

Survival of the Fittest: Understanding the Role of Individual Adaptability during Cultural Transitions

by

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Abstract

Using longitudinal data from an international student sample, I hypothesized and tested a process model, in which cultural identification mediated the relationship between individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment. The results from both self-reported and peer-reported data supported the hypothesized model. After controlling for other personality concepts (e.g., proactive personality and openness to experience), I found that individual adaptability significantly related to cultural identification, and afterwards positively associated with cross-cultural adjustment. Further, cultural identification mediated the relationship between individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment. This dissertation contributes to the cross-cultural adjustment literature by exploring the mediating mechanism of cultural identification during cross-cultural adjustment. Additionally, it is among the first to apply the concept of individual adaptability to the cross-cultural adjustment literature.

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Survival of the Fittest: Understanding the Role of Individual Adaptability during Cultural Transitions

Chapter 1: Introduction

In response to increased globalization, organizations continue to expand into foreign markets. As a result, the numbers of expatriates continue to grow exponentially (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Fan & Wanous, 2008). Mercer (2009) noted there are approximately one million expatriates worldwide, and the Global Relocation Trends Survey (2012) reports that growth in expatriate populations has increased by nearly 50% since 2011. It is widely recognized that expatriates are essential to the success of their organizations in the global market and that organizations rely on their expatriates to carry out global strategies (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen, 2000; Connelly, 2010; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002).

Overseas assignments can significantly impact the well-being of organizations and expatriates themselves (Wang & Takeuchi, 2007). Research shows that poor cross-cultural adjustment often results in psychological withdrawal, ineffective performance, and early return among expatriates (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Van Vianen, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004), which in turn increases the financial cost to organizations (Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003). For example, Mervosh and McClenahan (1997) estimated that companies pay \$250,000 to \$1.25 million for each expatriate failure and overall expatriate failures cost American companies \$2 billion annually (Pires, Stanton, & Ostefeld, 2006; Punnett, 1997). Cross-cultural maladjustment may impair expatriates' self-esteem, confidence, and reputation, and lead to feelings of homesickness, loneliness, and depression, psychological withdrawal, ineffective performance, and even premature return (Church, 1982; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005; Van Vianen, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004).

Therefore, organizations need competent expatriates who can succeed in a foreign country (Chen, Kirkman, Kim, & Farh, 2010; Harrison et al., 2004; Takeuchi, 2010). However, selecting appropriate candidates for overseas positions remains a major challenge (Global Relocation Trends Survey, 2007).

Unfortunately, firms often select assignees utilizing invalid predictors (e.g., technical expertise, employee willingness to go), which decrease the likelihood of successful adjustment to the host country (Mendenhall, Kühlman, Stahl, & Osland, 2002). Employees' ability to adjust to novel work and non-work contexts is strongly associated with their success abroad (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, & Shin, 2010; Garonzik, Brockner, & Siegel, 2000; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi et al., 2005). Hence, it is critical to know why some people adjust better to foreign countries than others (Takeuchi, 2010). Some empirical evidence suggests that individual differences (e.g., personality, cross-cultural competencies) have widespread effects on adjustment to cross-cultural situations (Caligiuri, 2000a, 2000b; Gong & Fan, 2006; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007). In spite of these studies, several noteworthy limitations in this literature are worth discussing.

First, studies in this stream of research often lack a sound theoretical framework. Further, studies that do rely on theory predominantly use the stress perspective to examine expatriate adjustment (Gong & Fan; 2006; Ones & Visewsvaran, 1997; Takeuchi, 2010). For example, factors such as role novelty or role discretion are sources of stress, which lead to maladjustment. Stress or lack of adjustment then leads to negative outcomes such as ineffective performance or early turnover intentions (Takeuchi, 2010). Researchers have called for different theoretical perspectives that consider additional factors that can predict expatriate adjustment (Harrison et al., 2004; Takeuchi, 2010). As such, I answer these calls by adopting different lenses, Individual

Adaptability (I-ADAPT) Theory (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006) and Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978) to explicate the expatriate adjustment process.

Second, previous adjustment research has paid little attention to potential mediators. Specifying and measuring mediating mechanisms will increase researchers' understanding of *why* specific factors influence results. For example, Gong and Fan (2006) found that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between goal orientation and cross-cultural adjustment. Other researchers have supported the relevance of cultural identification to adjustment processes and outcomes of expatriates (Anderson, 1994; Kohonen, 2005, 2008; Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2000; Sussman, 2000), though empirical research has been limited (De Cieri, Sheehan, Costa, Fenwick, & Cooper, 2009; Hartl, 2004; Kohonen, 2005, 2008). Therefore, this dissertation contributes to the cross-cultural adjustment literature by considering the mediating effect of cultural identification on cross-cultural adjustment. Specifically, I argue that cross-cultural adjustment is an identification process during which expatriates identify with a new culture.

Third, researchers have called for more specific predictors to identify expatriates with the highest probability of success (e.g., Hough & Oswald, 2008; Wang, Zhan, Mccune, & Truxillo, 2011). The well-established Five-Factor Model (FFM) (Tupes & Christal, 1961) is considered inadequate to predict specific outcomes, such as job performance (Hough, 1992; Hough & Oswald, 2008; Wang et al., 2011). Although cross-cultural scholars have begun to use more specific individual differences such as goal orientation (Gong & Fan, 2006; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007) and motivational cultural intelligence (Chen, Kirkman, Kim, Farh, & Tangirala, 2010) to predict the likelihood of successful adjustment to a new country, more research is needed. Given that expatriates go through an adjustment process in a novel environment, individual adaptability is a relevant, narrow personality construct, which can predict expatriates' adjustment (Ployhart &

Bliese, 2006). Therefore, in the present study, I tested the predictive effect of individual adaptability (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006) on cross-cultural adjustment processes and outcomes.

Methodologically, cross-cultural studies often rely on single-resource, cross-sectional designs (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Gong & Fan, 2006; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Takeuchi, 2010). In response to these limitations, data for this study were collected from two different sources: expatriates and their peers. Peer surveys were used to reduce the potential biases associated with self-report data (e.g., Gong & Fan, 2006). In addition, data were collected longitudinally to mitigate concerns about common method variance; a longitudinal study is also more appropriate to capture expatriates' adjustment process.

To summarize, the present research contributes to the cross-cultural adjustment literature in several ways. First, I test a process model of expatriate adjustment, in which expatriates' cultural identification mediates the relationship between individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment. Second, this dissertation is among the first studies to use individual adaptability to predict expatriate adjustment processes and outcomes. Third, I answer prior calls to explore new theoretical perspectives in describing, explaining, and predicting the expatriate adjustment process. Finally, responding to prior calls for research methods that is more stringent, longitudinal and peer data were collected to test the model.

