


A REVISED MODEL OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE:  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE,  
ADJUSTMENT, AND PERFORMANCE


by

Lisa M. V. Gulick  
A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Graduate Faculty  
of  
George Mason University  
in Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Psychology

Committee:

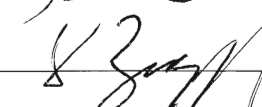
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Department Chairperson

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean, College of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

Date: December 2, 2010

Fall Semester 2010  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

A Revised Model of International Experience:  
The Relationship between International Experience, Adjustment, and Performance

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

By  
Lisa M. V. Gulick  
Master of Arts  
George Mason University, 2007

Director: Eden B. King, Assistant Professor  
Department of Psychology

Fall Semester 2010  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

Copyright: 2010 Lisa M. V. Gulick  
All Rights Reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract.....	iv
1. Introduction.....	1
The Nature of Experience.....	3
Modeling and Measuring Experience.....	6
An Improved Conceptualization of Previous International Experience.....	9
Flexibility .....	21
2. Method .....	25
3. Results.....	32
4. Discussion.....	39
5. Conclusion .....	51
Appendix A: Tables and Figures .....	52
Appendix B: Measures.....	61
Appendix C: Full Literature Review.....	71
References.....	113

## ABSTRACT

### A REVISED MODEL OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE, ADJUSTMENT, AND PERFORMANCE

Lisa M. V. Gulick Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2010

Dissertation Director: Eden B. King

The purpose of this study was to present and test an organized framework for understanding international experience and to identify the developmental aspects of international experience that facilitate performance and adjustment abroad. The framework consisted of quantitative and qualitative elements to provide a multidimensional examination of international experience that went beyond traditional uni-dimensional measures of international experience to more effectively capture the construct. A key differentiator of this model is the addition of several key qualitative elements including cultural challenge, complexity, variety, cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement. The elements of involvement—cultural, social, and work—each related to different aspects of adjustment. Behavioral aspects of cultural complexity were negatively related to performance, contrary to what was hypothesized. This study also examined the role of a key factor, individual flexibility, as a direct

predictor of performance abroad and as a moderator to the international experience— performance/adjustment relationship. Flexibility was positively and directly related to performance and also moderated the relationships between cultural challenge and performance, such that flexible individuals who engaged in culturally challenging experiences while abroad on their current assignment were associated with higher levels of performance than less flexible individuals. Flexibility also moderated the relationship between variety of experiences and performance abroad. Overall, this paper contributes to the increased knowledge and understanding of international work assignments and how they can be strategically shaped to benefit both the individual expatriate working abroad and their employing organization.

## 1. Introduction

*"Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful"*

Joshua Marine

As work and business operations become increasingly global, dynamic, and complex, the necessity for employees to engage in international assignments continues to increase (GMAC, 2008; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). Enhancing the success of international work assignments is particularly relevant to organizations when considering not only the potential competitive advantage that internationalizing employees may bring (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2000; Mendenhall, Bird, Osland, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008), but also the consequences of failed expatriate assignments. These costs are substantial and may include lost time, money, and damaged business relationships (Bennett, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000; Littrell & Salas, 2005; Selmer, Torbiorn, & De Leon, 1998).

Research attempting to identify predictors of success in global environments has discussed international experience as a fundamental contributor to expatriate adjustment and performance. However, findings related to international experience are equivocal and provide little insight into the role experience plays in facilitating desired work outcomes (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Black, 1988; Kealey, 1989; Mol,

Born, Willemsen, & Van Der Molen, 2005; Parker & McEvoy, 1993; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005). Specifically, it is not clear which elements of international experience promote expatriate adjustment or performance aboard. The mixed findings could be due in part to the lack of developed theory on international experience, as well as the lack of sophisticated and consistent measurement approaches used in past research.

The purpose of this study is to present an organized framework for understanding international experience and to identify distinct developmental aspects of international experience that facilitate either performance or adjustment abroad. This framework integrates research on experience from both domestic and international perspectives, including research on domestic work experience (Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998), experiential learning, developmental work assignments (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994), and prior international experience (Takeuchi et al., 2005). This study will also consider a critical factor—flexibility—likely to influence the degree to which these experiences enhance performance when individuals are working in international settings. Thus, this paper will provide a comprehensive integration of previously disconnected streams of literature. As a result, this work carries important implications for theories of development and practical implications for improving expatriate adjustment and performance on international assignments.

This paper contributes to the extant literature in four key ways. This study (a) moves beyond the traditional uni-dimensional measures of international experience by capturing the more accurate, multidimensional nature of the construct, (b) extends



Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, Lepak's (2005) work on international experience by examining additional qualitative dimensions of experience, including challenge, complexity, variety, and involvement (i.e., cultural, social, and work involvement), (c) examines predictors of expatriate performance outcomes, in addition to adjustment outcomes, and finally (d) examines the role of individual flexibility as an key moderator of the international experience—performance/adjustment relationship.

### **The Nature of Experience**

According to Quinones, Ford, and Teachout (1995) *experience* is defined as the events that occur in an individual's life (p. 890). Early scholars including John Locke and Aristotle, believed ideas and impressions were derived from experience (Viney & King, 1998). Through the accumulation and transformation of experiences, individuals constantly build and revise mental models of the world (Kolb, 1984; Papert, 1980).

Over time, the idea of learning from experience has garnered support. Though in order to truly understand the role of experience, it must be examined within a context (Quinones et al., 1995). One area that has received notable attention is *work experience*, which “refers to events experienced by an individual that are related to the performance of some job” (Quinones et al., 1995, p. 890) and is often discussed as an integral component of job performance (Quinones et al., 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Many research studies have examined the role of work experience supporting the idea that work experience facilitates the acquisition and maturing of skills, distinct worldviews, and both professional and personal networks (Carpenter et al., 2000). At a general level, several meta-analyses have found positive correlations between work experience and job

performance, ranging from  $r = 0.18$  (Hunter & Hunter, 1984) to  $r = 0.32$  (Schmidt & Hunter, 1988), even after controlling for participant age ( $r = 0.32$ , Schwab & Heneman, 1977). In some cases, job experience has been shown to be more predictive of performance than aptitude or ability (Vance, Coovert, MacCallum, and Hedge, 1989).

In international studies, the traditional outcome of interest has often been individual adjustment, in addition to performance. Performance refers to organizationally relevant behaviors that are under the control of the individual (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993), while adjustment refers to how comfortable expatriates are with their new roles and requirements, both in and outside of the workplace (Black, 1988). The following section provides a brief overview of research on international experience and how this can impact adjustment and performance outcomes.

### **Review of International Experience**

International experience is described as an essential predictor of expatriate adjustment and performance abroad. This idea is based on the rationale that international experience may provide a clearer picture of what is to come (Black, 1988) and impact the expectations individuals' hold about being abroad (Kealey, 1989), which should mitigate feelings of uncertainty often associated with operating in cross-cultural settings. Some evidence suggests that people with international experience report less difficulty adjusting to overseas conditions, higher levels of satisfaction, lower levels of stress, and feel they are better able to transfer skills and knowledge than individuals with less experience (Kealey, 1989).

Exposure to foreign cultures can also strengthen an individual's desire to learn about new cultures (Hays, 1971; Triandis, 1995) and help individuals understand the multiple meanings and interpretations of situations that arise in different cultural settings (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Ronen suggests that "...exposure to a wide range of cultural environments provides a socialization process that helps to create a diversity of values and to encourage more efficient adaptation to foreign surroundings" (Ronen, 1989, p.424). Through experience, individuals learn which behaviors are appropriate and which to avoid.

While theoretical support exists for the importance of international experience, research examining the relationship between international experience and outcomes, such as adjustment or performance, generally shows inconsistent and small findings (Black, 1988; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, et al. 2005; Kealey, 1989; Mol et al., 2005; Parker & Evoy, 1993; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepack, 2005). The weak findings may be due in part to the overly broad conceptualization of international experience often used when predicting performance or adjustment.

In summary, scholars generally support the idea that learning from experience is a particularly potent form of development (Ohlott, 2004), both domestically and internationally. However, there remains a distinct lack of theory on experience, which may explain why so little is known about whether and why international experience should impact performance (Rowe, 1988) or adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, et al. 2005). The absence of theory prompts deeper consideration as to what it really is about

experience that benefits the learner and how these aspects can be more effectively captured in research and practice.

### **Modeling and Measuring Experience**

Incredible variety exists in the way work experience is conceptualized in the literature (Rowe, 1988). For instance, work experience has been conceived of as length of service in an organization, the number of times a task was performed, the number of lateral job moves, the content of experiences (see Quinones et al., 1995, p. 888 for review), the degree of challenge experienced, and the “lessons” learned from an experience (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988). Additionally, past research has generally treated work experience as a uni-dimensional construct. The traditional measurement approach for experience often amounts to little more than a “checking the box” exercise (e.g., whether an activity was performed), which is unlikely to shed light on the complexities of the construct. Work experience is more accurately described as multi-dimensional and therefore, should be measured as such (Quinones et al., 1995).

### **Multi-dimensional Nature of Experience**

Several approaches have been suggested that take a multi-dimensional perspective on work experience. These include conceptualizing experience in terms of breadth (i.e., *number* of tasks performed), activity level (i.e., number of *times* task was performed), and type of activity (i.e., *complexity* or difficulty of task performed) (Ford et al., 1992), or in terms of the quantity (e.g., tenure, practice, frequency, and recency) and quality of an experience (e.g., breadth, variety, and supervisory experience) (DuBois & McKee, 1994).

The most sophisticated approaches for assessing the multi-dimensional nature of work experience were put forth by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998). Quinones et al. (1995) developed a conceptual framework of work experience separated into two main dimensions: *measurement mode* including time (i.e., organizational, job, or task tenure), amount (i.e., number of organizations, jobs, or times performing a task), and type (i.e., organizational type, job complexity, or task difficulty); and *level of specificity* consisting of task, job, or organizational level of specificity. Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) extended this work and offered a revised model of work experience identifying three core components of work experience: *quantitative components* (time- and amount-based measures), *qualitative components* (the nature of work experience—type of work or task, the degree of challenge, the variety and breadth of tasks and responsibilities, and the complexity of a task); and the *interaction component* (the interaction between the quantitative and qualitative components).

This collective work highlights several important points related to experience and how it should be modeled and measured. First, experience is multi-dimensional. For instance, qualitative and quantitative measures of experience are differentially related to distinct aspects of performance: quantitative tasks are more predictive of routine, consistent aspects of performance, while qualitative information is more informative of inconsistent, complex aspects of performance (DuBois & McKee, 1994; Quinones et al., 1995). Second, the level of specificity matters. When investigating experience it is important to consider the level of analysis that is relevant and appropriate to the question at hand—assessing experience at the task, job, or organizational levels can yield different

outcomes (Quinones et al., 1995). Finally, context is crucial. As articulated by DuBois and McKee, “Any experience gained must be relevant to the upcoming tasks or challenges in order to contribute to a person's competence. That is, if experience is expected to substantially influence performance, it must include knowledge that is critical to task performance” (1994, p.5). With regard to the current research, it is therefore critical to account for the cultural context in which an individual experiences work.

While there are some parallels between global and domestic contexts, operating in new or unique culture environments brings complexity and uncertainty that is not necessarily present in domestic situations. Such complexities can manifest in the form of differences in geographical and/or physical distance between people, disparate country infrastructures, or diverse cultural expectations of behavior and work (Dalton & Ernst, 2004). Expatriates often face challenges related to culture shock, homesickness, and language communication—things that may not directly affect employees working in a domestic context (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou, 1987). The role of experience may be all the more important for working abroad given the added complexities that exist when working in cross-cultural environments.

Overall, the various ways in which work experience has been conceptualized and measured are inconsistent across studies and fail to capture the breadth and depth of what constitutes experience (Quinones et al., 1995). This paper builds on the dimensions outlined by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998), and further investigates how they may be modified to capture relevant elements of international

experience that benefit individuals on international assignments. The next section provides a brief overview of research findings and rationale for why specific dimensions of international experience may uniquely impact adjustment and performance outcomes.

### **An Improved Conceptualization of International Experience**

To truly recognize the benefits and limitations of international experiences we must more thoroughly understand which aspects of experience help people adjust and perform more effectively in cultural settings. Takeuchi and colleagues (2005) presented a model of international experience based on the aforementioned work experience models by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998). Their model included the quantitative components discussed in these models (i.e., time and amount). It also accounted for additional factors, including work and non-work factors and familiarity with the culture. One key limitation of their model is the lack of attention paid to the qualitative characteristics of the experience. This study integrates and builds on these previous models and presents a revised model of international experience, incorporating essential elements described by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998)—namely the quantitative (i.e., timing, amount) and qualitative (i.e., challenge, complexity, variety) components of experience. Two key differentiators of this model include: the specific focus on *cultural* challenge, complexity, and variety, compared to task, job, or organizational challenge, complexity, and variety; and the addition of three qualitative elements—cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement—based on the idea of cultural involvement offered by Osland and Osland (2005). Please

see table 1. For all elements of experience, this study focuses on the accumulation of salient experiences during an individual's current international assignment.

### **Quantitative**

**Time.** As noted by Osland and Bird, "Time and experience are essential, because culture is embedded in the context (2000, p. 68). That is, the longer an expatriate is abroad, the more time he or she has to become acclimated with the country, overcome initial feelings of culture shock, and eventually progress to a state of heightened adjustment and performance. International experience has been shown to facilitate individuals' adjustment to living and working abroad (Black et al., 1991; Church, 1982). Research suggests international previous experience is positively related to work adjustment ( $\beta = .33$ ) (Black, 1988) and general adjustment ( $r = .20$ ) (Parker & McEvoy, 1993). A meta-analysis of 64 studies by Bhaskar-Shrinivas and colleagues (2005) exploring the relationship between previous experience and adjustment suggested that international experience was positively related to work adjustment ( $r = .06$ ) and interaction adjustment ( $r = .13$ ), but not general adjustment, although these correlations were quite small.

Interestingly, a separate meta-analysis focusing on expatriate performance, rather than adjustment, did not find a relationship between previous international experience and performance (Mol et al., 2005). Time spent living in a foreign country, however, was positively related to the derivation of creative solutions—an aspect of performance—when engaging in an insight creativity task involving negotiations (i.e., participants reached a negotiation deal based on more than price alone), over the effects of personality



and intelligence (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009). Taken together, the following hypotheses are put forth:

*Hypothesis 1: Total length of international living experiences will be positively related to current (a) performance, (b) general adjustment, (c) interaction adjustment, and (d) work adjustment.*

**Amount.** Amount refers to the number of organizations, jobs, or times a task/activity was performed (Quinones et al., 1995). A meta-analysis examining the amount component of experience on a U.S. population found a higher correlation between amount and performance than between the time or type components and performance (Quinones et al., 2005). An example question to represent the amount component of international experience is, “How many times have you lived abroad on an international assignment?” The idea is that the more times an individual lived abroad, the more opportunities he or she will have had to become more acclimated to foreign cultures. Yavas and Bodur (1999) found a significant difference between the levels of work and interaction adjustment for expatriates who had lived and worked in a foreign country compared to those who had not. Thus, I propose:

*Hypothesis 2: The total number of international living experiences will be positively related to current (a) performance, (b) general adjustment, (c) interaction adjustment, and (d) work adjustment.*

Learning is not a guaranteed byproduct of experience. Experience provides the opportunity to learn, but does not guarantee learning (Van Velsor & Guthrie, 1998). Holding constant the quantitative dimensions of an experience, what is gleaned from an

experience may substantively differ across individuals (Ford, Quiñones, Sego, & Speer-Sorra, 1992). As such, what is garnered from experience is more complex than merely accounting for the amount or length of time devoted to an activity. The following sections outline six qualitative components suggested to add richness to the discussion of international experience. The six qualitative elements are hypothesized to differentially relate to either performance or adjustment. Specifically, challenge, complexity, and variety are hypothesized to positively affect performance, while the elements of involvement are proposed to positively impact adjustment.

Challenge, complexity, and variety are often described as key aspects of experience that facilitate performance. Experiences of this nature may require individuals to question existing behaviors and perspectives and test or adopt new approaches and tactics. Through these types of developmental experiences, individuals have the opportunity to increase understanding of themselves, the ways of working with others, and their job roles and tasks (Ohlott, 2004), which may positively impact performance. Alternatively, the more involved individuals are while on their international assignment, the more opportunities they will have to interact with host-country nationals in work and non-work settings and to learn about cultural traditions. Such contact helps individuals learn about others and may provide information that contradicts previously held biases (Allport, 1954), which should make them feel more comfortable and positively impact their adjustment abroad. Based on this rationale separate hypotheses will be made with regards to predictors of expatriate adjustment and performance.

## **Qualitative**

**Challenge.** Challenge is a key component of experiential learning and development (Ohlott, 2004). As underscored by Holt, “To have a learning effect, experiences have to be significant, demanding, and most often surprising, involving experimentation, trial and error, and risk taking” (Holt, 2004, p. 493). In order for an experience to be developmental it must stretch people beyond their comfort zones, compelling them to think and act in new ways (Ohlott, 2004, p. 154). Here, experience is examined within the context of cultural challenges that may occur when individuals are operating in international environments that are not their native culture.

Culturally challenging experiences compel individuals to re-examine how they cognitively approach and behaviorally respond to a problem, activity, or event. Modifying one’s cognitive schema and behavioral responses based on a more accurate understanding of the situation can positively impact individual performance. Culturally challenging experiences may include overcoming obstacles (e.g., finding one’s way after getting lost in a foreign culture), engaging in confrontations with host-country nationals (e.g., clashing of cultural norms), making mistakes and errors (e.g., violating cultural rules or traditions), maneuvering through crises (e.g., knowing who to call in emergency situations), or engaging in situations one has not dealt with before. Challenging international experiences provide an opportunity to acquire additional knowledge and skills (Ohlott, 2004; Schmidt et al., 1986). Challenging experiences test assumptions and preconceived perceptions towards others or of the situation, and provide exposure to new or different perspectives, approaches, and solutions. By testing previously held

assumptions, individuals gain a deeper understanding of the differences and similarities that exist between and within cultures and how these cultural factors may impact others' behaviors, perspectives, and interactions. Research supports the idea that developmentally challenging experiences may positively affect learning and performance to the extent that the experiences challenge individual (Banks, 2006). Based on this, I propose,

*Hypothesis 3: Exposure to culturally challenging experiences on a current international assignment will be positively related to current levels of individual performance.*

**Complexity.** Complexity refers to the ambiguity and novelty associated with international experiences. In complex situations it is often unclear how to best approach, frame, manage, or otherwise behaviorally respond to a situation (Molinsky, 2007). There may be several sources of information to attend to and multiple approaches or solutions that lead to favorable outcomes (Harvey & Novicevic, 2001). Exposure to complex experiences abroad may reduce feeling of culture shock (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991), because individuals will have had more opportunities to learn about different attitudes, norms, behaviors (Osland & Bird, 2000) both in work and non-work settings. Individuals that lack complex cultural experiences will have a harder time making sense of the complex cultural situations they encounter (Osland & Bird, 2000). Experience in complex cultural situations can help individuals move beyond reliance on general stereotypes, to a level of understanding that accounts for the complex, and sometime paradoxical, elements of different cultures (Osland & Bird, 2000).

