



# What you do depends on where you are: understanding how domestic and expatriate work requirements depend upon the cultural context

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**Abstract**

To empirically address the importance of the cultural context for successful assignments, we conducted two studies using a large sample of public-sector US professionals working in comparable jobs in 156 different countries. The results provided direct evidence that social and perceptual skill, reasoning ability, and adjustment- and achievement-orientation personality requirements are higher in expatriate assignments, which has implications for pre-departure selection. Also, the results partly supported the hypothesis that expatriates are required to adjust their behavior to be consistent with the local cultural values, which has implications for post-arrival behavioral training.

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**Introduction**

Economic globalization, and the need to operate in locations around the world, has become a fact of organizational life. Typically, international operations of organizations are staffed by a mix of employees from the host country and expatriates from the parent country. Such expatriate assignments pose unique challenges for workers because of differences in such things as language, cultural values, and expectations. These differences are likely to influence the manner in which work is done and the underlying capabilities needed for success, and many scholars have recognized these differences and the importance of preparing workers for foreign assignments (e.g., Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Tung, 1987; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000; van Vianen *et al.*, 2004). However, even though the failure rate for expatriate assignments may not be as high as is often claimed (Harzing, 2002), the rate is still far from ideal (Swaak, 1995; Daniels and Insch, 1998; Black *et al.*, 1999; Prudential Relocation International, 1999; Osland, 2000). This is particularly problematic given the costs of expatriate failure, in terms of both individual career outcomes and direct financial costs to the organization (Mervosh and McClenahan, 1997; Black *et al.*, 1999; Windham International, 2000).

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Consequently, organizations should be highly motivated to prepare expatriates for their new assignments in an attempt to minimize failures. Such preparation typically occurs in two distinct stages (Selmer *et al.*, 1998). First, in the pre-departure stage, organizations select and train individuals for expatriate assignments (Aycan, 1997). Second, in the post-arrival stage, when expatriate workers begin to interact with host country nationals (HCNs) and adjust their behaviors to the host country's cultural norms and values for better performance (Shay and Baack, 2004), behavioral cross-training can be implemented to ensure that expatriates behave in culturally appropriate ways. Selmer (2001) has argued that behavioral training is more effective in the post-arrival stage than in the pre-departure stage because expatriates tend to be more motivated to learn once they are in their assignment. Although the goal of both pre-departure and post-arrival preparation is to help expatriates adapt to their new working environments, some have suggested that organizations often over-emphasize the technical requirements of work, particularly when the reason for assignment is subsidiary control (Shay and Baack, 2004). This results in a focus on performing the work itself, when adapting to the social and cultural aspects of the work environment may be more important (Tung, 1987; Dunbar, 1992).

Therefore, additional research is needed that focuses on the cultural context and the implications the cultural context might have for both pre-departure and post-arrival preparation. We conducted two distinct but related studies to add to our understanding of expatriate work. In the first study we suggest that, because expatriate jobs are performed in a different cultural context, they are likely to have a different profile of skill, ability, and personality requirements from that of domestic jobs. We examined differences in worker requirements between US domestic and expatriate jobs as well as how language differences in the host nation might further affect worker requirements. Although some have suggested that cross-cultural skills, abilities, and personality characteristics are important for expatriate adjustment (e.g., Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Caligiuri, 2000), no studies have actually measured these worker requirements and then matched them to a comparable domestic sample. This study represents the first attempt to empirically describe how requirements differ between domestic and

international work. If there are differences in underlying worker requirements, this has clear implications for pre-departure selection.

In the second study, we suggest that the behavioral requirements of work will be related to a host nation's cultural values. Interestingly, there have been no empirical studies that actually test whether behavioral requirements systematically vary with cultural values. We therefore, explicitly test a fundamental assumption of the expatriate literature, namely, that expatriates need to adjust to a new cultural environment by adapting their behavior to fit the host country's cultural norms and values (Brewster, 1995). By providing an empirical test of the relationship between work behavior and culture, we hope to examine some of the basic assumptions of the expatriate literature, as well as highlight some of the specific behavior-cultural value linkages to enable enhanced post-arrival training.

We examine these issues in an international government organization where there is a clear requirement to work internationally. As a result of this, it is important to recognize that workers' expectations about and desire to work abroad are likely to be different from those working for multinational corporations (MNCs) without such a requirement. Workers in such a career will have a desire to work internationally, and deliberately choose just such a career. In addition, these expatriates are likely to have better sociocultural adjustment, given the self-selection that is likely to occur when the expatriate assignments are initiated, at least in part, by the individual (Sargent, 2002). Although we shall return to a discussion of the generalizability of our results to MNCs, it is important to recognize potential boundary conditions of the current sample.