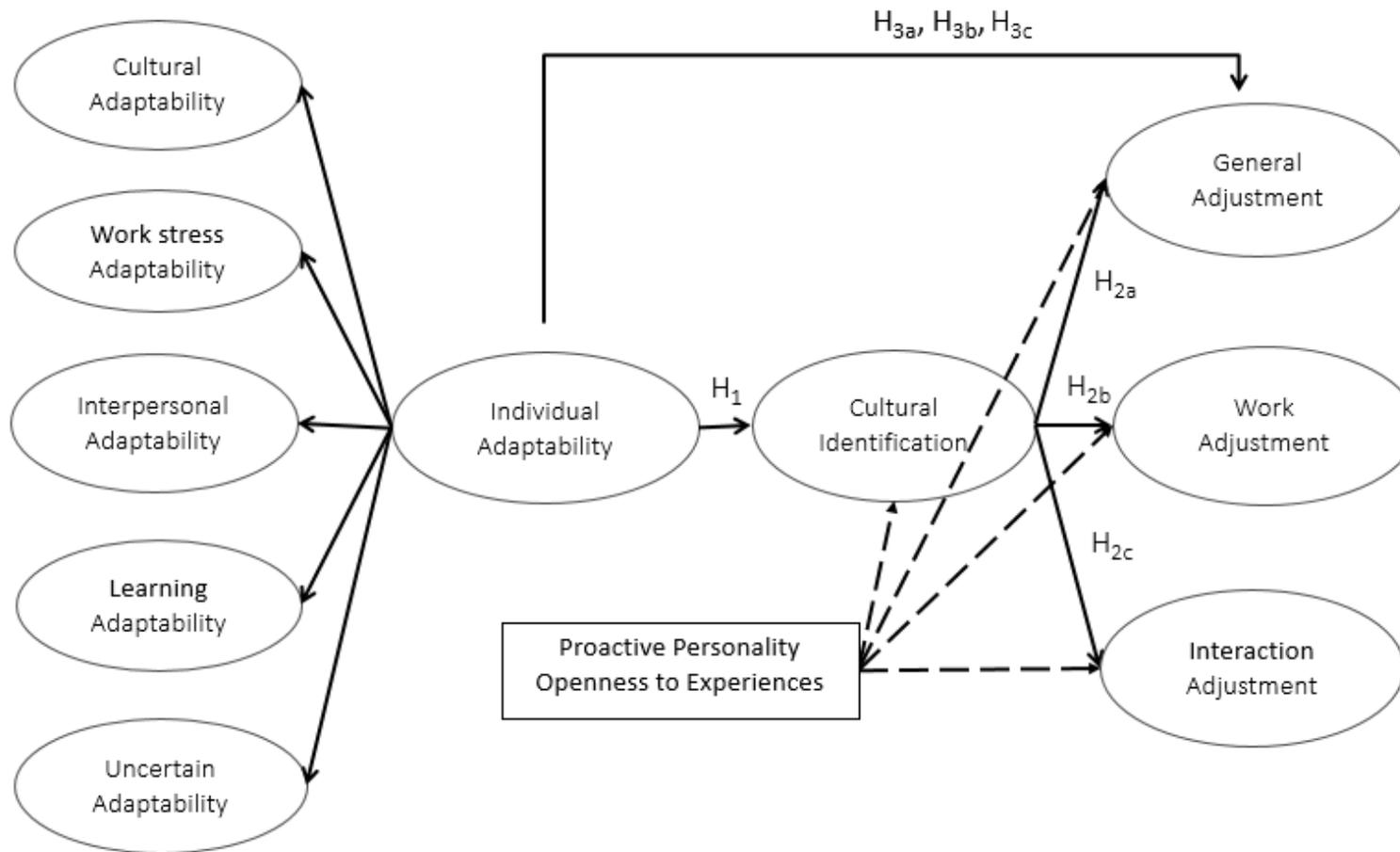
Chapter 2: Theoretical Overview and Hypothesis Development

In this chapter, I delineate a process model (Figure 1) of expatriate adjustment. As shown in Figure 1, I propose that individual adaptability predicts cultural identification, which in turn correlates positively with cross-cultural adjustment; meanwhile, cultural identification mediates this relationship. In this chapter, I discuss each construct and their relevance to the expatriate adjustment model.

Individuality Adaptability

Organizations and their employees face considerable environmental challenges requiring adaptive change. Numerous forces, such as technological changes, mergers, and the dramatic rise of global business, require employees to demonstrate adaptability in both their thinking (cognition) and behaviors (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). In response to these changes, and based on prior literature, Ployhart and Bliese (2006) developed I-ADAPT Theory, which underlies the nomological network of individual adaptability. According to I-ADAPT Theory, individual adaptability is an individuals' willingness to actively change themselves to fit different roles, tasks, and situations (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). This definition posits that adaptability is a reasonably stable individual difference that influences cognitions and behavior in various scenarios (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). Compared with other personality variables, adaptability is a more integrative and synthesized construct useful in the international environment (LePine, Colquitt, & Erez, 2000; Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). Further, individual differences in adaptability directly influence how individuals perceive situations, conditions, and tasks, select coping strategies, and acquire knowledge about performance and situations. Highly adaptive individuals tend to absorb the appropriate knowledge about situations and their performance therein. They are also more likely to adopt active coping styles and regulate their behaviors appropriately

Figure 1: Hypothesized model



in various situations.

The individual adaptability construct consists of eight sub-dimensions (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). Table 1 presents the eight sub-dimensions along with a brief definition of each. Ployhart and Bliese (2006) suggested that researchers should identify and test as many relevant sub-dimensions as possible for their specific scenarios. For example, Wang and his colleagues (2011) adopted five sub-dimensions (i.e., cultural adaptability, work stress adaptability, interpersonal adaptability, learning adaptability, and uncertainty adaptability) to predict work performance and satisfaction, and turnover intentions of newcomers through perceived person-environment fit (P-E fit) variables. Five types of adaptive behaviors (i.e., dealing with work stress, uncertain work environment, newcomer learning, demonstrating interpersonal adaptability, and cultural adaptability) that related to expatriates were identified by Pulakos and her colleagues (2000).

Based principally on work by Pulakos et al. (2000), five adaptability sub-dimensions were included in this study to predict expatriate adjustment processes and outcomes. Specifically, expatriates leave a familiar country and enter an unfamiliar one, which upsets old customs and creates psychological uncertainty (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Fan & Wanous, 2008). Additionally, expatriates are faced with a new and different culture, stress from task demands, social interaction problems, unfamiliar tasks, and other uncertainties in their new environment. Hence, cultural adaptability, work stress adaptability, learning adaptability, interpersonal adaptability, and uncertainty adaptability are included as relevant sub-dimensions of individual adaptability in this study to predict cross-cultural adjustment processes and outcomes. Because the other three adaptability dimensions (i.e., crisis adaptability, physical

adaptability, and creativity adaptability) are not as directly related to the context of expatriates' adjustment, they were not included in the present study.

Identity and Identification

Before exploring the concept of identification, the concept of identity must be considered. Identity provides answers to the question of "Who am I?" or "Who are we?" Additionally, identity explains peoples' ways of thinking and behavior in a given scenario (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008), and has been conceptualized in several forms in the organizational and occupational literatures. Based on social identity theory and self-categorization theory (SIT/SCT) (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), social identity refers to "part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Social identities are mutually accepted by group members, differentiate between groups, and give members a descriptive and evaluative sense of self (Ashforth et al., 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Identity theory highlights the importance of roles for the social structure of the self (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Compared with SIT/SCT, which argues that identities are an integral aspect of *collectives*, identity theory explains that identities are natural, inherent aspects of *roles*, such as jobs, professions, and relational linkages (e.g., mother-child). Additionally, identity theory helps explain why, when faced with multiple roles, people perform better in certain roles than in others (Ashforth et al., 2008). Additionally, the more a given role is valued, the more likely an individual will try to confirm the respective role identity (Ashforth et al., 2008; Burke & Reitzes, 1991).

Table 1: Definition of the Eight Sub-dimensions of Individual Adaptability (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006)

Sub-dimension title	Sub-dimension definition
Cultural adaptability	Person's willingness to fit to different cultures
Work stress adaptability	Individual's tendency to actively fit to a stressful work situation
Learning adaptability	Individual's willingness to actively learning unfamiliar tasks, procedures, and technologies
Interpersonal adaptability	Person's tendency to be easygoing and flexible during social interaction
Uncertainty adaptability	Individual's willingness to change themselves to fit uncertainty events and environments
Crisis adaptability	Person's tendency to appropriately handle with crises or emergency scenarios
Physical adaptability	Individual's tendency to fit in challenging working conditions or demanding jobs
Creativity adaptability	Person's tendency to solve novel, difficult problems creatively

With an understanding of identity, it becomes possible to discuss identification, which describes the opinion of affiliating with a certain collective classification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Identification occurs when peoples' beliefs about their collective or role become "self-referential" (i.e., one is aware of a group or role "deemed similar to one's self") or "self-refining" (i.e., one adjusts "to become more similar" to a certain collective or role) (Pratt, 1998, pp. 172-174).

Ashforth and his colleagues (2008) developed a "fuzzy set" (p. 330) to define identification, which depicted various layers of identification. The innermost layer is the "core of identity," which includes knowing oneself, what one values, and how one feels (p. 330). The next layer, "content of identity" (p. 330), includes a range of attributes (i.e., views, morals, knowledge, and competencies); identification involves the reception of these attributes as one's own (Ashforth et al., 2008). As individuals model an increasing number of these attributes, they are thought to be more typical of the collective (Elsbach, 2004). "Behavior of identity" (p. 330), the outermost layer suggests individuals will behave in certain ways, which reflect their identity. Behaviors are important for identification, as one might not only think and feel but also behave according to his/her identity (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2008).