Complex experiences often involve exposure to diverse people, situations, or problems. This experience provides expatriates with some semblance of structure or models to draw from when operating in future situations (Bandura, 1997; Fee, 2010). These experiences contribute to the modification of cognitive schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) and add to the number of behaviors in a repertoire of responses. Individuals with previous exposure to complex experiences should be more adept at handling current and future situations, because they have learned some of the cultural nuances and are more familiar with formulating responses to ambiguous situations. Therefore, previous exposure to complex international experiences should positively impact expatriate performance. Thus, I hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 4: Exposure to culturally complex experiences on a current international assignment will be positively related to current levels of individual performance.*

**Variety of Experiences.** Engaging in a variety of experiences provides individuals exposure to different and unique challenges and learning opportunities (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Each cultural experience may require distinct skills, approaches, or solutions. From experiences, individuals can discover which approaches were effective in certain situations and which were not as effective when in a different cultural context. The more experiences one possesses, the larger the collection of do's and don'ts one has to draw upon when facing similar or disparate situations in the future (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Exposure to a myriad of cultural experiences increases the opportunities to learn different lessons. This increases the portfolio of responses, both

cognitive and behavioral, one can choose from to react appropriately to different situations (Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997).

More generally, experiential variety fosters the development of broad principles that can be flexibly applied across familiar and unfamiliar situations (Ely, Zaccaro, & Conjar, 2009; Smith, Ford, & Kozlowski, 1997) and prompts the development of a more complex understanding of which responses are appropriate and when they should be applied (Ely et al., 2009). Variable experiences, here, focus on variety in non-work, cultural activities (e.g., the number of different cultural events, cultural customs, or ethnic foods an expatriate is exposed to). Research on expatriates supports the efficacy of experiential variety in promoting important work-related outcomes. For example, living and working as an expatriate in multiple countries is positively correlated with cultural adaptability and heightened knowledge of international business (Dalton & Ernst, 2004). Based on the rationale provided, this study posits,

*Hypothesis 5: Exposure to a variety of cultural experiences on a current international assignment will be positively related to current levels of individual performance.*

**Involvement.** In addition to predictors of performance, this study hypothesized that three aspects of international experience related to involvement would predict expatriate adjustment while abroad. The notion of involvement during international assignments is based on Osland and Osland's (2005) work on Cultural Involvement, referring to the extent to which expatriates enter a foreign culture and work interdependently with host country nationals (Osland & Osland, 2005, p. 93). Originally,

Osland and Osland conceptualized Cultural Involvement in terms of work-related, cultural, and personal variables. According to this research, cultural variables measured the degree of cultural similarity between home and host country and the presence of a cultural mentor. Work variables included descriptive information about job type (i.e., research vs. sales), facility type (i.e., headquarters vs. manufacturing), size of facility, as well as the degree of contact with customers, and the number of foreign coworkers and direct reports. Finally, personal variables included demographic data (e.g., age at posting; occupation) and activities that facilitate cultural entry (e.g., learning the language). The main limitation of their approach concerns the focus on demographic (e.g., personal demographics) and concrete descriptive variables (e.g., job type, facility size), as opposed to qualitative factors that capture the degree of involvement and integration with host culture. Osland's work discussed cultural involvement as an umbrella term, whereas in this study, involvement is distinguished as three separate elements: cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement.

***Cultural Involvement.***

*Cultural involvement* refers to the extent to which individuals engage, embrace, and participate in the foreign culture. Culturally involved individuals will pursue activities that provide exposure to a culture, its history, and its traditions. This may include going to museums, reading books about the culture and country history, or buying native goods. Experiences that allow for greater cultural involvement provide individuals with exposure to novel ideas, concepts, and perspectives, which can result in the development of new or revised conceptualizations of cognitive and behavioral

frameworks that influence how individuals approach future situations (Leung et al., 2008). Individuals who have lived or worked abroad have had the opportunity to observe and learn about different traditions, customs, and norms, compared to those who have not traveled abroad (Osland & Bird, 2000). This should make adjusting to cultures easier for these individuals, because they are more aware that cultural differences exist, have more accurate expectations about the differences that may arise in new cultures, and are more prepared to handle these differences (Black, 1988; Kealey, 1989).

Cultural experiences may also facilitate individuals' psychological readiness and openness to learning and accepting unfamiliar ideas (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009; Triandis, 1995). Additionally, cultural experiences help individuals recognize paradoxes that may exist between and within cultures and learn that there are multiple meanings and interpretations to situations that may vary by culture (Osland & Bird, 2000). Expatriates with more experience in different cultures are more likely to be aware of cultural nuances, making them more prepared to recognize the need to change behavior, therefore increasing the likelihood of adjusting more effectively in the cultural situation. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed,

*Hypothesis 6: The level of cultural involvement during current international assignments will be positively related to current levels of individual (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) work adjustment.*

***Social Involvement.***

*Social involvement* abroad refers to the degree to which individuals interact with host-country nationals, or individuals from cultures other than one's native culture. This



includes face-to-face interactions with host-country individuals in (e.g., making friends with people the country, joining social groups). Social involvement may facilitate outcomes through social learning processes (Bandura, 1977). When expatriates are more socially involved, they have more opportunities observe others and gain exposure to different models and ways of behaving (Bandura 1977; Fee, 2010), learn new customs and norms (Takeuchi et al., 2005), and incorporate feedback from others (Bandura, 1977). Greater interactions and contact with host-country nationals may contribute to more accurate expectations and improved attitudes towards diverse others (Allport, 1954). Greater social involvement in cultural contexts helps individuals understand and interact more effectively with host-nationals, which can impact expatriate adjustment. In fact, the frequency of interactions with host-country is positively related to cross-cultural adjustment (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003). Indeed, research shows that expatriates who interact less frequently with people from other cultures, and instead choose to socialize mostly with other like expatriates, tend to experience lower levels of adjustment to the new culture and living environment than individuals who interact more frequently with host-nationals (Parker & McEvoy, 1993). Formally, I hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 7: The level of social involvement during current international assignments will be positively related to current levels of individual (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) work adjustment.*

***Work Involvement.***

Work involvement refers to the extent to which expatriates engage with host-country or other foreign national colleagues at work and perform a range of functions to

complete work goals. Activities in this realm may include working with host-country colleagues on projects or team tasks, working with host-country supervisors to clarify project goals and accomplish work objectives, socializing with host-country work colleagues, or providing mentorship or guidance to junior host-country nationals (Fee, 2010).

Caligiuri (2009) found that high-contact global work experiences (i.e., short- or long-term expatriate assignments, attending global meetings, mentoring someone from another culture) were related to higher ratings of self-reported global effectiveness compared to experiences characterized by low contact work interactions (i.e., verbal or non-face-to-face interactions). Greater work involvement in international contexts may contribute to expatriate adjustment through increases in skill development and global knowledge and improved information sharing between host- and home-country counterparts (Black, Gregerson, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Sparrow, Brewster, & Harris, 2004; Stroh, Black, Mendenhall, & Gregersen, 2005).

Exposure to incongruent ideas, concepts, or perspectives in work contexts can also contribute to increases in cognitive complexity, which may impact how individuals view new cross-cultural situations (Fee 2010; Leung et al., 2008; also see Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). In work settings, it is customary to receive feedback from supervisors and peers. The feedback often received in work contexts may assist expatriates in getting a more accurate picture of how they are adapting and adjusting to the work context, which provides inducements to transition from ineffective behaviors to effective behaviors. At the same time these experiences offer additional insight into cultural norms (e.g., power

distance) and social norms (e.g., social etiquette), which will improve their ability to understand and interact with those from the host culture. Expatriates who are more involved in their work will have more opportunities to work with and receive feedback from their colleagues, giving them more chances to assess their behavior and become accustomed to the work context. Based on this rationale, I propose,

*Hypothesis 8: The level of work involvement during current international assignments will be positively related to current levels of individual (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) work adjustment.*

### **Flexibility**

The previous sections discussed various aspects of international experience hypothesized to contribute to improved expatriate performance or adjustment. Individual attributes, however, can impact what individuals extract and apply from different experiences (Banks, 2006; Ohlott, 2004; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Thus, the relationship between international experience and the aforementioned outcomes may depend on the degree to which individuals are characterized by particular attributes. This paper specifically focuses on individual-level flexibility as a key factor expected to impact the value of their international experiences, such that flexible individuals will reap more substantial benefits from international experiences than less flexible individuals.

Flexibility refers to “a person’s (a) awareness that in any given situation there are options and alternatives available, (b) willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and (c) self-efficacy in being flexible” (Martin & Rubin, 1995, p. 623). Flexible individuals see more than one way of approaching situations or solving problems, and are

able and willing to respond in different ways based on the situational requirements (Tucker, Bonial, & Lahti, 2004; Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991). Flexibility, here, is viewed as a skill that is amenable to change and therefore has the potential to be developed.

Flexibility is often considered an important factor in predicting a variety of work related outcomes (Jones, 2005) and is beneficial for individuals working in either domestic or international contexts (Ali & Camp, 1996). However, flexibility may be particularly crucial for those working in international contexts. This aligns with the idea of *requisite variety*, which suggests that to be effective, alignment must exist between individual complexity and environmental complexity; that is, individuals must be as complex as the situation is (Ashby, 1952). Individuals who are more flexible are better able to absorb the complex information provided by international experiences and incorporate it into cognitive and behavioral frameworks, providing a better match between the self and the situation.

People often revert to what is familiar to them and tend to view the world through their own cultural lens (Triandis, 1995). When confronted with complex and changing environments, flexible individuals are more willing and able to break current frames of reference (Horn, 2008), explore a variety of approaches (Martin & Rubin, 1995), and consider unfamiliar alternatives, perspectives, or solutions (Tucker et al., 2004) in pursuit of more functional frames and appropriate responses. Less flexible individuals are less skilled at identifying and applying alternative approaches to the challenges they confront. This will likely limit the number of new approaches these individuals use and,

thus receive feedback on as to the appropriateness for the situation. As a result, less flexible individuals will have fewer rich and diverse experiences to learn from, limiting the depth and breadth of their cultural frameworks, which can negatively impact their performance and adjustment.

The benefits of international experiences depend on how individuals approach and learn from experiences (Maddux, Leung, Chiu, & Galinsky, 2009). Flexible individuals are more likely to become involved in the cultural, social, and work activities and thus have the potential to gain more from these experiences than less flexible individuals. Research suggests that being more flexible towards the ideas of others is positively associated with expatriate job performance (Hawes & Kealey, 1979). Similarly, a review of critical incidents collected from Special Forces officers who interacted with people from a variety of cultures, revealed that the ability to change behavior was important for performing and working with others on the job (Carpenter & Wisecarver, 2004).

Thus, flexibility is an essential factor affecting the successful completion of international assignments (Arthur & Bennett, 1995). Taken together, this reasoning and evidence suggests that flexible individuals will be more likely to adjust their cognitive and behavior frames as the situation demands than less flexible individuals, which should contribute to their successful adjustment and performance abroad. Therefore, I propose,

*Hypothesis 9: Individual flexibility will be positively related to performance abroad.*

*Hypothesis 10: Individual flexibility will moderate the relationships between current (a) challenging international experiences, (b) complex international experiences,*

*(c) variety of international experiences and performance, such that the effects of experiences will be stronger for individuals higher in flexibility than for those lower in flexibility.*

*Hypothesis 11: Individual flexibility will moderate the relationship between current levels of cultural involvement and (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) work adjustment, such that the effects of higher levels of cultural involvement when abroad will be stronger for individuals higher in flexibility than for those lower in flexibility.*

*Hypothesis 12: Individual flexibility will moderate the relationship between current levels of social involvement and (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (d) work adjustment, such that the effects of higher levels of social involvement when abroad will be stronger for individuals higher in flexibility than for those lower in flexibility.*

*Hypothesis 13: Individual flexibility will moderate the relationship between current levels of work involvement and (a) general adjustment, (b) interaction adjustment, and (c) work adjustment, such that the effects of higher levels of work involvement when abroad will be stronger for individuals higher in flexibility than for those lower in flexibility.*

## **2. Method**

### **Participants and Procedure**

Individuals who were working abroad in a country that is not their native country completed an online survey assessing the extent and frequency with which they engaged in a variety of activities during their current international assignment.

These participants were recruited a variety of sources that had access to expatriates currently working abroad. These included a global organization consisting of over 165,000 employees in 140 countries. The online survey link was emailed to approximately 300 individuals on record as currently working outside their country of residence. The survey link was also emailed to 365 members of a large Washington, D.C. based foreign policy association of over 5,000 members who were registered as currently working in a country that was not their native country of residence. Finally, the survey link was electronically distributed through online expatriate associations, blogs, online chat forums, and social networks to individuals currently working outside their native country of residence. This convenience sampling method resulted in a sample size of 114 individuals who completed the entire survey, out of 168 who completed part of the survey. This number is consistent with the a priori power analysis indicating a sample size of 113 was needed to have 80% power of detecting a medium sized effect when employing the traditional .05 criterion of statistical significance.

The sample was 63% female, 37% male. Participants were 80% Caucasian, 10% Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander, 4.4% Latino(a)/Hispanic, 2.6% mixed, and 1.8% African-American. Seven individuals wrote in ethnic backgrounds including Argentinean, European-Hispanic, Indian, Irish/Spanish, and Mirpuri/Kashmiri. The majority of participants were single (55%), followed by those who identified as married (32%), or in a long-term committed partnership (11%). The majority of respondents had an advanced degree beyond college (95%). 87% reported working full-time. The majority of respondents were between 25-29 years of age (37.7%), followed by 30-34 years old (21.9%), 18-24 years old (9.6%), 35-39 years old (9.6%), 40-49 (6%), 50-59 (12.3%), and 60 and up (2.7%). The majority (65%) of participants had been on their current assignment for less than two years, 14% had been on their assignment for 3-5 years, 6% for 6-9 years, and 10.5% for more than 10 years. The following industries were represented in this sample, the largest being education (17.5%), government (15%), service (11%), finance/banking (11%), technology (6%), healthcare (5%), and R&D (4%). Participant country of current assignment spanned 39 countries, with the majority working in the United States (16.7%), United Kingdom (10.5%), United Arab Emirates (8.9%), Belgium (7%), Germany (6%), Netherlands (6%), Australia (3.5%), Haiti (2.6%), Afghanistan (2.6%), Bolivia (2.6%), and Singapore (2.6%).

## **Measures**

**International experience.** Information on international experience was gathered via a self-report questionnaire developed for this study. The questionnaire asked questions tapping each of the quantitative and qualitative dimensions outlined previously.



For the quantitative measures, participants were asked to indicate the total length of their combined time spend living abroad and their total number of international living experiences. For the qualitative dimensions, items were developed for this study tapping cultural challenge, complexity, variety, cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement. Participants indicated to extent to which they experienced activities on a five-point scale ranging from *Never* (1) to *Always* (5). Items can be found in Appendix B. Information on these dimensions was gathered in reference to the individuals' current international assignment. The internal consistencies for each dimension were acceptable and are noted in the correlation table.

**Flexibility.** Flexibility was measured using Martin and Rubin's (1995) 12-item cognitive flexibility measure. This measure is proposed to tap three dimensions: awareness of alterative options, willingness to be flexible, and self-efficacy in being flexible. All responses will be aggregated to form one composite score as directed by the scale's authors. Participants reported their agreement with each of the 12 items on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An example item is, "I am willing to listen and consider alternatives for handling a problem."

**Adjustment:** Adjustment was measured using Black and Stephens (1989) adjustment scale. This is a 14-item scales assessing self-reported adjustment along three dimensions: general, work, and interaction adjustment. Participants indicated the degree to which they felt adjusted on a scale ranging from 1 (*not adjusted*) to 7 (*very well adjusted*). Sample items include the degree participants feel adjusted to food, job responsibilities, or speaking with host nationals.

**Expatriate performance.** Expatriate performance was measured using a self-report 4-item performance measure adapted from Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998), and Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1989). Participants were asked to rate their effectiveness at doing various activities while on their international assignment on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not effective*) to 5 (*very effective*). An example item is, “In the context of your current international assignment, how would you rate your effectiveness at producing quality work?”

### **Factor analysis**

Exploratory factor analyses using varimax rotation were conducted on each of the qualitative elements of experience to determine the factor structure of each scale. All items can be found in the appendix.

**Cultural challenge.** The initial examination of the rotated factor matrix showed cultural challenge loading onto two factors. After deleting items that loaded highly onto more than one factor (“Required me to often engage in unstructured activities where there was little to no guidance as to the appropriate behaviors or course of actions” and “Forced me to struggle to determine the correct way to do things”), the remainder of the items loaded onto one factor. Six items were retained in this scale using the conservative a priori cutoff of 0.40 (Linn, 1968; see also Zwick & Velicer, 1982).

**Complexity.** The initial examination of the rotated factor matrix for complexity revealed the eight items loading onto two factors, with only one item dual loading (“I was faced with difficult tasks where the solutions were not obvious”). After this item was

removed, the remaining seven items loaded cleanly onto two factors all above the 0.40 cutoff.

The items for two distinct factors appeared to capture slightly different aspect of complexity of the experience. The items that loaded onto factor 1 centered on cognitive aspects, such as using different perspectives, making sense of several sources of information, and considering various strategies before making any final decisions—this factor was named Complexity-“cognitive” for the purposes of this study. In slight contrast, the items loading onto factor 2 appeared more behavioral in nature, such as dealing with unclear tasks, the need to behave in different ways, unclear roles, and dealing with situations that highlighted old strategies were no longer effective. This factor was referred to as Complexity-“behavioral.” Both factors were retained, resulting in three items for Complexity-“cognitive” and four items for Complexity-“behavioral.”

**Variety.** Of the 11 original items on the variety scale, six were retained. The initial examination of the items revealed two distinct factors with loadings above 0.40—one with five culturally neutral items related purely to the job or task, and a second factor containing items appearing to tap variety in the context of cultural activities. For example, factor 1 included items related to variety in work teams, responsibilities, tasks, skills and talents, and general activities. The second factor included items related to variety in ethnic foods, cultural customs, cultural events, and new people one had not met before. Conceptually, the items loading on the second factor were more directly relevant to the cultural context for which this component was hoping to tap. As such, the culturally neutral five items were dropped, leaving six remaining items. A final factor

analysis indicated all six of these items loaded on a single factor at 0.40 and above. The final scale consisted of six items.