### **Study 1: Differences in expatriate worker requirements**

Researchers have argued that inadequate adjustment to the new culture is a primary cause of high expatriate failure rates and low work performance (McEvoy and Parker, 1995; Kraimer *et al.*, 2001). Toward that end, much of the expatriate literature has focused on the factors that impact on adjustment, such as expatriate personality (Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997, 1999; Caligiuri, 2000), previous overseas experience (Black, 1988; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2005), pre-departure training (Black and Mendenhall, 1990), and non-work factors (Black and Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi *et al.*, 2002). Yet there

have been few empirical studies examining how underlying skill, ability, and personality requirements might be different in expatriate work in order to adjust to culturally different situations (Hechanova *et al.*, 2003).

Scholars have suggested that expatriate work has different skill, ability, and personality requirements from domestic work because of the need to adapt to cultural differences. In particular, in reviewing the cross-culture adjustment literature, Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) and Black and Mendenhall (1990) suggest that there are three critical dimensions for expatriate adjustment:

- the relationship dimension;
- the perceptual dimension; and
- the self dimension.

The *relationship dimension* refers to skills related to the fostering of relationships with host nationals. For successful expatriate adjustment, it is essential to develop good relationships with HCNs (Hechanova *et al.*, 2003). By maintaining proper relationships with HCNs, expatriate workers are able to interact with them appropriately, to overcome problems, and to perform assignments effectively. Cui *et al.* (1998) found significant relationships between communication competence, cultural empathy, social interaction, and cross-cultural adaptation. Arvey *et al.* (1991) suggested that relationship dimensions such as cultural empathy and interpersonal skills become important when dealing with cultural differences. Finally, in a meta-analytic review, Hechanova *et al.* (2003) found that better interpersonal skills were positively related to expatriates' adjustment to the working and non-working environment in host countries.

Although these studies do not compare skill requirements between expatriate and domestic workers, they do imply that expatriates need to have strong social skills so they can successfully adapt to the local culture and work through any cultural differences. This facilitates their adjustment to the new culture and promotes positive relationships with HCNs. Given the importance of social interaction and relationship development for cross-cultural adjustment, expatriate work will have higher social skill requirements than domestic work.

**Hypothesis 1:** The work demands for social skills will be higher in expatriate than in domestic assignments.

Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) *perception dimension* refers to skills related to the correct attribution and interpretation of host nationals' behaviors. Difficulties may arise when expatriates interact with HCNs who have different culturally based behaviors and beliefs. As expatriates' interpretations of HCNs' behavior are based on their own cultural beliefs, incorrect attributions or interpretations are likely to be made about HCNs' behaviors (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). Furthermore, to reduce uncertainty in interpersonal relationships in an intercultural context, it is very important for expatriates to properly interpret HCNs' behaviors (Oddou and Mendenhall, 1984). For instance, Spreitzer *et al.* (1997) showed that sensitivity to cultural differences was significantly related to job performance. Also, Yiu and Saner (2000) suggested that perceptual characteristics of expatriate managers might influence their adaptation to new settings.

Although perceptual skill does not imply any direct understanding of cultural differences, it does provide the basis for learning about those cultural differences once one is in an international setting. In other words, expatriate workers need these skills to correctly interpret HCNs' behavior so they can reduce uncertainty in interpersonal relations, interact efficiently with HCNs, and perform their jobs effectively. Thus, expatriate work will have higher perceptual skill requirements than domestic work because of the culturally different contexts of international work.

**Hypothesis 2:** The work demands for perceptual skills will be higher in expatriate than domestic assignments.

Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) *self dimension* refers to the characteristics related to self-confidence and tolerance of stress, which are closely related to individuals' abilities and personality characteristics. This includes confidence in one's ability to deal effectively with foreigners and new surroundings (Black *et al.*, 1999) as well as resistance to stress resulting from uncertainty and anxiety about unfamiliar situations (Chao and Sun, 1997). For example, using a longitudinal design, Anderzen and Arnetz (1999) showed that expatriates experienced increased psychosocial stress when compared with controls.

The stress literature has identified cognitive abilities as particularly important in the stress-coping process (Payne, 1994). For example, several

studies have found a positive relationship between cognitive failure (failures of memory, reasoning, and perception in everyday life) and stress susceptibility (Mahoney *et al.*, 1998; Matthews and Wells, 1988). In addition, it has been shown that problem-solving ability is negatively related to stress level (Priester and Clum, 1993; Fraser and Tucker, 1997). In a similar vein, uncertainty can be caused by an individual's inability to adequately structure or categorize information (Budner, 1962). In turn, such perceived uncertainty may lead to intolerance of anomalies and incongruities and a strong need for explanation of cause-and-effect relationships (Bonaiuto *et al.*, 1992). Thus, these kinds of reasoning ability would be a particularly important set of cognitive abilities for expatriate work. This suggests that expatriate work will have higher reasoning ability requirements than domestic work because of the stress, uncertainty, and anxiety associated with unfamiliar situations.