Because it involves routinely bringing certain elements of the collective identity into one's own identity, identification is also a dynamic process (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth et al., 2008; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). Ashforth and his colleagues (2008) developed a process model to capture the changing nature of identification, which is applicable to any group or role. Individuals begin to integrate attributes of the group into their own identity by "enacting identities" and "interpreting responses" to these outcomes (identity symbols, performance outcomes, and task behaviors) (pp. 343-346).

In employment scenarios, organizations provide feedback through “sensebreaking” (i.e., questioning who one is when one’s sense of self is challenged and generating a sense gap simultaneously) (Pratt, 2000) and “sensegiving” (i.e., trying to “guide the meaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational reality”) (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 442). These events work jointly to explain how an employee changes and becomes a typical group member. Individuals construct an “identity narrative” as a way to link these past dots together and eventually generate a story to tell: “who I am now,” “who I have been,” and “who I might become” (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 340).

During the identification process, individuals discover who they are and behave consistently with their values and beliefs (Ashforth et al., 2008). The identification process helps people decrease the uncertainty related to interacting in novel situations or with changes in familiar settings (Weick, 1995). The motives for identification come from basic human needs for safety, belongingness, connection, and the reduction of uncertainty (Ashforth et al., 2008; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004; Pratt, 1998; Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001).

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Cross-cultural adjustment measures the degree of psychological ease that people have in a novel, unfamiliar culture (Black & Stephens, 1989; Harrison et al., 2004). In the cross-cultural adjustment literature, the most established model classifies adjustment into three aspects: general, work, and interaction adjustment (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989). Whereas general adjustment refers to psychological ease associated with various aspects of the novel environment (e.g., food, weather, and transportation), work adjustment concerns psychological comfort associated with a new job, work standards and expectations. Finally, interaction

adjustment concerns psychological ease associated with social interactions and communication with host country citizens.

Many scholars have identified the significance of individual differences in predicting cross-cultural adjustment (Gong & Fan, 2006; Hechanova et al, 2003; Takeuchi, 2010). Among the earlier studies, Black et al.'s (1991) international adjustment model proposed several individual antecedents of adjustment, including self-efficacy, relational and perception skills.

Using a sample of expatriates, Arthur and Bennett (1995) showed that five factors (i.e., job knowledge and motivation, adaptability, family situation, relational skills, and extra-cultural openness) were perceived to be important for international success. Caligiuri (2000a) empirically tested the relationships between the Big Five personality characteristics (i.e., extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness) and expatriates' turnover intentions and supervisor-rated performance. Whereas extraversion, agreeableness, and emotional stability negatively related to expatriates' turnover intentions, conscientiousness positively related to supervisor-rated performance on the expatriate assignment.

Additional research has sought to differentiate broad character traits from more specific predictors (Jordan & Cartwright, 1998; Shaffer et al., 2006). For example, Shaffer et al. (2006) found that both the Big Five traits and narrow cross-cultural competencies (i.e., cultural flexibility, task/people orientation, and ethnocentrism) had unique influences on expatriates' effectiveness (i.e., adjustment, turnover intention, and job performance).

More recently, scholars have begun to use specific predictors, arguing that they could be useful in predicting cross-cultural adjustment. For example, Gong and Fan (2006) found that goal orientation is a useful variable in predicting cross-cultural adjustment. Cross-cultural motivation has also been a relevant construct in predicting expatriate adjustment and

performance (Chen et al., 2010; Firth, Chen, Kirkman, & Kim, 2014). In keeping with this recent trend, I introduce the construct of individuality adaptability (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006) into the expatriate literature.

The Role of Identification in Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Having reviewed the constructs of identity and identification, I will now discuss how these concepts apply in the context of cross-cultural adjustment. Sussman (2002) pointed out that Social Identity Theory (SIT) is directly related to the cultural change that takes place when people physically move between countries. Being classified as an out-group member (e.g., an expatriate in a host country) increases the salience of one's sense of self in comparison with the in-group (e.g., a citizen). However, scholars have only recently begun to use SIT/ SCT as the theoretical basis to understand the expatriate experience (Olsen & Martins, 2009). Toh and DeNisi (2007) used SIT/SCT as a framework to identify several factors that determine whether host country nationals will help expatriates. They propose that host country nationals are less likely to help expatriates when those expatriates are classified as outgroup members. Olsen and Martins (2009) utilized SIT to understand how demographic characteristics affect host country nationals' support for expatriates. While informative, SIT-based studies neglect the identity-altering effects of sustained contact with people from a different culture (Sussman, 2000).

Acculturation theorists in the immigration literature have addressed the change in individuals' sense of self (e.g., beliefs, values, behaviors, cultural identity) as a result of direct long-term cultural interaction (Berry, 1990, 1997, 2001; Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). Specifically, immigrants need to find answers to two questions: "Is it valuable to maintain one's identity and characteristics?" and "Is it valuable to maintain relationships with other groups?" (Berry, 1997, p. 10). People's cultural identity may shift away from home cultural identity when

prolonged contact with the new culture occurs (Berry, 1980). However, though potentially similar, the situations of immigrants and expatriates are not the same. This limits the explanatory and predictive value of acculturation theory on the expatriate experience (Sussman, 2000). For example, immigrants and expatriates have significantly different motivations for cultural transition. Immigrants are normally motivated by economic or political hardship, while the purpose for expatriates is to accomplish a work assignment (Sussman, 2000).

In the expatriate literature, several qualitative studies recognize the effect of expatriate assignments on people's identity. For example, Osland (2000) interviewed 35 returning U.S. expatriates and found that an overseas assignment was a transformational experience for them. More specifically, Osland found that U.S. expatriates questioned their identity and values while working abroad. Moreover, some had to adjust their U.S. cultural ideas and behaviors to be accepted or successful in the host country. Based on the narratives of four Finnish expatriates, Kohonen (2005) reported that expatriate managers experienced identity transformations and subsequently emphasized the importance of studying expatriates from an identity construction perspective. Using a narrative approach, Kohonen (2008) conducted interviews of 21 Finnish expatriates. Three types of identity modification emerged from this study: identity shifters (i.e., emerging new identity), balanced identities (i.e., integrating the culture of host and home country), and non-shifters (i.e., the continuity of the self). To Kohonen, the non-shifters' narratives were imbued with multiple meanings and were less reflective. Although non-shifters talked about some changes, they did not further define the nature of those changes. Therefore, Kohonen questioned how many non-shifters actually changed, but failed to recognize the change.

When expatriates enter a new environment, their prior routines may be disrupted and their previous attitudes or behaviors might be regarded as unacceptable or inappropriate (Black

et al., 1991). In other words, some sources of one's identity may no longer be present and people's sense of self becomes challenged (Anderson, 1994). Therefore, expatriates may experience a "sensebreaking" process (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 342) in their host country, which creates a knowledge gap and uncertainty. Expatriates have a desire to fill those knowledge gaps and reduce the uncertainty inherent in the new environment. As such, they begin to integrate elements of the new culture into their sense of self, deriving meaning from responses to the change (Ashforth et al., 2008; Weick, 1995). During this process, expatriates experience identification with the new environment. Meanwhile, as expatriates discover what behaviors and attitudes are appropriate in the novel country, uncertainty declines (Black et al., 1991).

Considering that expatriates enter a new country to carry out work tasks, cultural identification (i.e., the degree to which individuals define themselves as belonging to a certain cultural group) (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000) is considered in this study. In the following sections, hypotheses are developed.

Individual Adaptability and Cultural Identification

Expatriates face numerous uncertainties when entering an unfamiliar cultural environment, such as the need to know host country values and cultures, learn a new language and culturally proper behaviors (Bhagat & London, 1999; Earley & Ang, 2003; Fan & Wanous, 2008). Based on I-ADAPT Theory (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006), highly adaptive expatriates may proactively acquire the appropriate knowledge about the new cultural environment and how they should perform during the adjustment process, which benefits their identification process. Meanwhile, they might also be more likely to adopt a more active coping style and implement problem-focused coping strategies when faced with uncertainty. Finally, expatriates with higher levels of adaptability may appropriately regulate their behaviors in the changed environment.