**Cultural involvement.**

For cultural involvement, the initial EFA resulted in three factors. Examining the rotated matrix, two items loaded at 0.40 or above on two separate factors. These items (“Watching foreign films,” “Eating the native food/ going to local restaurants”) were deleted and second factor analysis was conducted, resulting in a two-factor structure. Five items loaded onto factor (cultural events, cultural sites, reading local books, local stores, local museums) and two items loaded onto another (music, neighborhoods). The two items on the second factor were not significantly correlated with any of the items from the first factor (except music was significantly correlated with museums). These two items appeared to be tapping something different than the other five items and therefore were not included. A final factor analysis revealed a single-factor structure with all 5 items loading above the 0.40 cutoff.

**Social involvement.** In the initial examination of the factor structure for the seven items, two factors emerged for current social involvement. One item (“Socialize with people from your own country”) loaded on two factors and was removed. After that item was removed, a second factor analysis revealed a single-factor structure with all but two items loading at 0.40 or above. These items (“Socialize with host-country nationals or third-country nationals,” “Stay home—use the computer, watch TV”) were removed; resulting in a final single factor structure with four items all loading above 0.40.

**Work involvement.** For work involvement, all but two of the original eight items loaded onto a single factor, with loading .40 or higher. Two items (“Put in more effort than is necessary at work” and “Enthusiastically take on work assignments”) loaded on two factors, both with loadings above 0.40. Once those two items were removed, a second factor analysis revealed a single-factor structure with all six items loading above the 0.40 cutoff.

### **3. Results**

All hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression analysis. Four separate regression equations were run for each of the dependent variables—performance, general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment. When examining performance, the quantitative elements of experience (length and amount of time spent abroad) were entered into the first step of separate regression equation. The second step of the model included three qualitative elements of experience predicted to impact performance—challenge, complexity, and variety. In step three, the moderator variable, flexibility, was entered into the equation. Finally, step four contained the interaction terms between flexibility and each of the three aforementioned qualitative components. Variables were centered before computing the interaction terms.

Similarly, for the each of the adjustment outcomes (general, interaction, and work), the quantitative elements of experience (length and amount of time spent abroad) were entered into the first step of separate regression equation, followed by the three involvement variables (cultural, social, and work involvement) in the second step. In step three, the moderator variable, flexibility, was entered into the equation. Finally, step four contained the interaction terms between flexibility and each of the three involvement variables. As before, variables were centered before computing the interaction terms.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for all study variables are presented in Table 1. Results of the hierarchical regression analyses are presented in Tables 3-6.

### **Effects of Quantitative Elements of Experience**

The hypothesized relationships between length of previous international living experience and total number of previous international living experiences were not significant ( $p > .05$ ) for performance or any of the three types of adjustment, showing no support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively.

### **Effects of Qualitative Elements of Experience**

**Cultural challenge, complexity, and variety predicting performance.** Hypotheses 3 through 5 examined the relationships of cultural challenge, complexity, and variety of current international experiences with current performance abroad, suggesting greater exposure to cultural challenge, complexity, and variety during current experiences would be positively related to current levels of work performance abroad. Interestingly, results showed that individuals who experienced more complexity in terms of their behavior requirements (e.g., experienced conflicting information about their role, did not have a clear understanding of what was needed, were forced to think and behave in more complex ways, or found the strategies used back home were ineffective) rated themselves lower on performance during their current assignment than individuals who were not exposed to the same levels of complexity during their time abroad. Specifically, there was a negative and significant relationship between the behavioral factor of complexity and performance ( $p < .05$ ). This finding was in the opposite direction of hypothesis 4, but does align to research suggesting there can be initial dips in performance when

individuals are confronted with new and complex situations. Such situations may increase the cognitive resources required by the individual, contributing the cognitive load. As cognitive load increases, the mental capacity the individual can devote to the task decreases, which may negatively impact initial performance (Sweller, 1988). The relationship between the cognitive factor of complexity and performance was not significant ( $p > .05$ ).

Similarly, hypotheses 3 and 5 proposed direct, positive relationships between the cultural challenge and the variety of experiences, and current work performance abroad. However, contrary to expectations neither of these direct relationships was supported ( $p > .05$ ).

**Cultural, social, and work involvement predicting adjustment.** Hypotheses 6a-c, 7a-c, and 8a-c proposed the degree of cultural, social, and work involvement during current overseas assignments would be positively related to general, interaction, and work adjustment, respectively. Supporting hypothesis 6a and 6b, cultural involvement during current international experiences was significantly and positively related to general ( $p < .05$ ) and interaction adjustment ( $p < .05$ ); hypothesis 6c regarding work adjustment was not supported. That is, engaging in activities during a current assignment abroad that afforded individuals opportunities to become immersed in their host culture was associated with higher self-reported levels of general and interaction adjustment.

Social involvement during international experiences was significantly and positively related to interaction adjustment ( $p < .05$ ) and work adjustment ( $p < .05$ ), supporting hypotheses 7b and 7c, and approached significant for general adjustment ( $p =$



.056). This suggests that taking steps to become socially involved, such as forming friendships with people from the local culture, attending informal social events, or participating in organized social groups with host-country nationals, is positively related to both how comfortable one feels with interacting with host-nationals in work and non-work settings and one's general adjustment to living in another country

Finally, hypothesis 8a-c proposed positive relationships between work involvement and all three types of adjustment. Results indicated a positive and significant relationship between work involvement and interaction adjustment ( $p < .05$ ), supporting hypothesis 8c. This demonstrates a positive association between behaviors, such as involving host colleagues on tasks, coordinating with the host supervisor, engaging in workplace exchanges, and providing mentorship, with heightened levels of perceived adjustment in terms of interacting with host-country nationals in non-work contexts. Contrary to hypotheses 8b and 8d regarding general and work adjustment were not supported ( $p > .05$ ).

To summarize, all three forms of involvement were related to different types of adjustment abroad. Social and cultural involvement manifested as the most beneficial factors for adjustment abroad in this study. These two forms of involvement with the host-country appear to facilitate adjustment and comfort with being overseas more generally, as well as socializing and interacting with host-nationals. Work involvement was only associated with interaction adjustment, suggesting that the degree to which individuals immerse themselves at work may not be as powerful in promoting greater

overall adjustment to the culture as steps taken to socialize with and learn about the culture to which one is currently working.

**Moderator: Flexibility**

Individual flexibility was significantly and positively related to performance in Step 3 of the hierarchical regression equation ( $p < .01$ ), consistent with Hypothesis 9.

**The interaction of flexibility with cultural challenge, complexity, and variety to predict performance.** Hypothesis 10 proposed that flexibility would moderate the relationships between international experiences associated with cultural challenge, complexity, and variety, and work performance abroad. Supporting hypothesis 10a, the relationship between challenging experiences and performance was moderated by individual flexibility, such that flexible individuals who engaged in culturally challenging experiences while abroad on their current assignment were associated with higher levels of performance than less flexible individuals ( $p < .05$ ). See Figure 1 for graphical depiction of this relationship.

Flexibility was also shown to interact with variety in international experiences ( $p < .05$ ). While significant, this was not in the proposed direction noted in hypothesis 10c. It was hypothesized that the relationship between greater variety in experiences and performance would be higher for more flexible individuals than less flexible individuals. Interestingly, results indicated there was no difference in performance between individuals high or low on flexibility experiencing high levels of cultural variety while abroad. However, the strength of the relationship between variety and performance was stronger for less flexible individuals, suggesting that experiential variety may benefit the

performance of less flexible individuals. See Figure 2. Finally, the betas were not significant for the interactions between flexibility and complexity, showing no support for hypothesis 10b ( $p > .05$ ).

**The interaction of flexibility with cultural, social, and work involvement to predict adjustment.** Similarly, hypotheses 11a-c, 12a-c, and 13a-c suggested the degree of cultural, social, and work involvement would interact with flexibility in predicting general, interaction, and work adjustment while abroad. Contrary to hypotheses, the moderated relationships between flexibility and cultural involvement (11a-c), social involvement (12a-c), or work involvement (13a-c) and any forms of adjustment were not supported ( $p > .05$ ). Taken together, these findings suggest that social, cultural, and work involvement are important elements that facilitate adjustment abroad directly, but flexibility does not appear to impact the extent to which individuals become more culturally, socially, or work involved when on an international assignment.

### **Exploratory analyses**

While the involvement was not hypothesized to directly affect performance abroad, it may be that involvement indirectly contributes to performance through adjustment. Initial research supports the idea that expatriate adjustment should impact performance abroad. For instance, research has shown positive relationships between work adjustment and self-rated performance abroad (Parker & McEvoy, 1993), as well general adjustment and self-rated performance (Caligiuri, 1997). Findings related to general adjustment and performance has been mixed, with research showing both positive (Caligiuri, 1997) and negative (Parker & McEvoy, 1993) relationships between general

adjustment and self-rated performance abroad. Kramer, Wayne, and Jaworski (2001) distinguished between task and contextual performance in their work, finding that work adjustment was positively related to task performance, while interaction adjustment was positively related to contextual performance.

Examination of the outcome variables in this study revealed that performance was significantly correlated with interaction adjustment ( $r = .25$ ), which was significantly and positively associated with social, cultural, and work involvement (marginal relationship for social) during current experiences abroad. To explore this further, exploratory analyses were conducted investigating whether interaction adjustment would mediate the relationship between any of the three forms of involvement and performance. No support was found for the mediation of cultural or work involvement by interaction adjustment, but exploratory analyses did suggest that interaction adjustment mediated the relationship between social involvement and performance. Social involvement was positively associated with interaction adjustment ( $\beta = .52, p < .05$ ); social involvement was positively associated with performance ( $\beta = .17, p < .10$ ); interaction adjustment was positively associated with performance ( $\beta = .25, p < .05$ ); and after controlling for interaction adjustment, the relationship between social involvement and performance was no longer significant ( $\beta = .02, p > .05$ ). The results of the Sobel (1982) test showed that the parameter estimate for the relationship between social involvement and performance was significantly lower in the mediated condition than in the non-mediated condition,  $z = 2.44, p < .05$ , indicating that interaction adjustment mediated the relationship between social involvement and performance.

#### **4. Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to present an organized framework for understanding international experience and to identify the aspects of international experience that facilitate performance or adjustment abroad. Additionally, this study also examined moderating effects of flexibility in order to understand the influence of individual differences on the degree to which transformational experiences enhance performance or adjustment in international work settings.

Expanding previous efforts to conceptualize and measure international experience, this work incorporated traditional measures of experience and augmented this with the inclusion of six qualitative components expected to more effectively and accurately capture the construct of international experience. Neither total length of time living abroad, nor the number of different living experiences an individual possessed, impacted performance or any types of adjustment. This is important to note, given that single-item measures of experience such as these (e.g., “How many times have you been abroad?”) are often the predominant measurement approach used in studies (Takeuchi et al., 2005; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). This finding reiterates the notion that international experience is more complex than it has traditionally been conceived. Thus, the frequent reliance single-item or one-dimensional measures of experience is insufficient to fully

capture the elements of experience that may yield positive outcomes, such as learning, individual change, adjustment to new cultures, and job performance.

Moving beyond the quantitative aspects of international experience, this study examined six qualitative aspects of international experience and suggested how they related to either performance or adjustment abroad. I will begin by first discussing results related to performance, followed by adjustment.

This study hypothesized that both the quantitative measures of experience (i.e., time and amount) and three qualitative aspects of experience—challenge, complexity, and variety—would directly and positively affect performance while abroad. Although the proposed relationships between the quantitative components of experience and performance were not supported, this study did suggest that the qualitative nature of experience is important to consider when predicting performance abroad. Specifically, this study suggested that the more cultural complexity (behavioral) associated with the experiences abroad, the lower individuals rated their performance abroad. Although in the opposite direction of the hypothesis, this finding supports research suggesting that during situations of high complexity, individuals can show initial decreases in performance, followed by increases over time as the individual learns the task and becomes accustomed to the working environment or task (Sweller, 1988).

The direct effects of cultural challenge and experiential variety were not supported here. The self-report nature of performance may have contributed to the non-significant findings for challenge and variety. In this study, the performance scale ranged from not at all effective (1) to very effective (5); the minimum rating was 1.75, the

maximum was 5.00, with an average performance rating of 4.25 ( $SD = .68$ ). Overall, the performance ratings were fairly high and the self-report nature of this measure may have inflated true performance ratings. Future studies are encouraged to use other-source ratings of performance to more accurately assess the impact of these variables on objective performance.

In addition to aspects of the situation, this study also examined individual flexibility, an aspect of the person. The relationship between flexibility and performance abroad is generally varied, showing at times small correlations and non-significant findings (Mol et al., 2005). This research contributes to the growing understanding of how flexibility may benefit performance in international contexts and suggests flexibility is an important factor worthy of additional research. Flexible individuals are capable of changing their perspectives and behavior, allowing them to respond in different ways based on situational requirements (Tucker et al., 2004; Zaccaro et al., 1991). The current results demonstrate that flexibility contributes both directly to performance and as a moderator to the relationships between culturally challenging experiences and performance overseas. Additionally, findings from this work suggest that experiential variety may compensate for lower levels of flexibility and positively impact performance. Taken together, these results emphasize the importance of individual attributes and how they may differentially affect outcomes of interest. Individuals may respond in disparate ways to similar contexts or interventions, based on their individual differences (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Therefore, it is critical in both theory and practice to consider factors,

such as flexibility, that may impact the extent to which individuals learn and use information from their environment.

Turning to adjustment, the results suggest that all three aspects of involvement were positively related to adjustment in some capacity. The idea of involvement builds on the ideas put forth by Osland and Osland (2005) discussing how involvement in one's host-country culture should positively impact an individual's experience abroad. They discussed involvement in terms of cultural, work, and personal variables could indicate one's degree of involvement and contact within a culture. As previously mentioned, their work focused on demographic and concrete descriptive variables (e.g., items assessing *work* included job type, facility size, degree of customer contact; items assessing *cultural* involvement included the cultural similarity between home-and host-countries), as opposed to qualitative factors that capture the degree of involvement and integration with the host-culture, which was the focus of this study. Developing the idea of involvement further, this paper conceptualized and tested three aspects of involvement—social, work, and cultural—concluding that all three contribute to adjustment while working overseas. Specifically, results from this research indicate social involvement and cultural involvement may be key factors for facilitating successful adjustment abroad.

Here, social involvement was conceptualized to include activities such as participating in cultural social events, joining social groups, and making friends with host nationals. Results from this study indicate that social involvement during current international experiences abroad was positively and significantly related to interaction and work adjustment, and marginally significant for general adjustment ( $p = .056$ ).



Additionally, cultural involvement—participating in cultural events, visiting cultural sites, reading books/watching movies about the local culture, shopping at local stores, or learning about local art—was also an important contributor to general and interaction adjustment while abroad. Specifically, individuals who reported being more culturally involved during their current international assignment felt they were more comfortable and able to adjust to the general living environment and to people from the host-culture. Finally, work involvement, which was comprised of activities in the workplace, such as involving host colleagues or engaging in social exchanges at the workplace, was positively related only to interaction adjustment. That is, individuals who reported higher levels of work involvement on their current assignment also rated themselves higher on their comfort with interacting with people from the host-country in non-work settings, but not in terms of adjustment to work or living overseas.

These findings suggest that types of involvement are specific and differentially related to outcomes, such as different types adjustment. Perhaps the elements of social involvement generalize more easily to different contexts than cultural and work involvement, which are more context-specific. That is, culture and work capture the extent to which individuals become involved, learn about, and interact with aspects of a particular cultural context, such as learning about the specific culture one is operating in, or involving individuals specifically from the work environment. The elements of social involvement may be more general in nature (i.e., social etiquette) and may apply more easily across situations. Additionally, exploratory analyses also suggested that interaction adjustment mediated the relationship between social involvement and performance,

highlighting that the benefits of participating in social situations can directly impact how comfortable individuals feel while abroad, and can also positively impact their work performance through their level of adjustment to interacting with individuals from the host-country. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study, future longitudinal research is encouraged to investigate the mediating effect of adjustment on the relationship between involvement and performance abroad. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance of embracing, rather than avoiding, the foreign culture in which one is working or living as a means through which to facilitate comfort during international experiences.

In summary, this study integrates and builds on previous theory and practice and offers a new conceptualization of international experience. The framework presented in this paper incorporates the essential elements described by Quinones and colleague (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) in their seminal work on work experience, but also builds on this work to offer a unique frame with which to view and conceptualize international experience, addressing a critical gap in the literature. Gains in theory provide practitioners with a more accurate understanding of the conceptual framework with which to conceive international experience. Additionally, a more accurate understanding of the construct allows for more rigorous measurement and application.

Of particular importance here are the findings related to involvement and flexibility. In terms of involvement, the benefits of interacting with host-country nationals or becoming involved in the host-culture have been discussed in the literature on expatriates (Hechanova et al., 2003; Parker & McEvoy, 1993), but past research has

not clearly articulated what is meant by such involvement or interaction. This paper fills this gap by explicitly identifying three aspects of involvement and demonstrating their importance in predicting adjustment abroad.

Other key take-aways from this study are the importance of flexibility in predicting performance abroad, as well as the impact flexibility has on the relationship between culturally challenging experiences abroad and performance. Results from this work suggest that flexible individuals who engaged in culturally challenging experiences while abroad were associated with higher levels of performance than less flexible individuals. These findings contribute to the growing expatriate literature on predictors of performance abroad and increase understanding of the types of situations (e.g., culturally challenging) where this skill may be particularly valuable.

These results can also be directly applied to organizational actions to prepare individuals for, and guide individuals during, international assignments. Rather than sending employees overseas to work as expatriates with little guidance as to what steps they can take to become acclimated and adjusted to the foreign culture, organizations can instead convey the importance of becoming socially, culturally, and work-involved once abroad to expatriates. Organizations can provide examples of each aspect of involvement and connect expatriates directly to networks or groups that can help expatriates become more involved upon arrival. Once organizations are armed with the knowledge of the crucial aspects of experience (such as involvement) that promote adjustment abroad, they can strategically place expatriates in situations that trigger learning and facilitate adjustment. Likewise, with the added organizational awareness that the complexities

associated with determining appropriate behaviors and strategies to use when abroad may decrease performance, organizations can provide new expatriates with additional supports once abroad (e.g., mentor) to help navigate through the new environment and mitigate potential dips in performance. Relying on a systematic, strategic approach derived from theory will ensure individuals engage in useful, beneficial activities while abroad that benefit both the individual and the organization.

