking and hiring people to provide accurate translations so that it makes sense on the other end”, “sometimes people send me stuff that just won’t be received well i.e. a long email, so I’ll change it to a format that will work in this context”
Assemble information	“I can see how everything fits together like a puzzle”, “we collate and make sense of the information that comes through my team”, “I have the unique vantage point where I can see everything and how it will impact our business priorities”

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*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)

Table 10

***Representing and Influencing: Themes and Examples***

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples
Ambassador		“Everywhere I go, I represent my company at all times, I’m never not representing us” “you realized everyone is watching you and what you do reflects on others”
Representing	Representing	“Look at the way these people do this”, “I have to remind them that things are different here, what works in one place won’t always work in another”, “I’m always reminding people of how things are different in this or that culture”
	Other Cultures	
	Representing the Interests of Others	“We won’t be able to do this in the the way that you are looking for”, “I’m always speaking on behalf of someone else”, “I am looking out for our business by representing my functions needs from around the world”, “I try to bring in the context of what the HQ is working on”
Influencing	Ensuring	“We can’t miss this detail or our efforts will fail”, “I try to think of and represent all the things that are relevant in order for this to work and put whatever has been missed into the mix”, “I’m trying to influence the way they are thinking about this so that they can work on it more effectively”
	Project Success	
	Molding	“I want them to know how this will be received so that maybe they can change their minds”, “my role is a lot of influencing, leading through influence” “I’m constantly trying to convince others about us”, “I’ll provide information to hopefully influence changes”
	Activities	
Protecting		“We’ve got to stop, slow down, back up” “I’ll sound the alarm when I see something is going to go wrong”, “I’ll push back and explain, no this is the way things are in this culture, It’s not wrong, it’s just different”, “I have to continuously say we can’t forget about xyz”

*Note.* N = 16 (PCN: N=5, HCN: N=4, TCN: N=4, XPT: N=3)



**Appendix A: Research Qualification Survey**

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your name?
2. Please provide the best email to contact you at: (personal email is recommended)
3. Do you work for or have worked for, in the past year, a multinational corporation in a cross-cultural capacity (MNC - a company or organization with both headquarters and foreign subsidiaries)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. What is the name of the MNC you work/worked for?
5. What staffing position are/were you in your MNC?
  - a. **Parent Country National** - A person who lives, works, and is from the nation of the MNC Headquarters (Parent Country)
  - b. **Host Country National** - A person who lives, works and is from the nation of the Foreign Subsidiary in the MNC (Host Country)
  - c. **Expat: Parent Country National** - A Parent Country National who lives and works in the Host Country
  - d. **Expat: Third Country National** - A person who is from one country, working for the Parent Country in a separate Host Country. (i.e., A German working for an American company in China)
  - e. **Inpat** - A Host Country National who works and lives in the Parent Country representing the Host Country.
  - f. **Other**
6. Do you often find yourself acting as a link between your team/group/culture and other teams/groups/cultures in your organization?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. **I absorb and manage the flow of information to and from my group. (5pt - Never > Always)**
  - a. *E.g., Source information from outside your group, make meaning of a multitude of information, filter translate or share this transformed information to your group or outside groups.*
8. **I coordinate, negotiate, or mediate between my group and outside groups. (5pt - Never > Always)**
  - a. *E.g., Negotiating and procuring resources, timelines, policy changes etc., collaborating, harmonizing, building trust between groups, motivating groups to work together etc.*
9. **I am well connected and I use my connections to connect others. (5pt - Never > Always)**
  - a. *E.g., Networking with outside groups, connecting individuals within and without the organization, building bridges between groups, bringing people together.*

**10. I represent and influence others. (5pt - Never > Always)**

- a. *E.g., Winning others over to influence an outcome, Act as an ambassador or advocate, absorb outside influences to protect your group, shed a positive light on your group to others to protect its reputation and image.*

**11. I engage in multi-directional activities. (5pt - Never > Always)**

- a. *E.g., Bringing outside information in, Sending inside information out, and move information around within your organization.*

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Once I have reviewed the results and identified whether or not you qualify for the study, I will contact you directly via email. Thank you.