Therefore, more adaptive expatriates may more quickly and efficiently show identification with the new cultural environment. Specific sub-dimensions of adaptability could contribute to this process.

Individual differences in cultural adaptability may most strongly influence perceptions and appraisals when dealing with individuals from diverse cultures (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006). Expatriates with high cultural adaptability may be more likely to accept a novel culture by understanding and following the accepted beliefs, values, and policies (Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000; Wang et al., 2011). Thus, expatriates high in cultural adaptability may be more apt to behave like locals and feel belongingness to the local environment. Furthermore, expatriates high in uncertainty adaptability may be more willing to grapple with uncertain and unexpected conditions. They are more likely to readily adjust themselves to appropriately fit unpredictable situations (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006; Wang et al., 2011). As a result, these expatriates might be more likely to experience identification with the new cultural environment.

Additionally, individuals with high interpersonal adaptability may be more likely to change their interpersonal activities to fit the new setting and remain flexible and open-minded when interacting with others (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006; Wang et al., 2011). Nelson and Quick (1991) argued that individuals high in interpersonal adaptability might gain more social support because of their flexibility in interacting with different people around them. Thus, highly interpersonally adaptive expatriates might have a better chance of obtaining useful information and help from host country nationals, which in turn, may help them increase their sense of belongingness to the new cultural environment.

Moreover, expatriates high in work stress adaptability may be more likely to adopt constructive ways to deal with stressful events and behave resiliently in demanding environments

(Pulakos et al., 2000). Expatriates with high work stress adaptability should be more likely to view the unfamiliar work situation as challenging rather than threatening (Wang et al., 2011). They can adopt more efficient and active ways of handling their stress when working overseas. Hence, they may have a better chance of gaining helpful responses and feeling a sense of oneness in the new working environment. Finally, expatriates with high learning adaptability may be more willing to increase their work performance efficiency and to actively learn novel tasks (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006; Pulakos et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2011). Miller and Jablin (1991) found that people high in learning adaptability tend to improve their mastery of work through proactive learning such as seeking feedback from colleagues and managers. During the process of interacting with host country employees, expatriates should experience a sense of belongingness to the new environment. Following the above logic, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. Individual adaptability will positively relate to expatriates' cultural identification.

Cultural Identification and Expatriates' Cross-Cultural Adjustment

During the process of cultural identification, expatriates' former identity may be replaced with a new one more suitable in the host country. During the transformation process from outsider to insider, expatriates gain enough knowledge and information to reduce knowledge gaps and uncertainties. In addition, they increase their openness to social influence from people in their new culture (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Meanwhile, host country nationals are more willing to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviors toward expatriates whom they perceive as like them, have similar values, and are categorized as one of their members (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Olsen & Martins, 2009; Van Vianen, 2004). Thus, the more

relationships formed with host country nationals, the more information and social support expatriates will receive from these new relationships. As a result, better expatriate adjustment to the host country is expected (Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, & De Pater, 2003). As such, expatriates with stronger cultural identification tend to obtain more information and help from host country nationals, which benefits their cross-cultural adjustment.

Hypothesis 2a. Cultural identification will positively relate to expatriates' general adjustment.

Hypothesis 2b. Cultural identification will positively relate to expatriates' work adjustment.

Hypothesis 2c. Cultural identification will positively relate to expatriates' interaction adjustment.

The Mediating Role of Cultural Identification

Culture influences peoples' values, beliefs, and behaviors and is a source of self-reference in social life (Berry, 1980). Regardless of the importance of culture, people may fail to notice it when staying in their home country and interacting with their fellow citizens (Sussman, 2000). When people enter a new cultural environment, they become aware of and experience the cultural differences day by day and little by little. In a short period, expatriates realize their source of self-reference no longer exists and begin to question themselves ("who am I?" Kohonen, 2008). Meanwhile, expatriates need to adjust to the local environment, otherwise they become isolated from locals and stay in their comfort zone. The more expatriates interact with the local culture, the more likely it is that they will adopt the local culture as a frame of reference for social life, sometimes subconsciously. Therefore, before expatriates realize it, they have already incorporated local cultural elements into themselves and use those elements to guide

their behaviors. In other words, those expatriates begin to identify with the local culture. As argued previously, expatriates with higher levels of individual adaptability tend to notice the cultural differences earlier, proactively change themselves, fill their value void quicker, and identify with the new culture sooner. According to the “similarity-attraction” perspective, host country people are more willing to work with expatriates when they realize the existence of value and cultural similarity (Van Vianen et al., 2004). Therefore, expatriates that are more adaptable have better opportunities to build strong networks with native people. Via those connections, expatriates will gain more information and social support, which benefit their adjustment abroad (Farh et al., 2010; Van Vianen et al., 2004).

Hypothesis 3a. Cultural identification will mediate the relationship between expatriates’ individual adaptability and people’s general adjustment.

Hypothesis 3b. Cultural identification will mediate the relationship between expatriates’ individual adaptability and people’s work adjustment.

Hypothesis 3c. Cultural identification will mediate the relationship between expatriates’ individual adaptability and people’s interaction adjustment.

Chapter 3: Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were international students enrolled at a large university in the southeastern U.S. Obtaining an academic degree in the U.S. was the major focus of these international students. In addition to pursuing a degree, participants also needed to adjust to their new country. The setting of international students is similar to that of expatriates going to work in a novel, unfamiliar country (Gong & Fan, 2006). When international students enter a foreign country and begin their new study life, they need to learn a foreign language and use that foreign language to read, write, and communicate with others. These students also have many tasks to complete, such as submitting assignments, working with teams on class projects, and passing exams. Leaving home for a novel country, these students need to handle cultural differences, build new connections and learn how to interact with local Americans. Therefore, these international students experienced similar life scenarios as expatriates working in a new country.

Data collection consisted of three expatriate self-report surveys over a one-year period and a peer-report survey at the end of this time period. The procedure is shown in Figure 2. Participants received a small gift (i.e., a bracelet) for completing the first survey, \$5 for completing the second survey, and \$10 for completing the third survey. The first survey took place during the new international student orientation (right after the students arrived in the U.S.) when most of the students had little experience studying at an American university. The second survey was administered six months later, after students had completed their first semester abroad. After another six months, the third survey was administered. At the time of the final survey, students had been in the U.S. for one year. The one-year period was long enough for participants to notice the cultural difference and take actions to adjust to the new culture.

Figure 2: Data Collection Procedure



One hundred sixty-eight expatriate students completed the first survey that measured demographic information and individual adaptability. Of these, 104 students (62%) submitted the second survey measuring cultural identification. Finally, 85 (or 82%) of the 104 students completed the final survey assessing their cross-cultural adjustment. The 85 students who completed all three surveys were asked to provide contact information for one peer (e.g., roommate, lab mate, classmate, or significant other) who was familiar with the participant and, more importantly, knew his/her adjustment process. Peers were asked to answer questions regarding the participants' cross-cultural adjustment. Of those 85 peers, 58 (one peer for each participant) completed the survey, for a response rate of 68%.

Of those who completed the first survey ($N = 168$), 101 participants were male. The average age was 24 years old ($SD = 3$). More than half (57%) of the students came from China, 11% were Indian, and the remaining students came from 30 other countries such as France, Turkey, or Korea. The majority of the students (91%) were pursuing graduate-level degrees. Two thirds of the participants rated their English ability as at least fairly good. Approximately 74% of the students had no international experience at all before coming to the American university. Table 2 shows the demographic profile of survey participants.

Measures

A complete list of measures used in this study, citations for each measure, number of items for each measure, and coefficient alpha reliabilities are listed in Table 3. A copy of all the measures is listed in Appendix I.

I-ADAPT. The Individual Adaptability Measure (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006) was adopted to measure five sub-dimensions of individuals' adaptability. Participants rated each item on a 5-point numerical rating scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree). Sample items from this

measure included the following: "I enjoy learning about cultures other than my own" (cultural adaptability; five items; Cronbach's alpha = .69), "I usually over-react to stressful news" (work stress adaptability; five items; Cronbach's alpha = .75), "I believe it is important to be flexible in dealing with others" (interpersonal adaptability; seven items; Cronbach's alpha = .69), "I take responsibility for acquiring new skills" (learning adaptability; nine items; Cronbach's alpha = .79), and "I perform well in uncertain situations" (uncertainty adaptability; five items; Cronbach's alpha = .69).