Similar developmental implications can also be made regarding the current findings for flexibility. Flexible individuals are able and willing to respond in different ways based on the situational requirements (Tucker et al., 2004; Zaccaro et al., 1991). This study highlighted a positive relationship between flexibility and performance abroad. Flexibility has been conceptualized in a variety of ways, including a trait-based and behavioral-based approaches (Kaiser, Lindberg, & Craig, 2007). While some attributes are more stable and immune to change, others are more malleable and may benefit from training and development (Zaccaro, 2007). Taking the skill-based approach to flexibility, and knowing the impact of flexibility for performance abroad, organizations can take steps to develop this skill in individuals they wish to send abroad, prior to departure, to better prepare them for the assignment. Additionally, this study suggested the performance benefits of engaging in culturally challenging experiences were greater for individuals higher in flexibility. As such, programs could be established in the host-country to identify culturally challenging activities that support expatriate development and increase performance.

The current findings linking flexibility to performance also have important implications in the context of selection. This study suggests that individuals higher in flexibility perform at higher levels than individuals lower on flexibility. Knowing this, organizations can strategically assess and select individual who are higher in flexibility and who are likely to perform more effectively when working on an international assignment. Organizations may also adopt a combined approach, relying on both selection and developmental strategies. Indeed, it may behoove organizations to select individuals that possess certain stable attributes that are less susceptible to change and will enable them to develop other dynamic attributes, such as flexibility, over time through developmental interventions (Zaccaro, 2007). With this approach, stable attributes may serve as the foundation for the development of more dynamic attributes that are likely to benefit individuals working internationally.

In all, based on the information provided in this study, organizations can more effectively identify factors to select for when deciding whom to send on an international assignment. Additionally, organizations can proactively prepare individuals to go abroad using the training and development strategies to develop attributes, such as flexibility, prior to departure on the international assignment. Finally, upon arrival organizations can guide expatriate to towards activities that promote cultural, social, and work involvement, all of which are positively associated with adjustment abroad.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Conclusions from this study must be considered in light of several limitations. First, the sample was one of convenience, drawing from individuals working in several

countries, industries, and positions. While the survey was disseminated to a large variety of people in different locations, the sample is not necessarily representative of any one population. Along with this, although the sample was in accordance with the size suggested by the a priori power analysis, a larger and more representative sample would allow for a stronger examination of the ideas proposed in this model. Additionally, given the exploratory nature of this work, all six of the scales to measure the qualitative components of the proposed framework were created for this study. Validated scales are always preferable, but none existed for the unique elements examined in this study. However, exploratory factor analyses generally supported the intended factor structures. The inter-correlations between the scales were reasonable—ranging between 0.28 to 0.62 among challenge, complexity, and variety (these scales were not correlated with the involvement scales, except for a positive relationship between variety and cultural involvement at  $r = .37$ ). Inter-correlations among the involvement scales were also reasonable ranged from 0.04- 0.43. Thus, there was evidence of convergent and discriminant validity for these previously untested measures.

A major limitation of this study is the use of entirely self-report measures. This introduces the issues related common method variance, which may bias results. The Harman's single-factor test is an often-used method for testing for common method variance (CMV). It involves conducting an exploratory factor analysis including all variables of interest (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). If all items load onto a single factor, or if one factor explains the majority of the variance, CMV is assumed to exist and may bias the findings. To test this, an exploratory factor analysis

was conducted on all items in the study, resulting in loadings on 23 different factors. This method should not be interpreted to mean common method variance does not exist, but may suggest that CMV may not be the sole driver of the results.

The concern for CMV may be partially mitigated by research suggesting that abstract constructs (e.g., attitudes) are more concerning than less abstract constructs (e.g., performance) (Cote & Buckley, 1987), which was measured in this study. Additionally, best practices also support the use of measures that most accurately capture the construct of interest, which depending on the construct may best be assessed by self-report. For example, self-report measures should be appropriate to assess constructs that are perceptual in nature, such as feelings or perceptions of work (Spector, 1994). While some indicators of individual adjustment may be observable (e.g., depression, avoidance, etc.), adjustment is a latent, perceptual variable that stems from within us and, as such, I argue it is appropriate to assess adjustment via self-report measures.

While this study covered a broad research question, there are several areas that are ripe for future research. Indeed, future research might consider testing other moderating factors in addition to flexibility to examine how they may impact the relationship between international experiences on performance and adjustment. Some variables that may be particularly germane include: motivational factors –why is the individual working abroad (e.g., Is it solely to receive a promotion? Did the individual have a choice in going? Is the individual going to a country of choice?); and feedback (i.e., does the individual received frequent and quality from host country peer and supervisors other opportunities that promote development?). This study suggested that social and cultural

involvement were important for individual adjustment. Another factor to consider is whether or not individuals receive support while abroad (e.g., does an individual have access to a mentor or to training?). Findings from this study point to the importance of involvement while abroad, so it may behoove organizations to ensure individuals are paired with an experienced person who can help them become involved and build up their network. Finally, a tremendous amount of the expatriate literature focuses on the outcomes of adjustment or simple measures of performance. Future research should expand the traditional focus to other relevant outcomes, including innovative performance and adaptive performance across multiple domains.



## **5. Conclusion**

In closing, the purpose of this study was to present and test an organized framework for understanding international experience and to identify the developmental aspects of international experience that facilitate performance and adjustment abroad. The framework consisted of quantitative and qualitative elements to provide a multidimensional examination of international experience that went beyond traditional uni-dimensional measures of international experience to more effectively capture the construct. A key differentiator of this model is the addition of several key qualitative elements including cultural challenge, complexity, and variety, as well as cultural, social, and work involvement. Finally, this paper also examined the role of a key factor, individual flexibility, as a direct predictor of performance abroad and as a moderator to the international experience— performance/adjustment relationship. Building understanding of human experience and performance in light of the increasing globalization of work, the current paper suggests that genuine flexibility and engagement with international cultures will improve expatriates' time abroad.

## Appendix A: Tables and Figures

Table 1

*Quantitative and qualitative components of experience*

<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Time	Challenge
Amount	Complexity
	Variety
	Cultural involvement
	Social involvement
	Work involvement

Table 2

*Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all study variables*

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Length of time Living abroad	6.07	1.76														
2 Number of # times Lived abroad	3.73	2.16	0.47**													
3 Challenge	3.08	0.76	0.06	0.05	(.82)											
4 Complexity Cog	3.25	0.78	0.05	0.11	0.52**	(.79)										
5 Complexity Beh	2.80	0.79	0.12	0.13	0.62**	0.57**	(.81)									
6 Variety	3.58	0.60	0.05	0.17	0.34**	0.28**	0.18	(.71)								
7 Cultural Inv	3.74	0.94	0.08	0.13	-0.02	0.05	0.05	0.37**	(.76)							
8 Social Inv	3.41	0.86	0.02	0.04	-0.03	0.04	-0.11	0.06	0.35**	(.83)						
9 Work Inv	3.49	0.72	-0.09	0.05	0.09	0.04	0.01	0.05	0.04	0.43**	(.87)					
10 Flexibility	4.09	3.90	-0.04	0.16	-0.12	-0.11	-0.26**	0.12	0.14	0.42**	0.29**	(.78)				
11 Performance	4.25	0.68	0.03	0.09	-0.14	-0.22*	-0.31**	0.08	-0.01	0.17	0.05	0.42**	(.89)			
12 Adjustment General	5.78	0.94	0.17	0.06	-0.32**	-0.18	-0.31**	0.03	0.30**	0.33**	0.04	0.25**	0.13	(.88)		
13 Adjustment Interaction	5.56	1.28	0.03	0.07	-0.13	-0.12	-0.21*	0.00	0.29**	0.63**	0.40**	0.32**	0.25**	0.50**	(.92)	
14 Adjustment Work	4.76	1.97	0.09	0.20	-0.17	-0.05	-0.20	0.02	0.15	.26*	0.04	0.09	-0.02	0.30**	0.40**	(.99)

\*\*  $p < 0.01$

\*  $p < 0.05$

Table 3

*Results of Regression Analyses of Current Experiences on Performance*

	B	SE	$\beta$
<i>Step 1: Quantitative</i>			
Length of time living abroad	0.07	0.76	0.10
Number of times lived abroad	-0.09	0.76	-0.14
<i>R<sup>2</sup> = .02</i>			
<i>Step 2: Qualitative</i>			
Challenge	0.04	0.11	0.05
Complexity 1	-0.10	0.11	-0.12
Complexity 2	-0.26	0.11	-0.31*
Variety	0.20	0.12	0.17
<i>R<sup>2</sup> = .14**</i>			
<i>Step 3: Moderator</i>			
Flexibility	0.69	0.16	0.39**
<i>R<sup>2</sup> = .27**</i>			
<i>Step 4: Two-way Interaction Terms</i>			
Challenge X Flexibility	0.59	0.26	0.30*
Complexity1 X Flexibility	-0.29	0.29	-0.16
Complexity2 X Flexibility	-0.06	0.31	-0.03
Variety X Flexibility	-0.89	0.28	-0.30**
<i>R<sup>2</sup> = .37**</i>			
<i>N = 114</i>			

†p < .10. \* p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

Table 4

*Results of Regression Analyses of Current Experiences on  
General Adjustment*

	B	SE	$\beta$
<i>Step 1: Quantitative</i>			
Length of time living abroad	0.17	0.14	0.18
Number of times lived abroad	-0.03	0.14	-0.03
<i>R2 = .03</i>			
<i>Step 2: Qualitative</i>			
Cultural Involvement	0.37	0.16	0.29*
Social Involvement	0.28	0.14	0.25†
Work Involvement	0.02	0.13	0.02
<i>R2 = .17*</i>			
<i>Step 3: Moderator</i>			
Flexibility	0.46	0.34	0.19
<i>R2 = .20</i>			
<i>Step 4: Two-way Interaction Terms</i>			
CI X Flexibility	0.03	0.45	0.01
SI X Flexibility	-0.11	0.46	-0.03
WI X Flexibility	0.06	0.39	0.02
<i>R2 = .20</i>			
<i>N=113</i>			

† $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 5

*Results of Regression Analyses of Current Experiences on Interaction Adjustment*

	B	SE	$\beta$
<i>Step 1: Quantitative</i>			
Length of time living abroad	0.00	0.19	0.00
Number of times lived abroad	0.09	0.19	0.07
<i>R2 = .01</i>			
<i>Step 2: Qualitative</i>			
Cultural Involvement	0.49	0.21	0.27*
Social Involvement	0.38	0.18	0.24*
Work Involvement	0.50	0.16	0.36*
<i>R2 = .30**</i>			
<i>Step 3: Moderator</i>			
Flexibility	0.46	0.43	0.14
<i>R2 = .31</i>			
<i>Step 4: Two-way Interaction Terms</i>			
C1 X Flexibility	-0.25	0.57	-0.06
S1 X Flexibility	0.38	0.58	0.09
W1 X Flexibility	-0.37	0.50	-0.09
<i>R2 = .32</i>			
<i>N=113</i>			

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 6

*Results of Regression Analyses of Current Experiences on Work Adjustment*

	B	SE	$\beta$
<i>Step 1: Quantitative</i>			
Length of time living abroad	0.00	0.33	0.00
Number of times lived abroad	0.38	0.33	0.19
<i>R2 = .04</i>			
<i>Step 2: Qualitative</i>			
Cultural Involvement	0.33	0.39	0.12
Social Involvement	0.77	0.35	0.32*
Work Involvement	-0.01	0.30	-0.01
<i>R2 = .15</i>			
<i>Step 3: Moderator</i>			
Flexibility	-0.31	0.82	-0.06
<i>R2 = .16</i>			
<i>Step 4: Two-way Interaction Terms</i>			
C1 X Flexibility	0.45	1.09	0.06
S1 X Flexibility	0.84	1.13	0.13
W1 X Flexibility	-0.04	0.96	-0.01
<i>R2 = .17</i>			
<i>N=86</i>			

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

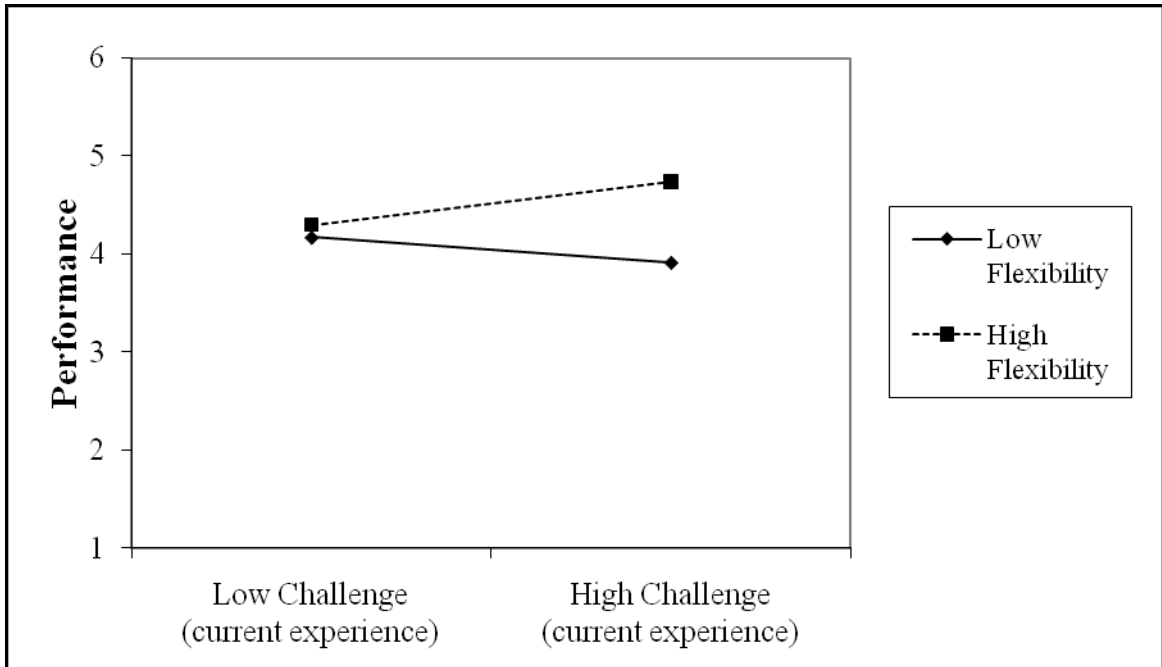


Figure 1. Interaction between cultural challenge and flexibility on performance.



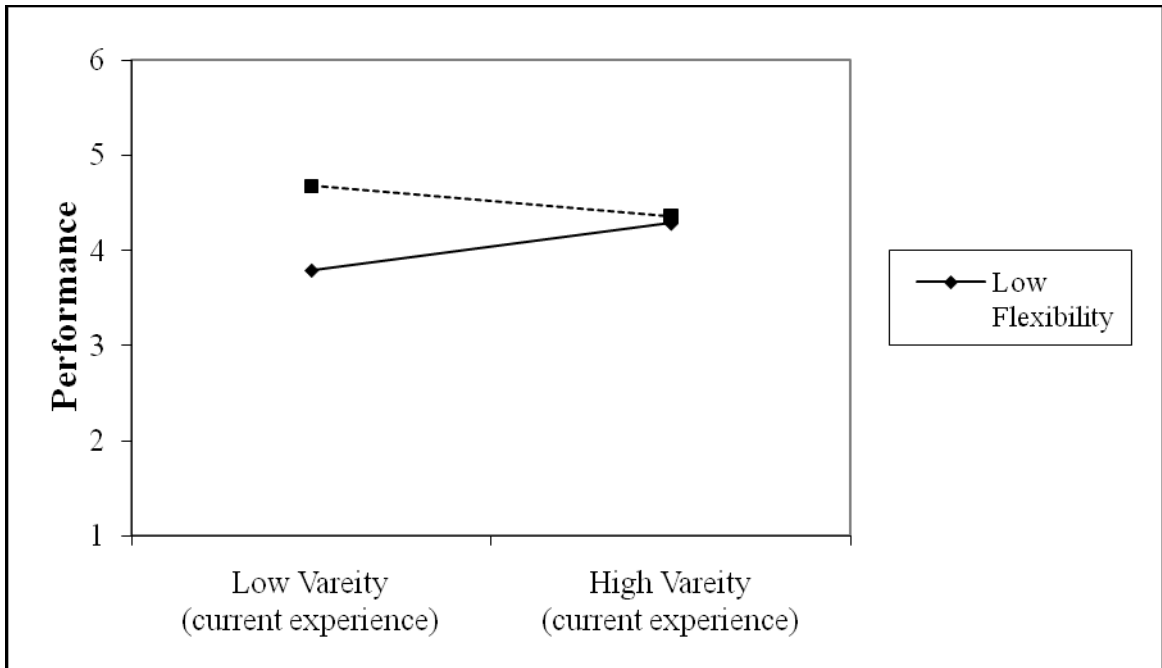


Figure 2. Interaction between variety and flexibility on performance.

## Appendix B: Measures

### International Experience

#### *Time*

1. Total length of combined time spent living abroad

#### *Amount*

1. Total number of different times spent living abroad

#### *Challenge*

Please answer the following questions for your current AND past assignment(s) based on a scale ranging from never to always.

My experience abroad:

1. Forced me to overcome challenging obstacles\*
2. Required me to engage in confrontations with host-country nationals\*
3. Required me to often engage in unstructured activities where there was little to no guidance as to the appropriate behaviors or course of actions
4. Put me in situations that led me to make mistakes and errors\*
5. Forced me to deal with crisis situations\*
6. Forced me to struggle to determine the correct way to do things
7. Put me in situations I had not dealt with before\*
8. Forced me to think in new ways about the way I complete my tasks\*

*\*indicates items used in final scale. Items without an asterisk did not load onto the same factor*

#### *Complexity*

Please answer the following questions for your current AND past assignment(s) based on a scale ranging from never to always.

During my time abroad:

1. I was faced with difficult tasks where the solutions were not obvious
2. I was faced with conflicting information about what my role was\*2
3. I did not have a clear understanding of what was needed to do the task\*2
4. I was forced to think and behave in more complex ways than I was used to\*2
5. I found the strategies I typically have used back home were not appropriate or were ineffective\*2
6. I had to pull together several different perspectives to come up with a successful solution when solving problems\*1

7. I was frequently presented with several sources of information that I had to make sense of before I could identify a course of action\*1
  8. I was forced to consider various strategies before making any final decisions\*1
- \*indicates retained in final analyses. 1= items retained in factor1, 2= items retained in factor 2*

### ***Variety***

Please answer the following questions for your current AND past assignment(s) based on a scale ranging from never to always.