## **Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol**

## INTRODUCTION

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### Overview of Process:

- Say hello and thank the interviewee for their time.
- Before we begin, I just want to confirm that you are currently in an environment where you are comfortable and able to speak freely as the conversation unfolds.
- I want to reiterate that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary; you are able to ask questions, opt out of answering my questions, leave, take a break, or end our interview early as needed. Your time and engagement are voluntary.
- Everything you share today is entirely confidential. I aim to summarize themes that emerge across multiple interviews like this one, and all information will be reported at the aggregate level. On the occasion that an anonymous quote is desired to be referenced, your permission will be requested and granted in order for it to be used.
- Having said this, do I have your permission to record this meeting today?
- Today, we will meet for approximately 60 minutes.
- The study I am conducting is an examination of cultural boundary spanning functions across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs. Cultural boundary spanning has been referred to as a set of behaviors that builds a bridge or acts as a link between two groups/cultures/teams etc. (Orsini, 2019; Sekiguchi, 2016)
- You've been identified as a critical feedback provider because you indicated that you work for an MNC as a: (select from one below) and are a potential CBSer acting as a link, working across cultures in this role.
  - Parent Country National
  - Host Country National
  - Expat: Third Country National
  - Expat: Parent Country National
  - Inpat
- During our time today, I will ask you a series of questions covering your experience working as a link, cross-culturally, in an MNC. Some topics we will cover will include your experience, the skills you use, and their frequency.
- What I'd like to understand (from your perspective) is two things:
  - Which boundary spanning activities you utilize and how often.
  - How your role within the MNC, view of yourself, or other factors impacts these activities?
- I want to encourage you that there is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions we will cover. All I need is honest answers to the best of your ability or comfort.

- The data collected from the interviews will be used to identify themes for cultural boundary spanning functions across national and cultural boundaries in multinational corporations.
- Having said all that, I think we are ready to begin the interview process.
- Do you have any questions before we get started?
- May I begin recording?
- Let's begin.

### **Interview Questions**

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#### **SET A - Background and Demographics**

1. Generally, how long have you been doing cross-cultural work?
2. Can you give me a brief overview of your experiences doing this type of work?
3. What is your current job title and role within your company?
4. Can you outline some of your high-level responsibilities for this position?
5. Can you tell me which cultures you work with that are different from your own?
6. On a scale of (5pt) Never to Always, how often does your work lean into working across these cultures?
7. On a scale of (5pt) Not at All to Very, how familiar are you with these cultures you cross?
8. How did you become familiar with them?
9. Do you speak more than one language? If so, which?

#### **SET B - Exploration of Roles and Boundary Spanning Functions**

1. According to your survey results you indicated that you identify most closely with the (PCN, HCN, TCN Expat, PCN Expat, Inpat) role.
  - a. Do you feel that this role is an accurate description of your role? If not, how so?
  - b. Do you feel that this role is in alignment with how you view yourself?
    - i. I.e. Technically a PCN but feel more globally connected than the title conveys?
  - c. Can you tell me more about what it is like to be in this position while conducting cross-cultural work?
    - i. PROBE: What are your greatest challenges?
    - ii. PROBE: What are the benefits?
2. You indicated that on a scale from never to always you (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) absorb and manage the flow of information to and from your group.

- a. PROBE: Can you give me an example of how you do this?
  - b. PROBE: What action do you feel you take most often in doing this?
  - c. PROBE: What are the challenges you experience in doing this?
  - d. PROBE: What helps you succeed in doing this?
  - e. PROBE: What is your main driver/motivator for doing this?
3. You indicated that on a scale from never to always you (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) coordinate, negotiate or mediate between your group and outside groups.
  - a. PROBE: Can you give me an example of how you do this?
  - b. PROBE: What action do you feel you take most often in doing this?
  - c. PROBE: What are the challenges you experience in doing this?
  - d. PROBE: What helps you succeed in doing this?
  - e. PROBE: What is your main driver/motivator for doing this?
4. You indicated that on a scale from never to always you (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) are well connected and you use your connections to connect others.
  - a. PROBE: Can you give me an example of how you do this?
  - b. PROBE: What action do you feel you take most often in doing this?
  - c. PROBE: What are the challenges you experience in doing this?
  - d. PROBE: What helps you succeed in doing this?
  - e. PROBE: What is your main driver/motivator for doing this?
5. You indicated that on a scale from never to always you (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) represent and influence others.
  - a. PROBE: Can you give me an example of how you do this?
  - b. PROBE: What action do you feel you take most often in doing this?
  - c. PROBE: What are the challenges you experience in doing this?
  - d. PROBE: What helps you succeed in doing this?
  - e. PROBE: What is your main driver/motivator for doing this?
6. You indicated that on a scale from never to always you (Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Always) engage in multi-directional activities.
  - a. PROBE: Can you give me an example of how you do this?
  - b. PROBE: What action do you feel you take most often in doing this?
  - c. PROBE: What are the challenges you experience in doing this?
  - d. PROBE: What helps you succeed in doing this?
  - e. PROBE: What is your main driver/motivator for doing this?
7. If you could make a pie chart describing how much time you spend on these five activities, what would it say? (Drop the list of activities in the chat box for easy review)
  - a. Information and Knowledge Management
  - b. Coordination, Negotiation, Mediation
  - c. Building and Maintaining Networks