Because few studies have empirically tested the second-order structure of Individual Adaptability, I conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to test the validity of this structure. The second-order structure provided a good fit to the data according to generally-accepted standards (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 (df = 39) = 69.12, p < .01$, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .96, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .07 and ranged between .04 and .09. The results supported the hypothesized second-order structure for adaptability (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006).

Cultural identification. The Vancouver Index of Acculturation (Ryder, Alden, and Paulhus, 2000; 10 items) was adopted to measure cultural identification. Respondents were asked to rate how strongly they disagreed or agreed with each statement (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Sample items for this measure were "I enjoy social activities with typical Americans." and "I enjoy American entertainment (e.g., movies, music)." Cronbach's alpha was .74 in this study.

Cross-cultural adjustment. Scales developed by Black and Stephen (1988) were adopted to measure the three facets of cross-cultural adjustment (i.e., general, work, and interaction

adjustment). Participants identified how well adjusted they were on a scale from 1 = not well adjusted at all to 7 = very well adjusted.

Since the participants in this study were students, the modified work adjustment subscale developed by Gong and Fan (2006) was used in place of the original. Sample items for the general adjustment subscale (six items) are "How well adjusted are you to the food in the USA?" and "How well adjusted are you to shopping in the USA?" Sample items for the work adjustment subscale (six items) include "How well adjusted are you to your school work?" and "How well adjusted are you to your instructors' teaching style?" Sample items for interaction adjustment subscale (four items) are "How well adjusted are you to talking to Americans?" and "How well adjusted are you to social gatherings in America?" Cronbach's alpha reliabilities were .90, .92, and .93, for general, work, and interaction adjustment, respectively.

Cross-cultural adjustment (peer-report). Items were the same as in the self-report version of this measure except that the word "you" was replaced with "this person" in the peer-report survey. Sample items included "How well adjusted is this person to food in America?" "How well adjusted is this person to his or her schoolwork?" and "How well adjusted is this person to talking to Americans?" Cronbach's alphas were .90, .94, and .94 for peer-reported general, work, and interaction adjustment in this study, respectively.

Controls. Previous experience in the U.S. was included as a control variable because it is a critical factor influencing cross-cultural adjustment (Takeuchi et al., 2005). In order to more rigorously test the model, I also controlled for participants' proactive personality (i.e., people's tendency to effect environmental change; Bateman & Crant, 1993; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999) and openness to experience (i.e., person's tendency to change existing thoughts and actions when they have been exposed to novel concepts or conditions; John, 1990).

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Participants

Variable	n	%
Gender		
Male	101	60
Female	67	40
Age		
18-22 years	67	40
23-26 years	69	41
27-30 years	23	14
> 30 years	9	5
Previous international experience		
none	105	62.5
less than one year	36	21.4
one to two years	7	4.2
more than two years	20	11.9
English		
Poor	8	4.8
fair	54	32.1
good	54	32.1
very good	52	31
Country and area		
Azerbaijan	1	0.6
Bangladesh	3	1.8
Brazil	4	2.4
Cambodia	1	0.6
Cameroon	1	0.6
Canada	1	0.6
China	96	57.1
Netherlands	1	0.6
Egypt	1	0.6
France	2	1.2
Germany	1	0.6
India	19	11.3
Iran	2	1.2
Iraq	1	0.6
Jordan	1	0.6
Kenya	1	0.6
Korea	3	1.8
Kuwait	2	1.2

Note. $N = 168$.

Table 2: continued

Nigeria	3	1.8
Nepal	3	1.8
Pakistan	1	0.6
Russia	2	1.2
Spain	1	0.6
Sri Lanka	4	2.4
Swazi	1	0.6
Taiwan	7	4.2
Thai	1	0.6
Turkey	1	0.6
Vietnam	1	0.6
Unknown	2	1.2

Note. $N = 168$.

Table 3: Description of Study Measures

Variable	Citation for the measure	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Cultural adaptability	Ployhart & Bliese, 2006	5	0.69
Stress adaptability	Ployhart & Bliese, 2006	5	0.75
Interpersonal adaptability	Ployhart & Bliese, 2006	7	0.69
Learning adaptability	Ployhart & Bliese, 2006	9	0.79
Uncertainty adaptability	Ployhart & Bliese, 2006	5	0.69
Cultural identification	Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000	10	0.74
General adjustment	Black, 1988	6	0.9
Work adjustment	Gong & Fan, 2006	6	0.92
Interaction adjustment	Gong & Fan, 2006	4	0.93
General adjustment (peer-report)	Black, 1988	6	0.9
Work adjustment (peer-report)	Gong & Fan, 2006	6	0.94
Interaction adjustment (peer-report)	Gong & Fan, 2006	4	0.94
Proactive personality	Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999	10	0.75
Openness to experience	Benet-Martinez & John, 1998	10	0.75

These variables were included because the newcomer literature suggests that they could predict the process and outcomes of newcomers' adjustment as well (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003; Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005; Wang et al., 2011). Therefore, I tested whether individual adaptability could predict expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment above and beyond proactive personality and openness to experience. The 10-item scale developed by Seibert et al. (1999) was adopted to measure proactive personality; Cronbach's alpha reliability was .75 in this study. I used the 10-item subscale of the Big Five Inventory to measure openness to experience (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008); Cronbach's alpha reliability was .75 in this study.

Chapter 4 Results

Methods of Analysis

The descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, intercorrelations, and alpha reliabilities for all variables are presented in Table 4. Previous experience in the U.S. was not correlated with any other variable except peer-report work adjustment. This result is consistent with prior work by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) who found that previous experience was not a useful predictor of cross-cultural adjustment. Further, because removing this variable did not influence the results of the model, I omitted this variable as a control variable and excluded it from Table 4 and the rest of the analyses.

As shown in Table 4, individual adaptability was correlated with cultural identification ($r = .37, p < .01$). Further, cultural identification was correlated with three facets of self-report cross-cultural adjustment and two facets of peer-report cross-cultural adjustment. However, the correlations among self-report and peer-report cross-cultural adjustment variables were mostly low or nonsignificant; therefore, I treated them separately as dependent variables in two models.

Since a number of participants missed the second, third, and peer rating survey, Little's MCAR test was conducted on all items. According to Ployhart and Vandenberg (2010), as long as the data are missing completely at random (MCAR), maximum likelihood can be used to get unbiased parameter estimates. The result showed that data were MCAR, $\chi^2 (df = 1539) = 1499.18, p = .76$. This result suggested that data were missing completely at random. Therefore, I used maximum likelihood estimation to run the model.

Table 4: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Alpha Reliabilities

Variables	Mean	SD	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Proactive Personality	3.68	0.43	168	(.75)									
2. Openness to Experience	3.71	0.51	167	.54**	(.75)								
3. Individual Adaptability (Total)	3.78	0.35	168	.51**	.49**	(.77)							
4. Cultural Adaptability	4.09	0.51	168	.50**	.47**	.77**	(.69)						
5. Work Stress Adaptability	3.21	0.66	168	.14	.14	.69**	.27**	(.75)					
6. Interpersonal Adaptability	4.02	0.37	168	.42**	.42**	.77**	.63**	.34**	(.69)				
7. Learning Adaptability	4.00	0.39	168	.58**	.49**	.75**	.57**	.29**	.54**	(.79)			
8. Uncertainty Adaptability	3.58	0.45	168	.41**	.44**	.79**	.50**	.41**	.53**	.60**	(.68)		
9. Cultural Identification	5.01	0.65	104	.32**	.30**	.37**	.45**	.13	.38**	.35**	.15	(.74)	
10. General Adjustment	5.23	1.14	85	.29**	.04	.27*	.25*	.19	.27*	.22*	.07	.43**	(.90)
11. Work Adjustment	5.32	0.95	85	.26**	.18	.42**	.49**	.23*	.42**	.29*	.16	.35**	.47**
12. Interaction Adjustment	4.83	1.25	85	.16	.11	.25*	.42**	.09	.27*	.19	-.20	.55**	.58**
13. General Adjustment (Peer)	5.47	1.06	58	.16	.15	.38**	.28*	.28*	.23	.38**	.23	.29*	.20
14. Work Adjustment (Peer)	5.79	0.98	58	.16	.30*	.38**	.30*	.22	.23	.35**	.34**	.13	-.03
15. Interaction Adjustment (Peer)	5.45	1.13	58	.24	.30*	.44**	.35**	.27*	.29*	.41**	.35**	.36**	.20