During my time abroad:

1. I worked on several different work-teams
2. I had many different responsibilities
3. I worked on a variety of tasks or projects, each with different objectives
4. I was required me to use a variety of different skills and talents
5. I engaged in a variety of activities
6. I felt like every day was something new\*
7. I interacted with people I had not met before\*
8. I ate several different types of ethnic foods\*
9. I witnessed a variety of cultural customs that were different from my own\*
10. I attended a variety of different cultural events\*
11. I tried to do something new every day\*

*\*indicates items used in final scale. Items without an asterisk did not load onto the same factor*

### ***Cultural Involvement***

Please indicate the extent to which you were involved with the activities while abroad on your current and past assignment(s) ranging from never to always.

1. Attending cultural events/cultural festivals\*
2. Visiting historical or cultural sites\*
3. Reading books/watching movies about the local culture/history\*
4. Shopping at local stores\*
5. Watching foreign films
6. Eating the native food/ going to local restaurants
7. Listening to music from the host culture
8. Visiting local art galleries or museums\*
9. Reading local magazines or newspapers

10. Residing among local neighborhoods (where the majority of residents are from the host-country)

*\*indicates items used in final scale. Items without an asterisk did not load onto the same factor*

### ***Social Involvement***

Please indicate the extent to which you were involved with the activities while abroad on your current and past assignment(s) ranging from never to always.

*\*=Reverse coded*

1. Socialize with people from your own country (r)
2. Socialize with host-country nationals or third-country nationals (people not from your county or the host-country)
3. Attend social events with host-country nationals\*
4. Participate in organized social groups with host-country nationals (e.g., sport groups, meet-up groups) \*
5. Form friendships with people from the local culture\*
6. Involve people from the host-culture in your activities\*
7. Stay home (use the computer, watch TV) (r)

*\*indicates items used in final scale. Items without an asterisk did not load onto the same factor*

### ***Work Involvement***

Please indicate the extent to which you were involved with the activities while abroad on your current and past assignment(s) ranging from never to always.

1. Work with host-country colleagues on projects or team tasks \*
2. Work with host-country supervisor(s) to clarify project goals and accomplish work objectives \*
3. Engage in social exchanges at the workplace with colleagues \*
4. Provide mentorship or guidance to more junior host-country nationals \*
5. Actively participate in work meetings with host-country nationals \*
6. Put in more effort than is necessary at work
7. Enthusiastically take on work assignments
8. Involve people from the host country on tasks \*

*\*indicates items used in final scale. Items without an asterisk did not load onto the same factor*

### ***Flexibility***

Martin, M. M., & Rubin, R. B. (1995). A new measure of cognitive flexibility. *Psychological Reports*, 76 (2), 623-626.

*Instructions:* The following statements deal with your beliefs and feelings about your own behavior. Read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement. Responses will be reported on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

1. I can communicate an idea in many different ways.
2. I avoid new and unusual situations. (R)
3. I feel like I never get to make decisions. (R)
4. I can find workable solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems.
5. I seldom have choices when deciding how to behave. (R)
6. I am willing to work at creative solutions to problems.
7. In any given situation, I am able to act appropriately.
8. My behavior is a result of conscious decisions that I make.
9. I have many possible ways of behaving in any given situation.
10. I have difficulty using my knowledge on a given topic in real life situations. (R)
11. I am willing to listen and consider alternatives for handling a problem.
12. I have the self-confidence necessary to try different ways of behaving.

### **Expatriate Adjustment**

Black, J. S., & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management*, 15(4), 529.

Please indicate on a scale of 1 to 7 (1=not adjusted at all; 7=very well adjusted) the degree to which you are adjusted or not on the following items.

1. Living conditions in general
2. Housing conditions
3. Food
4. Shopping
5. Cost of living
6. Entertainment/recreation facilities and opportunities
7. Health care facilitates
8. Socializing with host nationals
9. Interacting with host nationals on a day-to-day basis
10. Interacting with host nationals outside of work
11. Speaking with host nationals
12. Specific job responsibilities
13. Performance standards and expectations  
Supervisory responsibilities

### **Expatriate Performance**

Adapted measure of performance from Welbourne, Johnson and Erez (1998) and Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1989)

In the context of your CURRENT INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENT, please indicate your effectiveness at doing the following activities.

How would you rate your effectiveness at:

1. Fulfilling all responsibilities required by your job
2. Producing quality work (and *Early, 1987*)
3. Producing accurate work
4. Completing required assignments on time

### **Demographics**

#### **Age**

What is your age?

Under 18

18-24

25-29

30-34

35-39

40-44

45-49

50-54

55-59

60-64

65+

#### **Gender**

What is your gender? M\_\_\_ F\_\_\_

**Ethnicity:** Please indicate your ethnicity.

African-American/Black

Asian, Asian American/Pacific Islander

Caucasian/ White American, European, not Hispanic

Chicano(a)/ Mexican American

Latino(a)/ Hispanic American

Native American/American Indian

Mixed; parents are from two or more different groups

Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

**Educational background** (check highest degree completed)

High School

College /University

MBA

MA/MS

PhD

JD

MD or other medical degree

Other advanced degree \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital status.**

Single

married

divorced

widowed

in a long-term committed partnership, but not married

**Country of origin**

What country are you a citizen of? (Dual Citizens - Please select country you were born in and go on to next question)

Afghanistan	Hungary	Poland
Algeria	Iceland	Portugal
Angola	India	Qatar
Argentina	Indonesia	Romania
Australia	Ireland	Russia
Austria	Israel	Saudi Arabia
Azerbaijan	Italy	Scotland
Bahamas	Ivory Coast	Singapore
Bangladesh	Jamaica	Slovak Rep
Belgium	Japan	Slovenia
Belize	Jordan	South Africa
Bermuda	Kazakhstan	Spain
Bolivia	Kenya	Sri Lanka
Botswana	Kiribati	Sweden
Brazil	Korea	Switzerland
Brit. Virgin Isl.	Kuwait	Taiwan
Bulgaria	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Burma	Laos	Tanzania
Cambodia	Latvia	Thailand
Canada	Liechtenstein	Trinidad & Tob
Chile	Lithuania	Turkey
China	Luxembourg	Turkmenistan
Colombia	Macedonia	UAE
Costa Rica	Madagascar	Uganda
Cyprus	Malaysia	UK
Czech Rep	Martinique	Ukraine
Denmark	Mexico	United States
Dominican Rep	Micronesia	Uruguay
Ecuador	Moldova	Uzbekistan
Egypt	Monaco	Venezuela
El Salvador	Morocco	Vietnam
Estonia	Namibia	Yemen
Fiji	Nepal	Zaire
Finland	Netherlands	Zimbabwe
France	New Zealand	Other - North America
Georgia Rep	Nicaragua	Other - Europe
Germany	Norway	Other - South America
Greece	Oman	Other - Asia
Guatemala	Pakistan	Other - Middle East
Haiti	Panama	Other - Africa
Honduras	Peru	
Hong Kong	Philippines	



*If you are a dual citizen, select your second country (not the country you were born in) from the list below. Do NOT answer this question if you are not a citizen of more than one country.*

I am not a dual citizen

Afghanistan	Indonesia	Scotland
Algeria	Ireland	Singapore
Angola	Israel	Slovak Rep
Argentina	Italy	Slovenia
Australia	Ivory Coast	South Africa
Austria	Jamaica	Spain
Azerbaijan	Japan	Sri Lanka
Bahamas	Jordan	Sweden
Bangladesh	Kazakhstan	Switzerland
Belgium	Kenya	Taiwan
Belize	Kiribati	Tajikistan
Bermuda	Korea	Tanzania
Bolivia	Kuwait	Thailand
Botswana	Kyrgyzstan	Trinidad & Tob
Brazil	Laos	Turkey
Brit. Virgin Isl.	Latvia	Turkmenistan
Bulgaria	Liechtenstein	UAE
Burma	Lithuania	Uganda
Cambodia	Luxembourg	UK
Canada	Macedonia	Ukraine
Chile	Madagascar	United States
China	Malaysia	Uruguay
Colombia	Martinique	Uzbekistan
Costa Rica	Mexico	Venezuela
Cyprus	Micronesia	Vietnam
Czech Rep	Moldova	Yemen
Denmark	Monaco	Zaire
Dominican Rep	Morocco	Zimbabwe
Ecuador	Namibia	Other - North America
Egypt	Nepal	Other - Europe
El Salvador	Netherlands	Other - South America
Estonia	New Zealand	Other - Asia
Fiji	Nicaragua	Other - Middle East
Finland	Norway	Other – Africa
France	Oman	
Georgia Rep	Pakistan	
Germany	Panama	
Greece	Peru	
Guatemala	Philippines	
Haiti	Poland	
Honduras	Portugal	
Hong Kong	Qatar	
Hungary	Romania	
Iceland	Russia	
India	Saudi Arabia	

**Location of assignment.**

Please indicate the location of your current international assignment. Pick one country from the list and then indicate the length of the assignment

Afghanistan	Hungary	Poland
Algeria	Iceland	Portugal
Angola	India	Qatar
Argentina	Indonesia	Romania
Australia	Ireland	Russia
Austria	Israel	Saudi Arabia
Azerbaijan	Italy	Scotland
Bahamas	Ivory Coast	Singapore
Bangladesh	Jamaica	Slovak Rep
Belgium	Japan	Slovenia
Belize	Jordan	South Africa
Bermuda	Kazakhstan	Spain
Bolivia	Kenya	Sri Lanka
Botswana	Kiribati	Sweden
Brazil	Korea	Switzerland
Brit. Virgin Isl.	Kuwait	Taiwan
Bulgaria	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan
Burma	Laos	Tanzania
Cambodia	Latvia	Thailand
Canada	Liechtenstein	Trinidad & Tob
Chile	Lithuania	Turkey
China	Luxembourg	Turkmenistan
Colombia	Macedonia	UAE
Costa Rica	Madagascar	Uganda
Cyprus	Malaysia	UK
Czech Rep	Martinique	Ukraine
Denmark	Mexico	United States
Dominican Rep	Micronesia	Uruguay
Ecuador	Moldova	Uzbekistan
Egypt	Monaco	Venezuela
El Salvador	Morocco	Vietnam
Estonia	Namibia	Yemen
Fiji	Nepal	Zaire
Finland	Netherlands	Zimbabwe
France	New Zealand	Other - North America
Georgia Rep	Nicaragua	Other - Europe
Germany	Norway	Other - South America
Greece	Oman	Other - Asia
Guatemala	Pakistan	Other - Middle East
Haiti	Panama	Other – Africa
Honduras	Peru	
Hong Kong	Philippines	

**Length of assignment**

- 0-2 months
- 3-6 months
- 7-11 months
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10-15 years
- 16+ years

**Current work status.**

Please indicate your current organizational industry from the list below:

- Work Full-Time
- Work  $\frac{3}{4}$
- Work Part-Time
- Other (please specify)

**Organizational industry.**

Please indicate your current organizational industry.

Response options include: arts/entertainment, sales, manufacturing, service, R&D, marketing, health, finance/banking, government, utility, construction, education, technology, utility, other (please specify)

**Current organizational tenure:**

Please indicate the length of time you have been employed with your their current organization.

- Less than 6 months
- 6 months-1 year
- 1-2 years
- 3-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 10-15 years,
- More than 20 years

## **Appendix C: Full Literature Review**

The nature of organizations continues to evolve as work and business operations become increasingly global, dynamic, and complex (2001). As a result of globalization, the necessity for employees to engage in international assignments continues to increase (GMAC, 2008; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). Enhancing the success of international work assignments is particularly relevant to organizations when considering not only the potential competitive advantage that internationalizing employees may bring (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2000; Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, & Maznevski, 2008; L. K. Stroh, J. S. Black, M. E. Mendenhall, & H. B. Gregersen, 2005; Stroh & Caligiuri, 1998), but also the consequences of failed expatriate assignments. These costs are substantial and may include lost time, money, and damaged business relationships (Bennett, Aston, & Colquhoun, 2000; Littrell & Salas, 2005; Selmer, Torbiorn, & De Leon, 1998).

A main factor contributing to assignment failure is the inability of expatriates to adapt while abroad (GMAC, 2008). Research attempting to identify predictors of success in global environments has grown markedly over the decades and international experience is often discussed a fundamental contributor to expatriate adjustment and performance abroad. However, findings related to previous international experience are equivocal and provide little insight into the role experience plays in facilitating desired work outcomes (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Black, 1988; Kealey, 1989; Mol, Born, Willemsen, & Van Der Molen, 2005; Parker & McEvoy, 1993;

Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005). In other words, it is not clear which elements of experience promote expatriate adjustment and performance aboard. The mixed findings could be due in part to the lack of developed theory on international experience, as well as the lack of sophisticated and consistent measurement approaches used in past research.

The purpose of this study is to identify the developmental aspects of international experience that facilitate performance abroad and present an organized framework for understanding international experience. This framework integrates research on experience from both domestic and international perspectives, including research on domestic work experience (Quinones, Ford, & Teachout, 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998), experiential learning, developmental work assignments (McCauley, Ruderman, Ohlott, & Morrow, 1994), and prior international experience (Takeuchi et al., 2005). I will also consider a critical factor—flexibility—likely to influence the degree to which these experiences enhance performance when people work in international settings. While engaging in developmental experiences may engender positive adjustment and performance outcomes more generally, it is likely that certain individuals will obtain more from these experiences than others (Caligiuri & Tarique, 2009). Thus, this paper will provide a comprehensive integration of previously disconnected streams of literature. As a result, this work will have important implications for theories of development and practical implications for improving expatriate adjustment and performance on international assignments.

This paper contributes to the extant literature in four key ways. This study (a) moves beyond the traditional uni-dimensional measures of international experience by capturing the more accurate, multidimensional nature of the construct, (b) extends Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, Lepak's (2005) work on international experience by examining additional qualitative dimensions of experience, including challenge, complexity, variety, and cultural involvement (i.e., cultural, social, and work involvement), (c) examines the impact of international experience on expatriate performance outcomes, in addition to adjustment outcomes, and finally (d) examines the role of an important factor, individual flexibility, as a moderator of the international experience— performance/adjustment relationship.

This paper begins with a broad discussion of experience to provide a basis for understanding the construct, including a brief review of the historical roots of experience and learning and an overview of the domestic literature on work experience, followed by a summary of the literature on prior international experience. Based on the review of these literatures, a revised conceptualization of international experience is offered, after which the affect of the flexibility as a moderator will be discussed.

### **Historical Roots of Experience and Learning**

According to Quinones, Ford, and Teachout (1995) *experience* is defined as the events that occur in an individual's life (p. 890). The notion of learning from experience has a long history. Early scholars, such as John Locke and Aristotle, believed ideas and impressions were derived from experience (Viney & King, 1998). Locke, for instance,

did not believe people were born with innate ideas about the world, but rather he charged that the mind begins as a black slate (a *tabula rasa*) and all ideas, knowledge, and understanding are formed through experience.

In the mid-1990's, scholars such as Carl Rogers also supported the value of learning from experience, but advocated for a distinction between cognitive learning (e.g., numbers and facts) and affective-experiential learning (e.g., beliefs and attitudes) (Rogers, 1983). To Rogers, experience was of the utmost importance for development. In his book, *Becoming a Person* (1995) he states:

“Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person's ideas, and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience.” (p. 23).

While Rogers touted the value of experiential learning, he believed the two forms of learning, both cognitive and affective-experiential, should be melded to provide a holistic approach to development (Rogers, 1974).

Other well-known scholars such as Seymour Papert, a student of Jean Piaget's, also espoused the importance of experience for learning. Papert (1980) argued that people constantly build and revise mental models of the world through accumulated experience. He suggested that one of the most effective means by which to acquire new concepts is through direct experience and coined the process of *constructionism*, which focuses on learning by working through problems. Building off the seminal work of scholars, such as Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, and John Dewey, David Kolb proposed Experiential

Learning Theory (ELT), where “Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p.41).

Overtime, the idea of learning from experience has garnered support, but to truly understand the role of experience, it must be examined within a context (Quinones et al., 1995). The next section will focus on experience as it relates to the workplace.

### **The Nature of Work Experience**

*Work experience* is a type of experience that “refers to events that are experienced by an individual that are related to the performance of some job” (Quinones et al., 1995, p. 890). Work experience is often discussed as an integral component of job performance (Quinones et al., 1995; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Many research studies have examined the role of work experience supporting the idea that work experience facilitates the acquisition and maturing of skills, distinct worldviews, and both professional and personal networks (Carpenter et al., 2000).

At a general level, several meta-analyses have found a positive a relationship between work experience and job performance, ranging from  $r = 0.18$  (Hunter & Hunter, 1984) to  $r = 0.32$ , after controlling for participant age (Schwab & Heneman, 1977). In some cases, job experience has been shown to be more predictive of performance than aptitude or ability. In a study examining maximum performance of Air Force jet engine mechanics, Vance, Coovert, MacCallum, and Hedge (1989) found a direct relationship between experience (measured as current assignment tenure and the number of times assignment tasks had been performed) and task performance (measured by a work-



sample proficiency test), where experience accounted for more variance in task performance than aptitude (portions of ASVAB score). McDaniel, Schmidt and Hunter (1988) provided additional support for the relationship between work experience and job performance finding a meta-analytic correlation of  $r = 0.32$ . Interestingly, their research also suggested this relationship was moderated by the level of experience, such that the relationship between experience and performance was stronger for those with less than three years of experience ( $r = .49$ ) compared to those with more than 12 years of experience ( $r = .15$ ).

One way in which experience influences performance is through knowledge and skill acquisition. Schmidt, Hunter, and Outerbridge (1986) found that work experience contributed to increased performance ratings though its positive impact on job knowledge. Borman et al. (1993) extended this research and focused instead on the supervisory level, investigating the relationship between early supervisor experience and supervisor performance. Their findings indicated that experience worked through both task proficiency and job knowledge to influence performance, with the relationship between experience and proficiency being slightly stronger than the path between experience and knowledge.

Together, these studies demonstrate that experience can positively influence performance, both directly and indirectly. However, I contend that simply indicating that an experience has been enacted is not sufficient to yield positive outcomes. Learning is not a guaranteed byproduct of experience. Experience provides the opportunity to learn,

but does not ensure learning (Van Velsor & Guthrie, 1998). For example, if two individuals are both given the opportunity to work abroad, one may take strides to immerse him/herself in the culture, speak the language, engage with the local population, eat the native cuisine, and seek to understand other's perspectives, while the other operates in a cultural silo, retaining much of his/her home country traditions, food, language, and behaviors. While both of these individuals may have worked overseas for one-year, their experiences, and what they likely gleaned from their experiences, cannot be said to be equal. This scenario illustrates that while the amount of time spent doing something may be comparable, the take-aways from that experience may substantively differ (Ford, Quiñones, Seago, & Speer-Sorra, 1992). As such, what is garnered from experience is more complex than merely accounting for the amount of time spent doing an activity.