- d. Representing and Influencing
- e. Conducting Multi-Directional Activities
  - i. *NOTE: An equal division of time would be 20% for each category*

8. Having outlined this pie chart, how congruent is your use of time with what your supervisor expects of you and how they perceive you should use your time?

### **SET C - Emergent Data Questions**

1. As we've been engaging in conversation today, has this brought up anything for you that you'd like to discuss?
  - a. PROBE: You've thought of something relevant I didn't ask you about?
  - b. PROBE: Something you've seen or noticed something in a new way as a result of our conversation?
  - c. PROBE: A perspective you'd like to share or challenge about this conversation?
2. As we reflect on our conversation today, how do you think your experiences working across cultural boundaries has impacted your life?
  - a. PROBE: How has it impacted your view of yourself?
  - b. PROBE: How has it impacted how you engage with others or who you engage with?
  - c. PROBE: Have you been inclined to do new things you hadn't done before?

### **Closing Remarks and Questions**

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We are nearing the end of our time together; that being said:

1. Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you'd like to bring up?
2. Do you have any other questions about this study or thoughts you'd like to share?

Thank you for your candid feedback and participation. This concludes our time together.



## **Appendix C: Invitation to Interview Participants**

Hello!

My name is Tamara Downs; I'm a Master of Science in Organization Development Student at Pepperdine University's Graziadio Business School. I am conducting a research study to better understand **cultural boundary spanning functions across national and cultural boundaries in multinational corporations (MNCs)**, and I need your help!

If you work across different cultures in an MNC and find yourself frequently acting as a link between your team/group/culture and other teams/groups/cultures in your organization, you may be a perfect fit for this study. I invite you to **complete this survey** to identify if you qualify; it will take approximately 10 minutes.

Should you qualify, I will invite you to participate in a 1-hour recorded zoom interview in a location of your choice to discuss your experience working as a link, cross-culturally, in an MNC. Some topics we will cover will include your experience, the skills you use, and their frequency.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the study data is collected. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The results of the interviews will be confidential and used to extract themes reported on an aggregate level.

**To confirm** your interest in participating in this study, please complete the above survey.

**To decline** interest in participating in this study, please respond to this email directly.

**To refer** someone to participate in this study, please send me their contact information.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact me directly via phone at \_\_\_ or email at\_\_\_\_\_.

Thank you in advance for your participation and support!

Sincerely,  
Tamara Downs

Pepperdine University  
Graziadio Business School  
Masters of Science in Organization Development  
[Contact information omitted]

## **Appendix D: Social Media Invitation to Interview Participants**

LinkedIn/Slack/Instagram

Hello Friends and Colleagues!

I'm pursuing a Masters's degree in Organization Development at Pepperdine University's Graziadio Business School. I am conducting a research study to better understand **cultural boundary spanning functions across national and cultural boundaries in multinational corporations (MNCs)**. I am looking for participants to join my study.

If you or someone you know works across different cultures in an MNC and frequently acts as a link between your team/group/culture and other teams/groups/cultures in your organization, you may be a perfect fit for this study.

If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be, please leave a comment below or message me directly! Candidates will be invited to complete a short survey to identify if they qualify. Should they qualify for the study, they will be asked to participate in a 1-hour interview.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and your identity as a participant will be protected before, during, and after the study data is collected. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The results of the interviews will be confidential and used to extract themes reported on an aggregate level.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me! Thank you!