Table 4, continued: Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Alpha Reliabilities

Variables	Mean	SD	n	11	12	13	14	15
1. Proactive Personality	3.68	0.43	168					
2. Openness to Experience	3.71	0.51	167					
3. Individual Adaptability (Total)	3.78	0.35	168					
4. Cultural Adaptability	4.09	0.51	168					
5. Work Stress Adaptability	3.21	0.66	168					
6. Interpersonal Adaptability	4.02	0.37	168					
7. Learning Adaptability	4.00	0.39	168					
8. Uncertainty Adaptability	3.58	0.45	168					
9. Cultural Identification	5.01	0.65	104					
10. General Adjustment	5.23	1.14	85					
11. Work Adjustment	5.32	0.95	85	(.92)				
12. Interaction Adjustment	4.83	1.25	85	.60**	(.93)			
13. General Adjustment (Peer)	5.47	1.06	58	.17	.34**	(.90)		
14. Work Adjustment (Peer)	5.79	0.98	58	.17	.12	.62**	(.94)	
15. Interaction Adjustment (Peer)	5.45	1.13	58	.20	.37**	.78**	.75**	(.94)

Note. Numbers in parentheses are alpha coefficients.

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

In order to increase the ratio of respondents to parameters, item parceling was used before testing the model (Kline, 2011). Item parcels chosen randomly were used for sub-dimensions of individual adaptability, proactive personality, openness to experience, cultural identification, and cross-cultural adjustment variables (Kline, 2011). Specifically, items from the proactive personality scale were randomly assigned to one of three parcels; items in the same parcel were averaged to produce a parcel score. Parcels were created in a likewise manner for cultural adaptability, work stress adaptability, interpersonal adaptability, uncertainty adaptability, proactive personality, openness to experience (2 parcels each), three facets of cross cultural adjustment scales (both self-report and peer-report), and three parcels each for the learning adaptability and cultural identification scales.

Self-Report Cross-Cultural Adjustment Model

Measurement Model Testing

The measurement model that included all latent constructs (individual adaptability, proactive personality, openness to experience, cultural identification, and self-report adjustment variables) was tested first. The measurement model provided a good fit to the data based on widely-accepted standards (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 (df = 298) = 466.26, p < .001$, CFI = .91, and RMSEA = .06.

Structural Model Results

In testing the structural model, I added structural paths to the measurement models based on the research hypotheses. Specifically, I added a link from individual adaptability to cultural identification, and three links from cultural identification to the cross-cultural adjustment variables. In terms of control variables, I linked the control variables (i.e., proactive personality and openness to experience) to both cultural identification and the three facets of cross-cultural

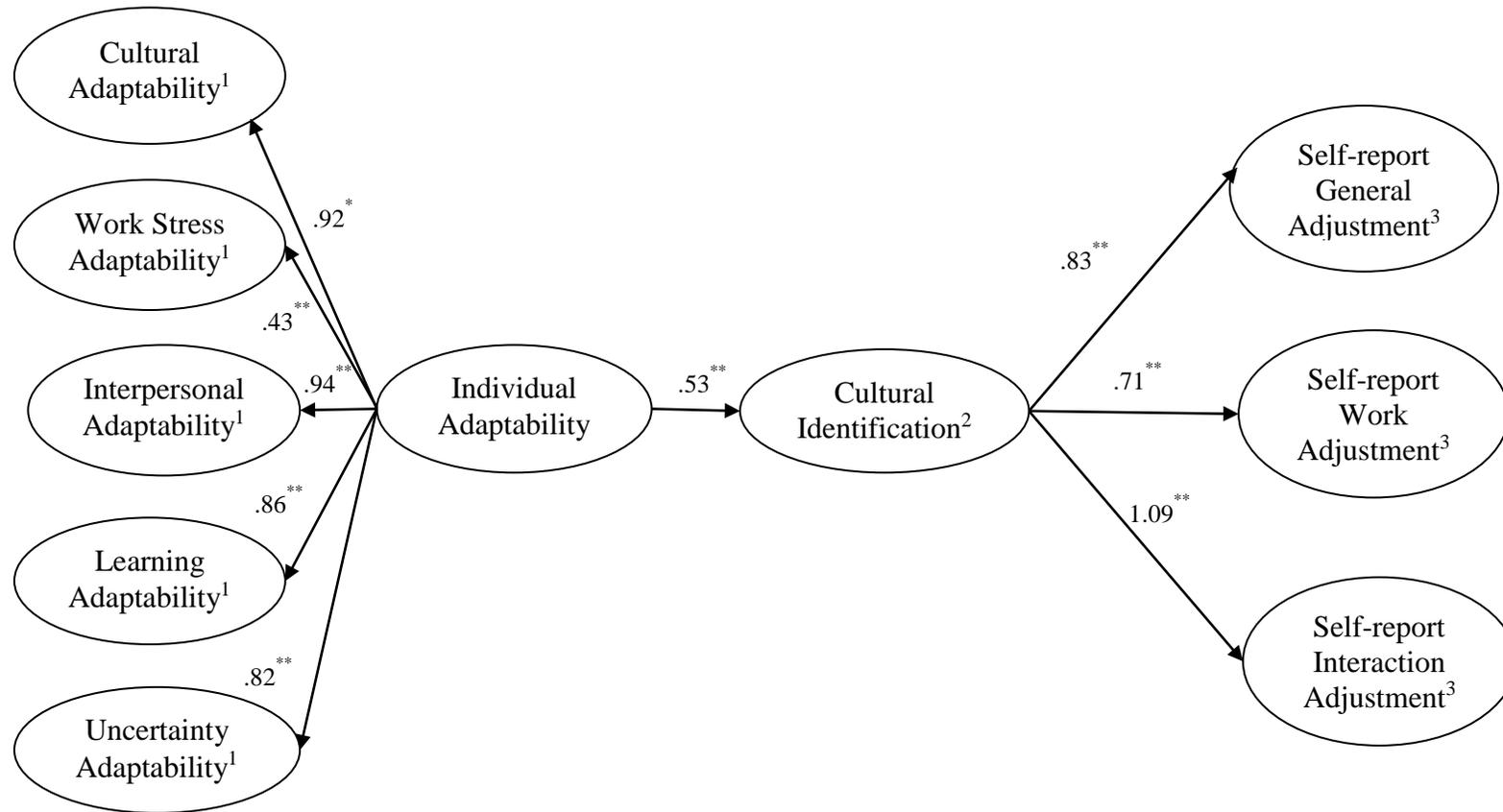
adjustment. The model fit the data well (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 (df = 304) = 486.09, p < .001$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .06. In order to test the model more rigorously, direct paths from individual adaptability to cross-cultural adjustment were added, allowing for a test of partial mediation. The partial mediation model fit the data well (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 (df = 301) = 482.77, p < .001$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .06. However, the results showed that there was no difference ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 3.32, p = .35$) between the full mediation and partial mediation models. In addition, none of the three direct paths from individual adaptability to cross-cultural adjustment were significant. Therefore, I removed the three direct links from the model and focused on the full mediation model, which was also my hypothesized model. The significant standardized path coefficients related to the hypotheses represented in Figure 3.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that individuals' adaptability would be positively associated with cultural identification. As shown, individual adaptability was positively associated with cultural identification ($\beta = .53, p < .01$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Hypotheses 2a-2c stated that individuals' cultural identification would positively relate to each facet of adjustment. Those who more closely identified with their new culture would adjust better in the novel country. The results using self-reports showed that cultural identification was positively related to general adjustment ($\beta = .83, p < .01$), work adjustment ($\beta = .71, p < .01$), and interaction adjustment ($\beta = 1.09, p < .01$). Therefore, Hypotheses 2a-2c were supported.

The Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) was used in this study to test the hypothesized indirect effects (Hypotheses 3a-3c: cultural identification will mediate the relationship between individual adaptability and three facets of cross-cultural adjustment). The results are presented in Table 5.