In summary, scholars generally support the idea that learning from experience is a particularly potent form of development (Ohlott, 2004). However, there remains a distinct lack of theory around the notion of experience, which may explain why we know so little about why international experience should impact performance (Rowe, 1988). This dearth of theory is especially notable when compared to other performance relevant constructs, such as cognitive ability or personality (Schmitt, Cortina, Ingerick, & Wiechmann, 2003). The absence of theory prompts deeper consideration as to what it really is about experience that benefits the learner and how these aspects can be more effectively captured in research and practice.

## **Modeling and Measuring Experience**

Incredible variety exists in the way work experience is conceptualized in the literature (Rowe, 1988). For instance, work experience has been conceived of as length of service in an organization, the number of times a task was performed, the number of lateral job moves, the content of experiences (see Quinones et al., 1995, p. 888 for review), the degree of challenge experienced, and the “lessons” learned from an experience (McCall, Lombardo, & Morrison, 1988).

Additionally, past research has generally treated work experience as a uni-dimensional construct. The traditional measurement approach for experience often amounts to little more than a “checking the box” exercise (i.e., it is often measured through the number of years in a particular position or whether or not an activity was performed), which is unlikely to shed light on the complexities of the construct. Work experience is more accurately described as multi-dimensional and therefore, should be measured as such (Quinones et al., 1995).

### **Multi-dimensional nature of experience**

Several approaches have been suggested that take a multi-dimensional perspective on work experience. Ford and colleagues (1992) identified three ways to measure experience (examining a subset of work performance focused on the opportunity to perform trained tasks) in Air Force recruits, which consisted of breadth (i.e., *number of tasks performed*), activity level (i.e., *number of times task was performed*), and type of activity (i.e., *complexity or difficulty of task performed*). DuBois and McKee (1994)

described two facets of work experience focusing on both the quantity (e.g., tenure, practice, frequency, and recency) and quality (e.g., breadth, variety, and supervisory experience).

The most sophisticated approaches for assessing the multi-dimensional nature of work experience were put forth by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998). Quinones et al. (1995) developed a conceptual framework of work experience separated into two main dimensions: *measurement mode* and *level of specificity*. Each dimension is then divided into sub-dimensions. Measurement mode is broken down into by *time* (i.e., organizational, job, or task tenure), *amount* (i.e., number of organizations, jobs, or times performing a task), and *type* (i.e., organizational type, job complexity, or task difficulty). Level of specificity is differentiated by whether experience is considered at the *task*, *job*, or *organizational* level. Together, these constitute nine separate categories of work experience. A meta-analysis applying this model found a positive relationship between overall work experience and average job performance ( $r = .27$ ). The authors also examined these nine dimensions as moderators finding that measurement mode and level of specificity moderated the relationship between work experience and job performance. For measurement mode, when experience was measured in terms of amount—or the number of organizations one worked in, the number of jobs one had, or number of times a task was completed—a higher correlation was observed with performance ( $r = .47$ ), compared to time ( $r = .27$ ) or type ( $r = .21$ ) measurements. Level of specificity was also important. Task level displayed the highest correlations with performance ( $r = .41$ ), followed by job ( $r = .27$ ) and organizational level

of specificity ( $r = .16$ ). This work supports the notion that work experience is more complex than previously treated and should be conceptualized in terms of multiple dimensions.

Tesluk and Jacobs (1998) extended this work and offered a revised model of work experience identifying three core components of work experience: the quantitative component, the qualitative component, and the interaction of the two components. According to Tesluk and Jacobs the *quantitative component* consists of time-based measures and amount-based measures, as described in Quinones and colleagues model. Tesluk and Jacobs differentiated these aspects of experience from *qualitative components* of work experience, which capture the nature of work experience. Qualitative aspects of experience could be described by the type of experience, including the type of work or task, the degree of challenge, the variety and breadth of tasks and responsibilities, and the complexity of a task (p. 328). The third and final component in Tesluk and Jacobs' model includes the *interaction component*, which captures the interaction between the quantitative and qualitative components. They described this component in terms of the *density*, or the intensity of the experience, and *timing* of the experience, or when the event occurs in reference to other events. As with Quinones and colleagues, Tesluk and Jacobs also focused on the level of specification (i.e., task, job, and organizational level), but included two additional levels—work group and team type.

This collective work highlights several important points related to experience and how it should be modeled and measured. First, experience is multi-dimensional.

Neglecting the dimensional nature of experience limits the use of this construct in theory and in practice. For instance, qualitative and quantitative measures of experience are differentially related to distinct aspects of performance (DuBois & McKee, 1994; Quinones et al., 1995). Quantitative tasks are more predictive of routine, consistent aspects of performance, while qualitative information is more informative of inconsistent, complex aspects of performance (DuBois & McKee, 1994; Quinones et al., 1995).

Second, the level of specificity matters. When investigating experience it is important to consider the level of analysis that is relevant and appropriate to the question at hand—assessing experience at the task, job, or organizational levels can yield different outcomes (Quinones et al., 1995). For instance, Quinones and colleagues found that task level experience displayed the higher correlations with performance than job or organizational level. Here, I will be focused on work and non-work experiences at the task or individual activity level (e.g., eating native cuisine). I am interested in identifying types of experiences that promote development in international contexts and experiences at the higher levels of analysis (job, organizational) would likely glaze over these factors.

Finally, context is crucial. As articulated by DuBois and McKee, “Any experience gained must be relevant to the upcoming tasks or challenges in order to contribute to a person's competence. That is, if experience is expected to substantially influence performance, it must include knowledge that is critical to task performance” (1994, p.5). With regard to the current research, it is therefore critical to account for the cultural context in which an individual experiences work. While there are some parallels between

global and domestic contexts, operating in new or unique culture environments brings complexity and uncertainty that is not necessarily present in domestic situations. Such complexities can manifest in the form of differences in geographical and/or physical distance between people, disparate country infrastructures, or diverse cultural expectations of behavior and work (Dalton & Ernst, 2004). Expatriates must simultaneously adapt to a new working environments, as well as new living and social surroundings. For instance, expatriates often face challenges related to culture shock, homesickness, and language communication—things that may not directly affect employees working in a domestic context (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Feldman & Thomas, 1992; Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou, 1987). Additionally, expatriates must strive to achieve performance objectives and expectations of both the home and host-country management, which may be in conflict with one another (Mendenhall et al., 1987). The role of experience may be all the more important for working abroad given the added complexities that exist when working in cross-cultural environments.

Overall, the various ways in which work experience has been conceptualize and measured are ineffective for accurately understanding and assessing this construct in international contexts. Past methods are inconsistent across studies and fail to capture the breadth and depth of what constitutes experience (Quinones et al., 1995). This paper builds on the dimensions outlined by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998), and further investigates how they may be modified to capture relevant elements of international experience that benefit individuals on international assignments.

Before discussing the elements of international experience proposed to be essential for promoting performance and adjustment, the next section provides a brief overview of research discussing the general notion of having previously acquired international experience and how this can impact adjustment and performance outcomes.

### **Review of International Experience**

While theoretical support exists for the importance of international experience, research examining the relationship between international experience to outcomes such as adjustment or performance generally shows inconsistent and small findings (Black, 1988; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2005; Kealey, 1989; Mol et al., 2005; Parker & Evoy, 1993; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepack, 2005). These weak findings may be due in part to the overly broad conceptualization of international experience often used in past research studies.

This section briefly reviews the general theoretical rationale for why accumulated international experience should facilitate adjustment and performance outcomes, followed by a review of research finding. In the subsequent section, I will provide a revised conceptualization of international experience, discussing specific elements hypothesized to impact adjustment and performance.

Before moving on to the theoretical background and review of research findings, I would like to briefly explain what is meant by performance and adjustment in the context of this study. Performance refers to organizationally relevant behaviors that are under the control of the individual (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, & Sager, 1993). In this case, I will be discussing performance as it relates to common in-role duties. These include behaviors



that are required for the job and activities for which the individual will be evaluated and potentially rewarded (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). Adjustment refers to how comfortable expatriates are with their new roles and requirements, both in and outside of the workplace (Black, 1988). Adjustment to foreign cultures has been described in terms of three facets: work adjustment, general adjustment, and interaction adjustment (Black 1988), all of which contribute to the overall adjustment of an individual. Work adjustment conveys how adjusted expatriates feel towards their job and responsibilities on the international assignment. General or cultural adjustment refers to the degree of adjustment expatriates feel towards everyday life situations in the foreign culture. Finally, interaction adjustment refers to the degree of adjustment felt with regards to interacting with people from the host-culture in non-work contexts.

Additionally, I would like to clarify that the goal of this study is to move towards achieving a better understanding of the critical elements of international experience that positively impact performance and adjustment while abroad in a foreign culture. Once we have established which aspects of international experience are important and lead more consistently to these relevant outcomes, organizations can strategically guide individuals to partake in these types of experiences, thus enhancing the developmental nature of the international assignment. Individuals who have undergone the hypothesized experiences through their past assignments should demonstrate higher levels of performance and adjustment compared to individuals lacking this prior experience. However, it is also likely that individuals who have been abroad for some time would have had the opportunity to also experience many, if not all, of these transformational experiences,

which can impact their current performance and adjustment. As such, this study focuses on the accumulation of experiences, both what individuals experienced prior to their current assignment, and the experiences they have amassed during their current international assignment. I will make hypotheses about the impact of both prior and current experience, but overall I suggest it is the accumulation of key experiences that is the driving factor contributing to performance and adjustment.

### **Review of Theory Supporting the Role of International Experience**

International experience is described as an essential predictor of expatriate adjustment and performance abroad. This idea is based on the rationale that prior international experience provides a clearer picture of what is to come, which can and should mitigate individual feelings of uncertainty (Black, 1988). More specifically, possessing international experience may impact the expectations individuals' hold about going abroad (Kealey, 1989). Possessing more accurate expectations about what may occur while abroad serves to decrease the uncertainty often associated with operating in cross-cultural settings. Prior experience may reduce the ambiguity cross-cultural experiences and increase expectations about how easily misunderstandings may occur. A study of 277 technical assistance advisors from Canada working in a variety of developing countries supports this notion. This study found that people with international experience reported less difficulty in adjusting to overseas conditions, were more satisfied, less stressed, and felt that they were better able to transfer skills and knowledge to others than those lacking experience (Kealey, 1989).

International experience can also help individuals understand and interact more effectively with host-nationals. Individuals with prior experience (i.e., 3-12 months abroad) reported feeling more able to facilitate communication and more aware of themselves and the culture than individuals with no prior experience (Martin, 1987). Ronen suggests that "...exposure to a wide range of cultural environments provides a socialization process that helps to create a diversity of values and to encourage more efficient adaptation to foreign surroundings" (Ronen, 1989, p.424).

Having previously been exposed to foreign cultures can also strengthen an individual's desire to learn about new cultures (Hays, 1971; Triandis, 1995). Such exposure helps individuals understand the multiple meanings and interpretations of situations and behaviors that arise in different cultural settings (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Through experience, individuals learn which behaviors are appropriate and which to avoid.

### **Review of Research Findings Examining International Experience**

International experience has been shown to facilitate individuals' adjustment to living and working abroad (Black et al., 1991; Church, 1982). Black (1988) empirically examined the impact of previous experience on the adjustment among 67 Americans working for American based companies in Japan. Results indicated that previous international experience positively related to higher levels of work adjustment. As mentioned previously, prior experience may mitigate feelings of uncertainty that arise in cross-cultural situations, which may in turn improve adjustment. Similarly, Yavas and

Bodur (1999) examined self-reported adjustment scores of 78 expatriate managers working in Turkey, where scores were dichotomized into high and low levels of adjustment. Findings revealed a significant difference between the levels of work adjustment and interaction adjustment for expatriates who had lived and worked in a foreign country compared to those who had not (Yavas & Bodur, 1999). Other studies have replicated these findings for expatriate working in different countries. For example, a survey of 169 expatriates on assignment in 12 countries, revealed a positive relationship between prior international experience and general adjustment ( $r = .24$ ;  $\beta = .20$ ) (Parker & McEvoy, 1993).

Jointly examining the influence of current international assignment tenure and prior assignment experience, Takeuchi et al. (2005) examined 243 Japanese expatriates on assignment in America. They found that the relationship between current tenure and work adjustment was moderated by the length of previous international work experiences, such that for expatriates with shorter prior international assignments abroad, current tenure had a more positive effect on work adjustment than for those with longer previous international work assignments. This suggests that the impact of one's current assignment was more profound for those without prior experience, while those who had experience abroad were less shocked by their current assignment. Results also suggested that expatriates with shorter, culture-specific prior international assignments (i.e., previously assigned to the same country they are currently working in), current tenure had a more positive effect on general adjustment than it did for those with longer, more diverse international work assignments. These findings support the idea that prior

international experience can ease transition and adjustment to a new culture by clarifying expectations and decreasing the ambiguity of working in an international setting.

Through meta-analysis, researchers have been able to combine the results of several studies investigating the relationship between prior international experience and outcomes, such as adjustment and performance, to gain a broader understanding of how these factors are operating in relation to one another. Bhaskar-Shrinivas and colleagues (2005) meta-analyzed of 64 studies focusing on the outcome expatriate adjustment. Their results suggested that previous international experience was positively related to work adjustment (.06) and interaction adjustment (.13), although these correlations are quite small. No significant relationship was observed between previous experience and general adjustment.

Interestingly, a separate meta-analysis focusing on expatriate performance, rather than adjustment, did not find a relationship between previous international experience and performance (Mol et al., 2005). Time spent living in a foreign country, however, was positively related to the derivation of creative solutions—an aspect of performance—when engaging in an insight creativity task involving negotiations (i.e., participants reached a negotiation deal based on more than price alone), over the effects of personality and intelligence (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009).

Despite Mol and colleagues' null finding in the meta-analysis, prior experience may impact performance when it is combined with training interventions. A study conducted by Hays (1971) found that teams who received culture assimilator training, in

combination with traditional training that everyone received, performed better in community development tasks than those teams who did not receive culture assimilator training (Hays, 1971). More importantly, there was an interaction between experience and training, such that teams composed of members where at least 50% had participated in this international assignment before, displayed even higher levels of performance than those who were inexperienced (Hays, 1971). Additionally, experienced teams that also received culture assimilator training performed better than those who did not on the performance measures, although the overall effect of training was not significant (Hays, 1971). This finding suggests that previous international experience may also enhance the success of certain training techniques on subsequent performance (Hicks, 1984; Ryman & Biersner, 1975). One explanation for this effect may be that previous cultural experience strengthens an individual's interest and desire to learn about a new culture (Triandis, 1995).

Overall, prior international experience is important because of its potential to reduce the ambiguity of future cultural experiences (Black, 1988), influence expectations about going abroad (Kealey, 1989), strengthen an individual's desire to learn about a new culture (Triandis, 1995; Hays, 1971), and facilitate an individual's ability to cope in different situations (Louis, 1980). However, findings related to previous international experience are equivocal and provide little insight into the role of prior international experience. This may be because the argument for previous international experience is often confounded by what we assume experience provides individuals. That is, it is assumed that experience provides people the knowledge, skills, and motivation needed to

perform successfully abroad. This is problematic because, as noted by Seibert (1996) “Learning does not often automatically follow from experience; it requires reflection and a desire to learn from what has occurred as well as an environment that provides opportunities for reflection and learning” (see Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998, p. 333, paraphrasing Seibert, 1996). Additionally, international experience is often measured incidentally or included as a control variable, rather than a major factor of interest. This could also account for the unsophisticated measurement of prior experience in past studies. Overall, inconsistent findings in this line of research may be a result of how we are capturing and assessing the construct rather than an indication that experience does not support performance.

### **An Improved Conceptualization of Previous International Experience**

To truly recognize the benefits and limitations of international experiences we must more thoroughly understand what aspects of experience help people develop and function more effectively in cultural settings. Takeuchi and colleagues (2005) took the first step and offered a model of international experience based on the aforementioned work experience models by Quinones and colleagues (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998). Their model included the quantitative components discussed in these models (i.e., time and amount). It also accounted for additional factors, including work and non-work factors and familiarity with the culture. One key limitation of their model is the lack of attention paid to the qualitative characteristics of the experience.

This study integrates and builds on these previous models and presents a revised model of international experience, incorporating the essential elements described by Quinones and colleague (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs (1998)—namely the quantitative (i.e., timing, amount), qualitative (i.e., challenge, complexity, variety), and the interaction components (intensity). One component, timing, will not be included in this study. Tesluck and Jacobs suggested the timing of experiences could impact their efficacy depending on when they occurred in the individual’s career, which goes beyond the scope of this study. A key differentiator of this model is the addition of several key qualitative elements based on the idea of cultural involvement offered by Osland and Osland (2005) These include cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement.

In sum, the qualitative components include: challenge, complexity, variety, and the degree of involvement in terms of cultural activities, social interactions, and work dynamics. These aspects will be discussed in greater detail below.

<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
Time	Challenge
Amount	Complexity
	Variety
	Cultural Involvement
	Social Involvement
	Work Involvement



## **Quantitative**

**Time.** Ford, Segó, Quinones, and Speer (1991, as cited in Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998) reviewed domestic literature on work experience and concluded that the most common way to measure work experience was by *job tenure*. As noted by Osland and Bird, “Time and experience are essential, because culture is embedded in the context (2000, p. 68). That is, the longer an expatriate is abroad, the more time he or she has to become acclimated with the country, overcome initial feelings of culture shock, and eventually progress to a state of high adjustment and performance. Many of the studies reviewed above examined experience in terms of time and demonstrate support for this component as it relates to adjustment and performance (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Mol et al., 2005). Thus, I propose:

**Amount.** Amount refers to the number of organizations, jobs, or times a task was performed (Quinones et al., 1995). A meta-analysis examining the amount component of experience on a U.S. population found a higher correlation between amount and performance than between the time or type components and performance (Quinones et al., 2005). An example question to represent the amount component of international experience is, “How many times have you worked abroad on an international assignment?” The idea is that the more times an individual worked abroad, the more opportunities he or she will have had to become more acclimated to the foreign culture.

Overall, quantitative indices of international experience provide useful information regarding adjustment and performance abroad (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al.,

2005; Mol et al., 2005). However, the frequent reliance on simple or one-dimensional measures of experience, such as such as length of time abroad, are insufficient to capture the elements of experience that lead to positive outcomes, such as individual change or learning (Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998).