**Appendix E: Digital Image Cover for Invitation to Research Study**

RESEARCH STUDY

CULTURAL BOUNDARY SPANNING IN MNCS

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

Tamara Downs  
MSOD Student  
Pepperdine University  
Graziadio Business School

**Appendix F: Subject Consent Form**



**IRB #:** 22-12-2050

**Study Title:** An examination of cultural boundary spanning functions across national and cultural boundaries in MNCs.

**Authorized Study Personnel**

**Principal Investigator:** Tamara Downs | Mobile: [Contact Information Omitted]

**Faculty Chair/Sponsor:** Dr. Ann Feyerherm | Mobile: [Contact Information Omitted]

**Key Information:**

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Sharing your experience working cross-culturally, spanning boundaries within an MNC
- You will be asked to participate in one 60-minute individual interview
- There are minimal risks associated with this study
- Your identity will be kept confidential before, during, and after the research study, and all data will be reported at an aggregate level
- Anonymous quotes might be used, only after receiving permission from you first
- You will not be paid for your participation
- You will be provided with a copy of this consent form

**Invitation**

If you are 19 years of age or older, you are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study? (If you qualify)**

If you qualify, you will be asked to be in this study because you have worked within an MNC in any of the following positions (Parent Country National, Host Country National, Third Country National, PCN Expat, or Inpat). In this position, you have taken on the behaviors of cultural boundary spanning (CBS), which promote the flow and exchange of information, coordination, building and maintaining relationships or networks, recruiting of resources, representing and influencing others, and engaging in multi-directional activities within the context of cross-cultural environments.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?**



CBS has been shown to improve MNCs' abilities to contextualize and adapt across cultural boundaries. Employees who engage in CBS behavior have been shown to experience higher levels of job satisfaction as well. Ultimately, MNCs who have CBS within their infrastructure are more likely to be high-performing and experience a reduction in organizational conflict. This research study aims to answer two questions: 1) Does the use of CBS functions vary in MNCs? 2) If they vary, are the variances influenced by the person's national and cultural relationship to the headquarters? With this understanding, cultural boundary spanning may be better developed within MNCs.

**What will be done during this research study?**

Should you qualify, you will be asked to engage in a recorded one-on-one interview with the researcher, which will last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted by zoom in a location of your choice.

**How will my data be used?**

Data from our conversation will be analyzed using qualitative research techniques. Codes will be assigned to the data to reveal themes and categories, which will be summarized and then reported as a collection of themes or new discoveries for cultural boundary spanning within MNCs. On the occasion that an anonymous quote is desired to be referenced, your permission will be requested and granted in order for it to be used.

**What are the possible risks of being in this research study?**

The risks associated with participating in this study are minimal. To ensure your privacy and comfort, I recommend you use a personal email account and device for our interview and have access to a private, safe, and comfortable location where you are unlikely to be interrupted. You may request breaks at any time or withdraw your participation at any time for any reason.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

You will assist in contributing to academic research on cultural boundary spanning. However, you may not get any direct benefit from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

The benefits to society may include a better understanding of how to develop, nurture, and utilize cultural boundary spanners within MNCs. Additionally, this research is emancipatory in nature, giving voice to the underrepresented positions of HCNs and TCNs within corporations. By participating in this study, society may benefit by seeing more of the underrepresented peoples being represented and treated equally in and through research. Additionally, future researchers may be challenged to consider a more global perspective when pursuing future research agendas. Ultimately research may move one small step closer to being an inclusive, diverse, and equal field for all.

**What are the alternatives to being in this research study?**

Instead of being in this research study, you can decide not to participate in the interviews.

**What will being in this research study cost you?**

There is no cost to you for participating in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?**

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

**What should you do if you have a problem during this research study?**

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

**How will information about you be protected?**

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. All interview responses will be kept confidential, and only aggregated, and non-identifiable data will be presented in this study or any future publication(s). On the occasion that an anonymous quote is desired to be referenced, your permission will be requested and granted in order for it to be used.

All digital recordings or print notes associated with this study will be secured and handled according to Pepperdine University's Information Security Policies. Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by securing data in password-protected files on a password-protected computer. There will be no hard copies of the data.

The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Pepperdine University, and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings, but the data will be reported as summarized data, and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

All data and notes will be destroyed within five years.

**What are your rights as a research participant?**

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study.

For study-related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form.

For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by phone at [Contact Information Omitted] or email at [Contact Information Omitted].

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study ("withdraw") at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine

University.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

**Documentation of informed consent**

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this study. By clicking on the “I Agree” button below, your consent to participate is implied. You should print a copy of this page for your records.

**Participant Feedback Survey**

To meet Pepperdine University’s ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online [feedback survey](#) is included.

**I Agree**

**I Do Not Agree**