Figure 3: Structural Equation Modeling Results for the Proposed Model with Self-report Data



Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

¹. $N = 168$.

². $N = 104$.

³. $N = 85$.

Table 5: Sobel Test Results for Indirect Effects for Self-Report Data

Relationship	Mediator	Indirect Effect
Individual Adaptability – General Adjustment	Cultural Identification	2.29*
Individual Adaptability – Work Adjustment	Cultural Identification	2.26*
Individual Adaptability – Interaction Adjustment	Cultural Identification	2.36*

* $p < .05$.

Specifically, cultural identification mediated the relationship between individuals' adaptability and general ($z = 2.29, p < .05$), work ($z = 2.26, p < .05$), and interaction adjustment ($z = 2.36, p < .05$). Hence, Hypotheses 3a-3c were all supported.

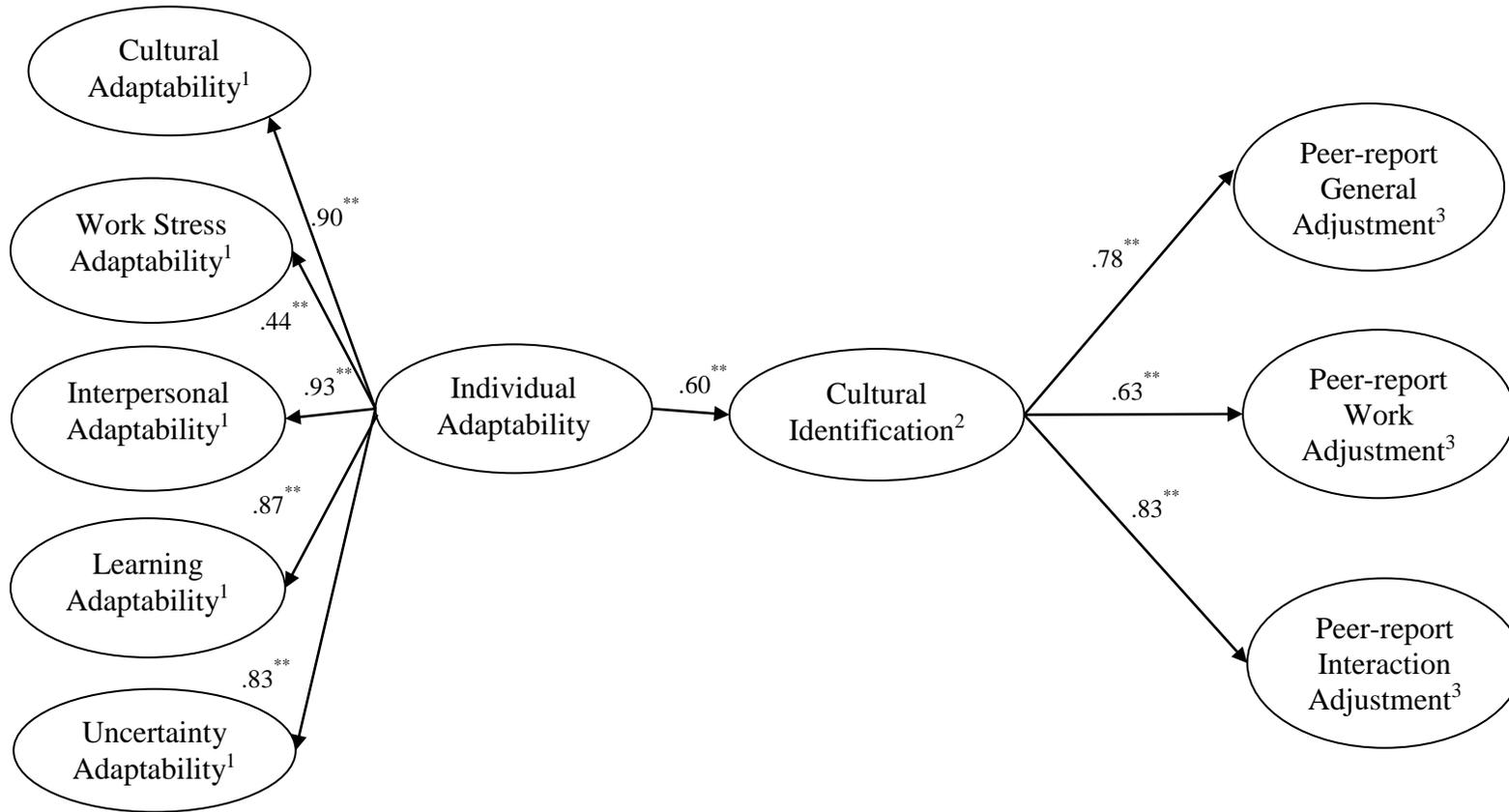
In terms of control variables, openness to experience was negatively associated with general adjustment ($\beta = -.42, p = .05$). Since openness to experience was positively correlated with general adjustment, the negative coefficient may be due to a suppression effect (Conger, 1974). The findings showed that individual adaptability provided unique contributions in predicting cross-cultural adjustment through cultural identification.

Peer-Report Cross-Culture Adjustment Model

In this section, the peer-report cross-cultural adjustment model results are reported. The measurement model fit the data fairly well (Hu & Bentler, 1999): $\chi^2 (df = 298) = 458.35, p < .001$, CFI = .90, and RMSEA = .06. In terms of the structure model, there was no significant difference between the full and partial mediation model ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 1.92, p = .59$), therefore, I focused on my hypothesized model. The model fit reasonably well: $\chi^2 (df = 304) = 619.74, p < .001$, CFI = .88, RMSEA = .07. The significant unstandardized path coefficients related to the hypotheses are presented in Figure 4.

According to the results, individual adaptability was positively associated with cultural identification ($\beta = .60, p < .01$); therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported. Simultaneously, cultural identification was positively associated with general adjustment ($\beta = .78, p < .01$), work adjustment ($\beta = .63, p < .01$), and interaction adjustment ($\beta = .83, p < .01$). Thus, Hypotheses 2a-2c were also supported.

Figure 4: Structural Equation Modeling Results for the Proposed Model with Peer-report Data



Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

¹. $N = 168$.

². $N = 104$.

³. $N = 58$.

The Sobel test (Sobel, 1982) was used again to test the indirect effects, and the results are presented in Table 6. As shown, cultural identification mediated the relationship between individual adaptability and peer-reported general adjustment ($z = 2.33, p < .05$), work adjustment ($z = 2.20, p < .05$), and interaction adjustment ($z = 2.42, p < .05$). Therefore, Hypotheses 3a-3c were supported.

In terms of the control variables, openness to experience was negatively related to cultural identification ($\beta = -.13, p < .01$); it was also related to general adjustment ($\beta = .71, p < .01$), work adjustment ($\beta = .97, p < .01$), and interaction adjustment ($\beta = .84, p < .01$). Proactive personality was positive associated with cultural identification ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) but negatively linked to three facets of adjustment. The pattern of relationships with the control variables is curious, but may be due to the small sample size (only 58 peers completed the peer survey). However, even after controlling for these variables, my hypotheses were still robustly supported.

Overall, the model was supported by both self-report and peer-report data. Both models showed that individual adaptability was positively related to cultural identification, which, in turn, was positively related to three facets of cross-cultural adjustment. In addition, cultural identification mediated the relationship between individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment.

Table 6: Sobel Test Results for Indirect Effects for Peer-report Data

Relationship	Mediator	Indirect Effect
Individual Adaptability – General Adjustment (peer)	Cultural Identification	2.33*
Individual Adaptability – Work Adjustment (peer)	Cultural Identification	2.20*
Individual Adaptability – Interaction Adjustment (peer)	Cultural Identification	2.42*

Note. * $p < .05$.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

In this dissertation, I proposed and tested a process model in which cultural identification serves as a mediating mechanism between individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment. Using longitudinal and peer-report data, the hypothesized model was supported. Individual adaptability shortly after arrival in the U.S. was positively related to self-reported cultural identification six months later, which in turn was positively related to three facets (i.e., general, work, and interaction) of self and peer reported cross-cultural adjustment (survey 3) 6 months after that. Further, cultural identification (survey 2) mediated the relationship between individual adaptability (survey 1) and cross-cultural adjustment (survey 3) assessed both by the expatriate and their peer.