A richer and more nuanced understanding of experience can be garnered through assessments that explore the nature of that experience. Since the quantitative and qualitative approaches capture valuable, yet distinct aspects of experience, it is vital to include both time- and amount-based measures when studying international experience.

Takeuchi and colleagues applied the time and amount components of the Quinones et al (1995) and Tesluk and Jacobs' (1998) models to examine the role of international experience on expatriate adjustment, but did not examine the type of experience. They specifically call for additional research investigating other qualitative aspects of experience and their effects on other work-related factors. This study directly addresses this call for research and examines six qualitative components of experience: challenge, complexity, variety, cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement.

## **Qualitative**

**Challenge.** Challenge is a key component of experiential learning and developmental (Ohlott, 2004). As underscored by Holt, "To have a learning effect, experiences have to be significant, demanding, and most often surprising, involving experimentation, trial and error, and risk taking" (Holt, 2004, p. 493). In order for an

experience to be developmental it must stretch people beyond their comfort zones, compelling them to think and act in new ways (Ohlott, 2004, p. 154).

In reference to work-related experience, Patricia Ohlott (2004) described five sources of challenge related to on the job learning: job transitions, creating change, high levels of responsibility, managing boundaries, and dealing with diversity. *Job transitions* include events, such as moving to a new job or taking on new tasks. Jobs with *high levels of responsibility* are characterized by those with elevated scope and visibility, and those that involve high stakes. *Managing boundaries* can also be very challenging. This may manifest in the form of managing relationships or external pressures, influencing others, or managing cross-functional project-teams. *Creating change* includes experiences, such as starting something new, fixing problems, or dealing with problem employees. Finally, challenging experiences can arise from experiences requiring individuals to work in *diverse* contexts, such as working with individuals and groups from different cultures of backgrounds. Research in this area was used to develop the Developmental Challenge Profile (DCP), an instrument designed to measure the aspects of jobs that foster learning in managerial positions (McCauley et al., 1994).

Findings have supported the relationship between these developmental sources and relevant work outcomes, such as learning (McCauley et al., 1994) and skill development (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Banks (2006) found that developmentally challenging stretch experiences were related to tacit learning and adaptive performance to the extent that experiences challenged the individual. Developmentally challenging

assignments are also positively related to the use of complex problem solving skills, as mediated by the complexity of the individuals' frame of reference (Horn, 2008).

As mentioned previously, experiences do not occur in a vacuum; they need to be considered within a context. Here, experience is examined within the context of international assignments, specifically in terms of individuals operating in environments that are not their native culture. Research highlights that the degree of challenge experienced on the job differs for those working in domestic compared to international assignments (McCauley et al., 1994). Specifically, those working on international assignments scored higher on job challenges associated with *High Stakes*, *Job Overload*, *Handling External Pressure*, *Influencing Without Authority*, *Developing New Directions*, and *Inherited Problems* (McCauley et al., 1994).

Challenging experiences that arise in international contexts, such as these, compel individuals to re-examine how they cognitively approach and behaviorally respond to a problem, activity, or event. Modifying one's cognitive schema and behavioral responses based on a more accurate understanding of the situation can positively impact individual performance and adjustment.

Individuals working and living abroad are likely to encounter challenging non-work experiences as well. These may include overcoming obstacles (e.g., finding one's way after getting lost in a foreign culture), engaging in confrontations with host-country nationals (e.g., clashing of cultural norms), engaging unstructured activities (i.e., little to no guidance as to appropriate behavior or course of action), making mistakes and errors

(e.g., violating cultural rules or traditions; offending host-country nationals), and maneuvering through crises (e.g., knowing who to call in emergency situations ). Challenging international experiences provide an opportunity to acquire additional knowledge and skills (Ohlott, 2004; Schmidt et al., 1986). Challenging experiences test assumptions and preconceived perceptions towards others or of the situation, and provide exposure to new or different perspectives, approaches, and solutions. By testing previously held assumptions, individuals gain a deeper understanding of the differences and similarities that exist between and within cultures and how these cultural factors may impact others' behaviors, perspectives, and interactions. Based on this evidence, I propose,

**Complexity.** Complexity refers to the ambiguity and novelty associated with international experiences. In complex situations it is often unclear how to best approach, frame, manage, or otherwise behaviorally respond to a situation (Molinsky, 2007). There may be several sources of information to attend to and multiple approaches or solutions that lead to favorable outcomes (Harvey & Novicevic, 2001).

Exposure to complex experiences abroad may reduce feeling of culture shock and facilitate adjustment (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991), because individuals will have had more opportunities to learn about different attitudes, norms, behaviors (Osland & Bird, 2000) both in work and non-work settings. Individuals that lack of complex cultural experiences will have a harder time making sense of the complex cultural situations they encounter (Osland & Bird, 2000). The experience of navigating through complex

situations often leads individuals to challenge previous assumptions, predictions, or methods of behavior. Experience in complex cultural situations can help individuals move beyond reliance on general stereotypes, to a level of understanding that accounts for the complex, and sometime paradoxical, elements of different cultures (Osland & Bird, 2000).

Complex experiences often involve exposure to diverse people, situations, or problems. This experience provides expatriates with some semblance of structure or models to draw from when operating in future situations (Bandura, 1997; Fee, 2010). These experiences contribute to the modification of their cognitive schemas (Fiske & Taylor, 1984) and add to the number of behaviors in their repertoire of responses. Individuals with previous exposure to complex experiences should be more adept at handling current and future situations, because they have learned some of the cultural nuances and are more familiar with formulating responses to ambiguous situations. Therefore, previous exposure to complex international experiences should positively impact expatriate performance.

Additionally, international assignments associated with greater complexity are likely to reap greater learning benefits than less complex changes. Individuals with more experience in complex situations should be less susceptible to feelings of uncertainty, tension (Wall & Callister, 1995), and anxiety (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981) that are often associated with working in dynamic environments, such as international settings. Complex international experiences provide individuals greater exposure to more

culturally distinct situations and help them form additional scripts (Abelson, 1981; Gioia & Poole, 1984) to pull from. This can reduce the ambiguity or novelty associated with working and living in foreign cultures, promoting expatriate adjustment.

**Variety of Experiences.** Engaging in a variety of experiences provides individuals exposure to different and unique challenges and learning opportunities (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Each experience may require distinct skills, approaches, or solutions. From experiences, individuals can discover which approaches were effective in certain situations and which were not as effective. The more experiences one has, the larger the collection of do's and don'ts one has to draw upon when facing similar or disparate situations in the future (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004). Exposure to a myriad of experiences increases the opportunities for different lessons to be learned. This increases the portfolio of responses, both cognitive and behavioral, one can use from to react appropriately to different situations (Hooijberg, Hunt, & Dodge, 1997).

More generally, experiential variety fosters the development of broad principles that can be flexibly applied across familiar and unfamiliar situations (Ely, Zaccaro, & Conjar, 2009; Smith, Ford, & Kozlowski, 1997). Moreover, variety in experience prompts the development of a more complex understanding of which responses are appropriate and when they should be applied (Ely et al., 2009). Variable experiences can include work-related activities (e.g., the number of different tasks, projects, or work-teams an expatriate contributes to) and non-work activities (e.g., the number of different cultural events, historical tours, or ethnic foods an expatriate is exposed to). Some

expatriates may only participate in a few activities (low variety), while others are very actively involved in several different activities (high variety).

Research on expatriates supports the efficacy of experiential variety in promoting important work-related outcomes. For example, living and working as an expatriate in multiple countries is positively correlated with cultural adaptability and heightened knowledge of international business (Dalton & Ernst, 2004). In related work, the benefits of experiential variety have been observed in training contexts with studies linking experiential variety to adaptive performance (Heinen et al., 2010; Horn, 2008; S. Zaccaro et al., 2010; Zaccaro, Nelson, Gulick, & DeRosa, 2010).

Based on the rationale provided, it is expected that exposure to a variety of international experiences will contribute to individual adjustment and performance while abroad. Exposure to a greater number and breadth of learning opportunities and increased understanding of what is, and what is not, appropriate in a variety of contexts provides individuals with more background and expertise to draw from when faced with new situations abroad. Having a larger portfolio to draw from should mitigate some of the uncertainty and anxiety of often associated with operating in unfamiliar contexts (Oberg, 1960), facilitating greater performance and adjustment. Formally this study posits,

**Involvement.** The notion of involvement during international assignments is based on Osland and Osland's (2005) work on Cultural Involvement, referring to the *extent to which expatriates enter a foreign culture and work interdependently with host country nationals* (Osland & Osland, 2005, p. 93). Originally, Osland and Osland



conceptualized Cultural Involvement in terms of work-related, cultural, and personal variables. According to this research, cultural variables measured the degree of cultural similarity between home and host country and the presence of a cultural mentor. Work variables included descriptive information about job type (i.e., research vs. sales), facility type (i.e., headquarters vs. manufacturing), size of facility, as well as the degree of contact with customers, and the number of foreign coworkers and direct reports. Finally, personal variables included demographic data (e.g., age at posting; occupation) and activities that facilitate cultural entry (e.g., learning the language).

The main limitation of their approach concerns the focus on demographic (e.g., personal demographics) and concrete descriptive variables (e.g., job type, facility size), as opposed to qualitative factors that capture the degree of involvement and integration with host culture. Building on this work, here, involvement is broken down into three major categories: cultural involvement, social involvement, and work involvement. *Cultural involvement* refers to the extent to which individuals engage and embrace the foreign culture. This includes non-work activities, such as learning about the local culture and history, shopping at local stores, eating local food, and living among the host-country nationals (as opposed to living in a cultural silo surrounded by home-country national—e.g., china town; little Ethiopia). *Social involvement* abroad refers to the degree to which individuals interact with host-country nationals, or individuals from cultures other than one's native culture. This includes face-to-face interactions with host-county individuals in informal (e.g., friends, parties) or formally organized social activities (e.g., sport groups, meet-up groups, book readings). Lastly, *work involvement* refers to the extent to

which expatriates engage with host-country national colleagues at work and perform a range of functions to complete work goals. These types of involvement will be described in greater detail in the following sections.

### ***Cultural Involvement.***

As previously mentioned, cultural involvement refers to the extent to which individuals engage, embrace, and participate in the foreign culture. Culturally involved individuals will pursue activities that provide exposure to cultural, its history, and traditions. This may include going to museums, reading books about the culture and country history, buying native goods, eating the native cuisine, participating in traditional activities (e.g., going to a neighborhood bathhouse or hot spring in Japan), and watching native films. Cultural involvement can also be impacted by the individual's living situation. For example, there are significantly more opportunities to interact with and learn about cultural nuances when living among the native population, as opposed to living in a cultural silo or home-country compound (e.g., military housing).

Passive exposure to different cultures is insufficient to bring about meaningful results. Rather, active involvement in cultures, whereby individuals actively compare cultures is critical increasing cultural understanding and enhancing performance outcomes (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Specifically, Leung and Chiu (2010) conducted a study on European American undergraduates and found that individuals exposed to juxtaposing cultures (a presentation of both American *and* Chinese cultures) or a fusion of the two cultures representing a hybrid culture (e.g., a McDonald's rice burger), demonstrated and

higher levels of creativity on a creativity task (re-writing the Cinderella story for Turkish kids and a time analogy) than did individuals who watched a slide show depicting only one culture (American OR Chinese) or watched no slide show (control group); effects were observed immediately and over time (5 to 7 days later). In a second study, they found that European American undergraduates with a higher degree of multicultural experiences showed increased generation of unconventional ideas. Finally, in a third study, they found that the extent of multicultural experiences was positively related to individuals' receptiveness to ideas originated from foreign cultures and self-perceived creativity.

Experiences that allow for greater cultural involvement provide individuals with exposure to novel ideas, concepts, and perspectives, which can result in the development of new or revised conceptualizations of cognitive and behavioral frameworks, or schemas that influence how individuals approach future situations (Leung et al., 2008). Individuals who have lived or worked abroad have had the opportunity to observe and learn about different traditions, customs, and norms, compared to those who have not traveled abroad (Osland & Bird, 2000). This should make adjusting to cultures easier for these individuals, because they are more aware cultural difference exist, have more accurate expectations about the difference that may arise in new cultures, and are more prepared to handle these differences (Black, 1988; Kealey, 1989).

Cultural experiences may also facilitate individuals' psychological readiness and openness to learning and accepting unfamiliar ideas (Maddux & Galinsky, 2009;

Triandis, 1995). Exposure and openness to new ideas and perspectives can sometimes benefit performance (see Mannix & Neale, 2005 for review of diversity in teams) by providing individuals an opportunity to draw on a wider-range of perspectives that can facilitate the identification of alternative solutions (Jackson, 1992; Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993). Additionally, cultural experiences help individuals recognize paradoxes that may exist between and within cultures and learn that there are multiple meanings and interpretations to situations that may vary by culture (Osland & Bird, 2000). An example provided by Leung and colleagues (2008) describes how leftover food on a plate can be construed as appreciation or insult to the host, depending on the culture one is operating in—a distinction that expatriates with more experience in a culture will be more likely to assess correctly. Expatriates with more experience in different cultures will be more likely to be aware of cultural nuances, even if only at the most general level that differences exist, making them more prepared to recognize the need to change behavior, therefore increasing the likelihood of performance more effectively in the cultural situation.

Overall, experience with different cultural situations provides individuals opportunity to observe and participate in unique and varying activities that promote openness to and readiness to accept unfamiliar ideas. Exposure to the nuances and intricacies of living among people from different cultures may increase the likelihood of performing and adjusting successfully abroad. Opportunities to become more immersed in the culture, whether by learning about cultural norms in the community or eating the

native cuisine can all impact an individual's adjustment and performance when in international contexts. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed,

***Social Involvement.***

Social involvement abroad refers to interactions with host-country nationals or individuals from cultures other than one's native culture. Molinsky (2007) portrays social interactions as the "micro building blocks" of adjustment and adaptability abroad. As noted by Frank Brown, the dean of INSEAD, "you learn from everyone you come into contact with, whether you learn best practice or you learn worst practice" ("How to conquer the world," 2008). These statements reflect the idea of social learning theory, which discusses how individuals learn through observation, imitation, and modeling (Bandura, 1977). When expatriates are more socially involved, they have more opportunities observe others and gain exposure to different models and ways of behaving (Bandura 1977; Fee, 2010), learn new customs and norms (Takeuchi et al., 2005), and incorporate feedback from others (Bandura, 1977).

The ability to interact with local nationals and exhibit cultural empathy (i.e., relational abilities) was ranked as the second most critical factor out of 10 needed to perform effectively aboard (Hays, 1971). Martin (1987) found similar support for the importance of relational factors, such as communication. She examined 175 undergraduate students who self-rated themselves on various cognitive, affective, and behavioral abilities. Results revealed that individuals with more prior experience (i.e., had previously been abroad between 3-12 months) felt they were more able to facilitate

communication and were more aware of themselves and the culture. Greater interactions and contact with host-country nationals may contribute to more accurate expectations and improved attitudes towards diverse others (Allport, 1954). Taken together, greater social involvement in cultural contexts helps individuals understand and interact more effectively with host-nationals, and positively impact expatriate performance.

In addition to performance outcomes, the frequency of interactions with host-country is positively related to cross-cultural adjustment (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003). Indeed, research shows that expatriates who are less socially involved with people from other cultures, and instead choose to socialize mostly with other like expatriates, tend to experience lower levels of adjustment to the new culture and living environment and when interacting with host-nationals (Parker & McEvoy, 1993).

In social situations individuals pull from encoded schemas or frameworks to determine appropriate behavior. The more experience individuals' have interacting with host-country and other foreign nationals, the more built up their frameworks will be. Research has shown that the extent to which individuals interact with host-country nationals in both work and non-work settings is related to subsequent increases in cognitive complexity (Fee, 2010). Greater exposure to novel social situations while abroad helps individuals recognize unique facets of social situations, identify emotions in others, and regulate one's own emotions (Hooijberg et al., 1997). Experiences that build an individual's social complexity helps individuals relate to others in social contexts

(Hooijberg et al., 1997), which can positively impact adjustment, as well as performance while abroad. Formally, the following hypotheses are offered:

***Work Involvement.***

Work involvement refers to the extent to which expatriates engage with host-country or other foreign national colleagues at work and perform a range of functions to complete work goals. Activities in this realm may include working with host-country colleagues on projects or team tasks, working with host-country supervisors to clarify project goals and accomplish work objectives, engaging in social exchanges at the workplace with colleagues, or providing mentorship or guidance to junior host-country nationals (Fee, 2010).

Caligiuri (2009) found that high-contact global work experiences (i.e., short- or long-term expatriate assignments, attending global meetings, mentoring someone from another culture) were related to higher ratings of self-reported global effectiveness compared to experiences characterized by low contact work interactions (i.e., verbal or non-face-to-face interactions). Greater work involvement in international contexts may also contribute to expatriate performance through increases in skill development and global knowledge, improved information sharing between host- and home-country counterparts, and increased global coordination and control of global locations (Black, Gregerson, Mendenhall, & Stroh, 1999; Sparrow, Brewster, & Harris, 2004; Stroh, J. S. Black, M. E. Mendenhall, & H. Gregersen, 2005).

Exposure to incongruent ideas, concepts, or perspectives in work contexts can also contribute to increases in cognitive complexity, which may impact how individuals view new cross-cultural situations (Fee 2010; Leung et al., 2008; also see Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). In a study examining the differences in work-related learning outcomes of U.S. versus global executives, global executives reported learning more high-level strategic lessons and how to work more effectively across cultures compared to U.S. executives (McCall & Hollenbeck, 2002)—both of which should positively impact performance abroad. In the same study by McCall and Hollenbeck (2002), individuals reported gaining additional insight into themselves and their careers compared to their U.S. counterparts. This should assist with their adjustment abroad, because they will have a better understanding of how the current cultural situation is affecting them and have a clearer vision for where they are headed in the future.

Some concepts cited as being learned from experience include identifying shortcomings, accepting responsibility, understanding when learning is essential, finding ways to get help, asking questions, and seeking advice from others (Keys & Fulmer, 1998). In work settings, it is customary to receive feedback from supervisors and peers. The feedback often received in work contexts may assist expatriates in getting a more accurate picture of how they are performing, which provides inducements to transition from ineffective behaviors to effective behaviors. Additionally, by asking questions, seeking advice, and receiving help from work colleagues, expatriates learn the norms for working with host-country nationals (e.g., reporting structure; pace of work assignments; interpretation of deadlines or commitments), which should positively impact performance



and adjustment to the new work context. At the same time these experiences offer additional insight into cultural (e.g., power distance) and social norms (e.g., social etiquette), which will improve their ability to understand and interact with those from the host culture, thereby easing the overall adjustment process. Expatriates who are more involved in their work will have more opportunities to work with and receive feedback from their colleagues, giving them more chances to assess and improve their performance and get accustomed to the work context. Based on this rationale, I propose,

### **Flexibility**

The previous section discussed various aspects of international experience hypothesized to contribute to improved expatriate adjustment and performance. Individual attributes, however, can impact what people extract and apply from experiences (Banks, 2006; Ohlott, 2004; Tesluk & Jacobs, 1998). Thus, the relationship between international experience and the aforementioned outcomes may depend on the degree to which individuals are characterized by particular attributes. This paper specifically focuses on individual-level flexibility as a key factor expected to impact the value of their international experiences, such that flexible individuals will reap more substantial benefits from international experiences than less flexible individuals.

Flexibility refers to “a person’s (a) awareness that in any given situation there are options and alternatives available, (b) willingness to be flexible and adapt to the situation, and (c) self-efficacy in being flexible” (Martin & Rubin, 1995,p. 623). Flexible individuals see more than one way of approaching situations or solving problems, and are

able and willing to respond in different ways based on the situational requirements (Tucker, Bonial, & Lahti, 2004; Zaccaro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1991).

Flexibility is often considered an important factor in predicting a variety of work related outcomes (Jones, 2005) and is beneficial for individuals working in either domestic or international contexts (Ali & Camp, 1996). However, flexibility may be even more crucial for those working in international contexts. As noted by Keys and Fulmer, for global contexts it is essential to have players who “can handle ambiguity, bring about change, and are even more flexible and resilient than their domestic counterparts” (1998, p. 5). This aligns to the idea of *requisite variety*, which suggests that to be effective, individuals must be as complex as the situation is; that is, there must be alignment between individual complexity and environmental complexity (Ashby, 1952). This idea can be applied here in the sense that individuals who are more flexible are better able to absorb the complex information provided by international experiences and incorporate it into cognitive and behavioral frameworks, providing a better match between self and situation.

People often naturally fall back on what is familiar to them and tend to view the world through their own cultural lens (Triandis, 1995). When confronted with complex and changing environments, flexible individuals are more willing and able to break current frames of reference (Horn, 2008), explore a variety of approaches (M. M. Martin & Rubin, 1995), and consider unfamiliar alternatives, perspectives, or solutions (Tucker et al., 2004) in pursuit of more functional frames and appropriate responses. Flexible

individuals may feel less anxiety or loss of control (Raudsepp, 1990) when confronted with complex or challenging situations and can more quickly focus in identifying alternative approaches and testing their effectiveness. Less flexible individuals are not as willing and able to identify and apply alternative approaches to the challenges they confront. This resistance to change will likely limit the number of new approaches these individuals apply and, thus receive feedback on as to their appropriateness for the situation. As a result, less flexible individuals will have fewer rich and diverse experiences to learn from, limiting the depth and breadth of their cultural frameworks, which can negatively impact their performance and adjustment. Thus, I propose,

The benefits of international experiences do not result from merely spending time abroad; rather, an important factor is how individuals approach and learn from experiences (Maddux, Leung, Chiu, & Galinsky, 2009). Flexible individuals are more likely to become involved in the culture, social, and work activities and have the potential to gain more from these experiences than less flexible individuals.

To begin with, flexible individuals view new situations as challenges, rather than threats (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000). They will likely feel more confident in their ability to engage with the host-country population and become involved in a variety of work and non-work related activities. Because they have more opportunities to gain exposure to new ideas, revise mental and behavioral frameworks, and receive feedback from others, they will glean more from their time overseas than less flexible and less involved individuals. This involvement can also impact their adjustment while on an

international assignment. If they are more involved, expatriates will also have more chances to meet new people, form friendships and professional networks, and learn of new activities and events. Flexible individuals are more likely to engage in more a greater variety of activities as well, since they are not as constrained by lack of awareness of activities or willingness to engage in activities than less flexible individuals.

Additionally, once involved in cultural, social, and work activities, flexible expatriates should be more receptive and able to process the information they receive. Expatriate assignments can be stressful (Oberg, 1960), but flexible individuals may be better apt to handle the stress of international assignments. Flexibility is related to the idea of emotional stability (Shaffer et al., 2006), suggesting that flexible expatriates who are able to remain calm in ambiguous situations may be better able to control the stress they experience. This sense of control provides flexible individuals more mental and emotional resources to focus on understanding how they are feeling and adjusting to the new culture and work environment. Research supports the influence of flexibility on international assignments. For instance, studies shows that flexibility is positively related to the adjustment of expatriate managers working abroad in a variety of countries (Black, 1990; Shaffer et al., 2006).

Flexible individuals will also have more resources to devote to understanding the impact of their behavior on others and on deriving lessons from their experiences, which can help them adjust and perform more effectively in international environments. Indeed, research suggests that showing more flexibility towards the ideas of others is positively

associated with expatriate job performance (Hawes & Kealey, 1979). Similarly, a review of critical incidents collected from Special Forces officers interacting with people from a variety of cultures, revealed that the ability to change behavior was important for performing and working with others on the job (Carpenter & Wisecarver, 2004).

In summary, flexibility is an essential factor affecting the successful completion of international assignments (Arthur & Bennett, 1995). Taken together, this reasoning and evidence suggests that flexible individuals will be more likely to become involved in the overall culture, social situations, and work contexts and extract more from their involvement than less flexible individuals, contributing to their successful adjustment and performance abroad.

## References

## References

- Ali, A. J., & Camp, R. C. (1996). Global managers: qualities for effective competition. *International Journal of Manpower, 17*(6/7), 5-18.
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Arthur, W., & Bennett, W. (1995). The International Assignee: The Relative Importance of Factors Perceived to Contribute to Success. *Personnel Psychology, 48*(1).
- Ashby, W. (1952). *Design for a brain*. NY: Wiley & Sons.
- Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control*: WH Freeman New York.
- Bennett, R., Aston, A., & Colquhoun, T. (2000). Cross-cultural training: A critical step in ensuring the success of international assignments. *Human Resource Management, 39*(2,3), 239.
- Bhaskar-Shrinivas, P., Harrison, D. A., Shaffer, M. A., & Luk, D. M. (2005). Input-based and time-based models of international adjustment: Meta-analytic evidence and theoretical extensions. *The Academy of Management Journal, 48*(2), 257-281.
- Black, J. S. (1988). Work Role Transitions: A Study Of American Expatriate Manag. *Journal of International Business Studies, 19*(2), 277.
- Black, J. S., Gregerson, H., Mendenhall, M., & Stroh, L. (1999). *Globalizing people through international assignments*: Addison-Wesley.
- Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M., & Oddou, G. (1991). Toward a Comprehensive Model of International Adjustment: An Integration of Multiple Theoretical Perspectives. *Academy of Management Review, 16*(2), 291-317.

- Black, J. S., & Stephens, G. K. (1989). The influence of the spouse on American expatriate adjustment and intent to stay in Pacific Rim overseas assignments. *Journal of Management, 15*(4), 529-544.
- Borman, W. C., Hanson, M. A., Oppler, S. H., Pulakos, E. D., & White, L. A. (1993). Role of early supervisory experience in supervisor performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*(3), 443-449.
- Caligiuri, P., & Tarique, I. (2009). Predicting effectiveness in global leadership activities. *Journal of World Business, 44*(3), 336-346.
- Campbell, J. P., McCloy, R. A., Oppler, S. H., & Sager, C. E. (1993). A theory of performance. *Personnel selection in organizations, 3570*.
- Carpenter, M. A., Sanders, W. G., & Gregersen, H. B. (2000). International assignment experience at the top can make a bottom-line difference. *Human Resource Management, 39*(2-3), 277-285.
- Carptenter, T. D., & Wisecarver, M. W. (2004). *Identifying and validating a model of interpersonal performance dimensions* (No. 1144). Arlington, VA: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.
- Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*(3), 540-572.
- Cote, J. A., & Buckley, M. R. (1987). Estimating trait, method, and error variance: Generalizing across 70 construct validation studies. *24*(3), 315-318.
- Dalton, M., & Ernst, C. T. (2004). Developing leaders for global roles. In C. McCauley & E. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (pp. 361-382). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- DuBois, D., & McKee, A. S. (1994). *Facets of work experience*. Paper presented at the 9th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Nashville, TN.
- Ely, K., Zaccaro, S. J., & Conjar, E. A. (2009). Leadership development: Training design strategies for growing adapability in leaders. In *The Peak Performing Organization* (pp. 175-196). NY: Routledge.
- Fee, A. (2010). Developing a global mindset through international assignments: A longitudinal study. unpublished manuscript.



- Feldman, D. C., & Thomas, D. C. (1992). Career Management Issues Facing Expatriates. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 23(2), 271.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (1984). *Social cognition* (1st ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Ford, J. K., Quiñones, M., Segó, D. J., & Speer-Sorra, J. (1992). Factors affecting the opportunity to perform tutorial tasks on the jobs. *Personnel Psychology*, 45, 511-527.
- GMAC. (2008). Global Relocation Trends Survey. 2008, from [http://www.gmacglobalrelocation.com/insight\\_support/grts/2005\\_GRTS.pdf](http://www.gmacglobalrelocation.com/insight_support/grts/2005_GRTS.pdf)
- Goldstein, I. L., & Ford, J. K. (2002). *Training in organizations* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Harvey, M., & Novicevic, M. M. (2001). Selecting expatriates for increasingly complex global assignments. *Career Development International*, 6(2), 69-87.
- Hawes, F., & Kealey, D. J. (1979). *Canadians in Development: An Empirical Study of Adaptation and Effectiveness on Overseas Assignment (Technical Report)*. Ottawa: Canadian International Development Agency.
- Hays, R. D. (1971). Ascribed Behavioral Determinants of Success-Failure among US Expatriate Managers. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 2(1), 40-46.
- Hechanova, R., Beehr, T. A., & Christiansen, N. D. (2003). Antecedents and consequences of employees' adjustment to overseas assignment: A meta-analytic review. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, 52(2), 213-236.
- Hooijberg, R., Hunt, J. G., & Dodge, G. E. (1997). Leadership complexity and development of the Leaderplex Model. *Journal of Management*, 23(3), 375-408.
- Hunter, J. E., & Hunter, R. F. (1984). Validity and utility of alternative predictors of job performance. *Psychological Bulletin*, 96(1), 72-98.
- Jackson, S. E. (1992). Team composition in organizational settings: Issues in managing an increasingly diverse workforce. In S. Worchel, W. Wood & J. A. Simpson (Eds.), *Group process and productivity* (pp. 138-141). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Jones, R. A. (2005). So What is Flexibility? Toward a Multi-Level Theory of Organisational, Group, and Individual Flexibility. *Unpublished manuscript*.

- Kaiser, R. B., Lindberg, J. T., & Craig, S. B. (2007). Assessing the Flexibility of Managers: A comparison of methods. *15*(1), 40-55.
- Kealey, D. J. (1989). A study of cross-cultural effectiveness: theoretical issues, practical applications. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *13*, 387-428.
- Kraimer, M. L., Wayne, S. J., & Jaworski, R. A. (2001). Sources of support and expatriate performance: The mediating role of expatriate adjustment. *Personnel Psychology*, *54*(1), 71-99.
- Leung, A. K., Maddux, W. W., Galinsky, A. D., & Chiu, C. (2008). Multicultural experience enhances creativity: The when and how. *American Psychologist*, *63*(3), 169-181.
- Littrell, L. N., & Salas, E. (2005). A review of cross-cultural training: Best practices, guidelines, and research needs. *Human Resource Development Review*, *4*(3), 305-334.
- Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sense-making: What newcomers experience and how they cope in unfamiliar organisational settings. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *25*, 226-251.
- Maddux, W. W., & Galinsky, A. D. (2009). Cultural borders and mental barriers: The relationship between living abroad and creativity. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *96*(5), 1047-1061.
- Maddux, W. W., Leung, A. K., Chiu, C., & Galinsky, A. D. (2009). Toward a more complete understanding of the link between multicultural experience and creativity. *American Psychologist*, *64*(2), 156-158.
- Mannix, E., & Neale, M. A. (2005). What differences make a difference? The promotions and reality of diverse teams in organizations. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, *6*, 31-55.
- Martin, J. N. (1987). The relationship between student sojourner perceptions of intercultural competencies and previous sojourn experience. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *11*(4), 337-355.
- Martin, M. M., & Rubin, R. B. (1995). A New Measure of Cognitive Flexibility. *Psychological reports*, *76*(2), 623-626.
- McCall, M. W., Lombardo, M. M., & Morrison, A. M. (1988). *The lessons of experience: How to successful executives develop on the job*. NY: Lexington Books

- McCauley, C., Ruderman, M. N., Ohlott, P. J., & Morrow, J. E. (1994). Assessing the developmental components of managerial jobs. *Journal of applied psychology*, 79(4), 544-560.
- McDaniel, M. A., Schmidt, F. L., & Hunter, J. E. (1988). Job experience correlates of job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73(2), 327-330.
- Mendenhall, M., Bird, A., Osland, J., Oddou, G., & Maznevski, M. (2008). *Global Leadership: Research, Practice, Development*. London: Routledge.
- Mendenhall, M., Dunbar, E., & Oddou, G. (1987). Expatriate selection, training and career-pathing: a review and critique. *Human Resource Management*, 26(3), 331-345.
- Mol, S. T., Born, M. P. H., Willemsen, M. E., & Van Der Molen, H. T. (2005). Predicting Expatriate Job Performance for Selection Purposes: A Quantitative Review. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 36, 590-620.
- Molinsky, A. (2007). Cross-cultural code-switching: The psychological challenges of adapting behavior in foreign cultural interactions. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(2), 622.
- Ohlott, P. J. (2004). Job assignments. In C. D. McCauley & E. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development* (Second ed., pp. 151-182). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Osland, J., & Bird, A. (2000). Beyond sophisticated stereotyping: A contextual model of cultural sensemaking. *Academy of Management Executive*, 14(1), 65-79.
- Osland, J., & Osland, A. (2005). Expatriate paradoxes and cultural involvement. *International Studies of Management and Organization*, 35(4), 91-114.
- Parker, B., & McEvoy, G. M. (1993). Initial examination of a model of intercultural adjustment. *International journal of intercultural relations*, 17(3), 355-379.
- Quinones, M. A., Ford, J. K., & Teachout, M. S. (1995). The relationship between work experience and job performance: A conceptual and meta-analytic review. *Personnel Psychology*, 48, 887-910.
- Ronen, S. (1989). Training the international assignee. In I. L. Goldstein (Ed.), *Training and development in organizations* (pp. 417-453). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

- Rowe, P. M. (1988). The nature of work experience. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 29(1), 109-115.
- Schmidt, F. L., Hunter, J. E., & Outerbridge, A. N. (1986). Impact of job experience and ability on job knowledge, work sample performance, and supervisory ratings of job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 71(3), 432-439.
- Schwab, D. P., & Heneman, H. G. (1977). Effects of age and experience on productivity. *Industrial Gerontology*, 4, 113-117.
- Selmer, J., Torbiorn, I., & De Leon, C. T. (1998). Sequential cross-cultural training for expatriate business managers: pre-departure and post-arrival. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(5), 832-840.
- Shaffer, M. A., Harrison, D. A., Gregersen, H., Black, J. S., & Ferzandi, L. A. (2006). You Can Take It With You: Individual Differences and Expatriate Effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91, 109-125.
- Smith, E. M., Ford, J., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (1997). Building adaptive expertise: Implications for training design. In M. A. Quinones & A. Ehrenstein (Eds.), *Training for a rapidly changing workplace: Applications of psychological research* (pp. 89-118). Washington DC: APA.
- Sobel, M. E., (1982). Asymptotic confidence intervals for indirect effects in structural equation models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological Methodology 1982* (pp. 290-312). Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.
- Sparrow, P., Brewster, C., & Harris, H. (2004). *Globalizing human resource management*. NY: Routledge.
- Spector, P. E. (1994). Using self-report questionnaires in OB research: A comment on the use of a controversial method. *15(5)*, 385-392.
- Stroh, Black, J. S., Mendenhall, M. E., & Gregersen, H. (2005). *Global Leaders, Global Assignments: An Integration of Research & Practice*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, Inc.
- Sweller, J., Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning, *Cognitive Science*, 12, 257-285 (1988).
- Takeuchi, R., Tesluk, P. E., Yun, S., & Lepak, D. P. (2005). An Integrative View of International Experience. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(1), 85-100.

- Tesluk, P. E., & Jacobs, R. R. (1998). Toward an integrated model of work experience. *Personnel Psychology, 51*(2), 321-355.
- Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism and collectivism*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Tucker, M. F., Bonial, R., & Lahti, K. (2004). The definition, measurement and prediction of intercultural adjustment and job performance among corporate expatriates. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 28*(3-4), 221-251.
- Van Velsor, E., & Guthrie, V. (1998). Enhancing the ability to learn from experience. In C. McCauley, R. S. Moxley & E. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (pp. 241-261). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Van Velsor, E., & McCauley, C. D. (2004). Introduction: Our view of leadership development. In C. McCauley & E. Van Velsor (Eds.), *The Center for Creative Leadership handbook of leadership development* (pp. 1-22). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.
- Vance, R. J., Coover, M. D., MacCallum, R. C., & Hedge, J. W. (1989). Construct models of task performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 74*(3), 447-455.
- Viney, A. W., & King, D. B. (1998). *A History of Psychology: Ideas and Context* (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Watson, W. E., Kumar, K., & Michaelsen, L. K. (1993). Cultural diversity's impact on interaction process and performance: Comparing homogeneous and diverse task groups. *Academy of Management Journal, 36*(3), 590-602.
- Yavas, U., & Bodur, M. (1999). Correlates of adjustment: a study of expatriate managers in an emerging country. *Management Decision, 37*(3), 267-278.
- Zaccaro, S. J. (2007). Trait-Based Perspectives of Leadership. *American Psychologist, 62*(1), 6-1611.
- Zaccaro, S. J., Gilbert, J. A., Thor, K. K., & Mumford, M. D. (1991). Leadership and social intelligence: Linking social perspectiveness and behavioral flexibility to leader effectiveness. *Leadership Quarterly, 2*(4), 317-342.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Lisa Marie Van Gulick received her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Industrial-Organizational Psychology in 2010 from George Mason University after receiving her Master of Arts degree in 2007. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, with a minor in Political Science, from the University of Washington in Seattle, WA in 2001.

Her research and applied experiences focus on developing leaders to work effectively in complex global environments both domestically and internationally, enhancing cross-cultural selection and training, designing strategies for accelerating leadership development, increasing individual and leader adaptability, and improving diversity management practices in organizations.