This dissertation makes several contributions to the cross-cultural adjustment literature. First, this study supported the role of culture identification as a mediator during the cross-cultural adjustment process. This addressed the concern that the literature does not pay enough attention to potential mediators (e.g., Gong & Fan, 2006; Kealey, 1989; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Second, this dissertation is the first use of individual adaptability, which was firmly based on the I-ADAPT theory (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006), to predict cross-cultural adjustment. Individual adaptability is a narrower trait than the Big Five traits. Its use addressed Shaffer et al.'s (2006) concern that the cross-cultural adjustment literature has focused too heavily on the Big Five and has ignored narrower traits. Also, of note is that this study also controlled for additional narrow traits (i.e., proactive personality and openness to experience), and found that individual adaptability made unique contributions beyond those narrow traits in predicting cross-cultural adjustment.

Methodologically, I used longitudinal data to test the model, which has been repeatedly

called for in the cross-cultural adjustment literature (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Takeuchi, 2010). Moreover, peer-report adjustment outcome measures were used as well, which is not common in cross-cultural adjustment studies.

Although this dissertation makes several contributions, it also had several limitations which should be addressed in future research. The first limitation is that this study did not take environmental factors into account. Recent studies have suggested the importance of environmental factors such as influence from host country nationals, spouses, and local organizations on expatriates' adjustment (Takeuchi, 2010). Future studies should consider personal factors, environmental factors, and the interactions of the two, which would depict a more complete and accurate picture of expatriates' adjustment in a new culture.

Second, although I found that individual adaptability is an important predictor of cross-cultural adjustment, future studies may consider including several other well-established predictors, such as self-efficacy and goal orientation into the model. Further, future scholars may also want to integrate other potential mediators, such as coping strategy into the model. Combining these variables will help provide a better, more complete understanding of expatriate adjustment.

Third, identification is a multidimensional construct, which may occur at several levels such as the organization, workgroup/unit, and profession (Ashforth et al., 2008). As Fan and Wanous (2008) cogently pointed out, for many expatriates cultural entry is coupled with organizational entry. If so, individual adaptability may facilitate both cultural and organizational identification, which, in turn, should result in better cross-cultural adjustment. With this current sample, organizational identification was less relevant; however, future research using an expatriate sample should consider multiple levels of identification as mediators between

individual adaptability and cross-cultural adjustment.

Finally, given that the current sample was international students studying in a U.S. university, findings might not generalize to other populations such as business expatriates, military, and missionaries. Additionally, the sample size, especially the peer sample size was small. Future research needs to test the theoretical model in other populations and with larger sample sizes.

A growing number of expatriates relocate to another country every year, and they need to adjust well and successfully complete assigned tasks in the host country. My study suggests that individual adaptability should be included as part of the selection battery when selecting personnel for overseas assignments. Human resource professionals should consider providing training to boost new expatriates' individual adaptability as well. For expatriates themselves, they may want to improve their individual adaptability level in order to fit the new environment. Individual adaptability cannot only be applied to the study of expatriates but also the common employee. Today's business world is increasingly dynamic, which necessitates employees being able to adapt to changing demands. Having employees with high individual adaptability will save companies' time and money, especially during the times of change, which is increasingly common.

In addition, having a sense of belongingness to the new culture definitely increases expatriates' cross-cultural adjustment. Therefore, expatriates may want to be more open to experience a new cultural environment, which will benefit themselves as well as the organization. Employers may consider providing opportunities for expatriates to get in touch with local culture and help them identify with the new culture, which will facilitate expatriates' adjustment to new country as well as their new job.

In spite of some limitations, this is the first study that tested the predictive role of individual adaptability on cross-cultural adjustment. Further, this dissertation empirically showed that cultural identification plays a critical role in conveying the effect of individual adaptability on cross-cultural adjustment. I am hopeful that my study will stimulate more research in the cross-cultural adjustment literature.

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Appendix I

Individual Adaptability (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006)

Please rate each item on a 5-point numerical rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

1. I enjoy learning about cultures other than my own.
2. I usually over-react to stressful news.
3. I believe it is important to be flexible in dealing with others.
4. I take responsibility for acquiring new skills.
5. I work well with others from diverse cultures.
6. I tend to be able to read others and understand how they are feeling at any particular moment.
7. I enjoy learning new approaches for conducting work.
8. It is important to me that I respect others' culture.
9. I feel unequipped to deal with too much stress.
10. My insight helps me to work effectively with others.
11. I enjoy the variety and learning experiences that come from working with people of different backgrounds.
12. I am easily rattled when my schedule is too full.
13. I need for things to be "black and white".
14. I feel comfortable interacting with others who have different values and customs.
15. I become frustrated when things are unpredictable.
16. I am able to make effective decisions without all relevant information.
17. I am an open-minded person in dealing with others.
18. I take action to improve work performance deficiencies.
19. I am usually stressed when I have a large workload.
20. I am perceptive of others and use that knowledge in interactions.
21. I often learn new information and skills to stay at the fore front of my profession.
22. I often cry to get angry when I am under a great deal of stress.
23. I often learn new methods to solve problems.
24. I tend to perform best in stable situations and environments.
25. When something unexpected happens, I readily change gears in response.
26. I try to be flexible when dealing with others.
27. I can adapt to changing situations.
28. I train to keep my work skills and knowledge current.
29. I am continually learning new skills for my job.
30. I perform well in uncertain situations.
31. I take responsibility for staying current in my profession.
32. I adapt my behavior to get along with others.
33. I easily respond to changing conditions.
34. I try to learn new skills for my job before they are needed.
35. I can adjust my plans to changing conditions.

Proactive personality (Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999)

Please rate each item on a 5-point numerical rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

1. I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve my life.
2. Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.
3. Nothing is more exciting than seeing my ideas turn into reality.
4. If I see something I don't like, I fix it.
5. No matter what the odds, if I believe in something I will make it happen.
6. I love being a champion for my ideas, even against others' opposition.
7. I excel at identifying opportunities.
8. I am always looking for better ways to do things.
9. If I believe in an idea, no obstacle will prevent me from making it happen.
10. I can spot a good opportunity long before others can.

Openness to experience (Benet-Martinez, & John, 1998)

Please rate each item on a 5-point numerical rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

1. I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas.
2. I see myself as someone who is curious about many different things.
3. I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker.
4. I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.
5. I see myself as someone who is inventive.
6. I see myself as someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences.
7. I see myself as someone who prefers work that is routine.
8. I see myself as someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas.
9. I see myself as someone who has few artistic interests.
10. I see myself as someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature.

Cultural identification (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000)

Please rate each item on a 7-point numerical rating scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

1. I often participate in mainstream American cultural traditions.
2. I would be willing to marry an American.
3. I enjoy social activities with Americans.
4. I am comfortable working with Americans.
5. I enjoy entertainment (e.g., movies, music) from America.
6. I often behave in ways that are "typical American".
7. It is important for me to maintain or develop American cultural practices.
8. I believe in mainstream American values.
9. I enjoy typical American jokes and humor.
10. I am interested in having American friends.

Cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Stephen, 1988)

Please rate each item on a 7-point numerical rating scale (1=not well adjusted at all, 7=very well adjusted).

1. How well adjusted are you to food in the USA?
2. How well adjusted are you to the transportation system in the USA?
3. How well adjusted are you to the weather in the USA?
4. How well adjusted are you to shopping in the USA?
5. How well adjusted are you to the entertainment available in the USA?
6. How well adjusted are you to the living conditions in general in The USA?
7. How well adjustment are you to your schoolwork?
8. How well adjusted are you to the academic requirements here at Auburn University?
9. How well adjusted are you to working with American classmates?
10. How well adjusted are you to your instructors'/professors/ teaching style?
11. How well adjusted are you to the instructional methods in Auburn University?
12. How well adjusted are you to interacting with your professors in academic activities?
13. How well adjusted are you to interpersonal relationships with Americans on a day-to-day basis?
14. How well adjusted are you to being associated with Americans?
15. How well adjusted are you to talking to Americans?
16. How well adjusted are you to social gatherings with Americans?