**Hypothesis 3:** The work demands for reasoning abilities will be higher in expatriate than domestic assignments.

In terms of personality, several scholars have found that some personality characteristics are significantly related to expatriates' success. In particular, Caligiuri (2000) found that emotional stability was negatively related to the expatriates' desire to terminate their assignments. In addition, Harrison *et al.* (1996) found that expatriates high in self-efficacy and self-monitoring displayed greater adjustment. Also, Arthur and Bennett (1995) found that flexibility and motivation ranked second and third in importance for expatriate success after family situation. Ones and Viswesvaran (1999) found that conscientiousness was perceived as the most important personality factor for expatriate success. Finally, Aycan (1997) argued that such things as willingness and commitment might make the adjustment less difficult.

Based on this personality research, we suggest that success in expatriate work requires greater adjustment and achievement orientation. Adjustment orientation is similar to the concept of emotional stability but broader in that it includes flexibility as well as such traits as self-control and stress tolerance. Expatriate work involves greater adjustment-related requirements than domestic work because of the need to be open to and tolerant of the cultural differences to enable better adjustment to the culturally different environment. Also,

higher levels of stress and uncertainty associated with working abroad increase the adjustment-orientation personality requirements. In addition, to overcome the temptation to leave the expatriate assignment early owing to the difficulties associated with working in an unfamiliar and stressful environment, expatriate work has higher achievement-orientation personality requirements. Otherwise, expatriates might simply give up when faced with adjusting to a difficult work environment. Thus, because of the degree of persistence needed when working abroad, expatriate work has more achievement orientation requirements, such as effort, persistence in the face of obstacles, and initiative.

**Hypothesis 4:** The work demands for adjustment-orientation personality will be higher in expatriate than in domestic assignments.

**Hypothesis 5:** The work demands for achievement-orientation personality will be higher in expatriate than domestic assignments.

One important aspect of a cultural context is the language that is spoken. As expatriates cannot ignore language differences between their home and host nations, language differences may have a critical impact on their adjustment to their foreign assignment (Shaffer *et al.*, 1999). Some US expatriates may work in English-speaking countries whereas others may work in non-English-speaking countries. Such language differences may require more of the aforementioned skill, ability, and personality requirements because of the heightened uncertainty, anxiety, and challenge associated with working in an environment where a foreign language is spoken. For instance, because language is an essential communication medium, expatriates may need more social skills in non-English-speaking countries than in English-speaking countries so they can develop favorable relationships with HCNs via social interactions. Furthermore, if the host nation's language is different from the expatriates' home language, they need to be more adjustment oriented than those assigned to English-speaking countries to deal with more stress and uncertainty.

**Hypothesis 6:** The work demands for social and perceptual skills, reasoning ability, and adjustment- and achievement-orientation personality will be higher in non-English-speaking countries than in English-speaking countries.

**Method**

**Sample**

The sample consisted of 1,312 mid-career professional employees in an international agency of the US government. All employees are expected to spend approximately two-thirds of their tenure in international assignments. All assignments (either international or in the US) typically lasted 3 years. People rotated from one international assignment to another, from one domestic assignment to another, and between international and domestic assignments. The assignments were based on a joint consideration of organizational needs and employee interests. For example, if there was an opening in Korea, the organization would seek individuals who might have an interest in such an assignment. It is important to realize, however, that if there were no interested individuals, or if the interested individual did not have the requisite skills required for the assignment, the organization would simply assign the most appropriate employee to the position.

The average tenure of the sample was 14 years. Given this level of organizational experience, all respondents have been on multiple expatriate assignments, as well as working domestically, with most of the sample having a similar amount of expatriate experience (given their similar career stage).

All expatriates received extensive language training prior to departure. The extent of this training varied depending on (1) the difficulty of the host country language (e.g., learning Chinese is more difficult than learning Spanish, thus requiring more training for the typical employee) and (2) an employee’s level of prior proficiency with the host country language. There was wide variability in level of prior language proficiency, which was reflected in the amount of language training received. The language training typically ranged from 6 months to 2 years. In addition to this training, employees received cultural awareness

training, as well as detailed training on the culture, political issues, social unrest, risks, economy, and recent events about the host nation.

These employees were working in five different career specialties in 156 different countries, including the US. The major duties of each of the five specialties are as follows. Administrative positions involved overseeing procurement of goods and services, managing financial operations, and negotiating and monitoring contracts with various external groups. Public relations positions involved assisting US citizens, interacting with foreign government officials and members of the public, and processing official documents. Economic analyst positions involved assisting US business representatives and negotiating treaties and other agreements. Political analyst positions involved monitoring, developing, and implementing US policies and strategies. Finally, multifunctional positions represented a combination of the other four positions. These five specialties can be thought of as five distinctly different jobs, with unique tasks and duties (although multifunctional positions simply represent a unique combination of tasks and duties performed in the other specialties). Based on where the respondents were working at the time of the survey (which indicated that they should respond with respect to their current position, not past positions), they were classified as an expatriate or a domestic worker. Table 1 reports the number of respondents for each specialty in domestic and international positions.

Employees received surveys asking about the skill, ability, and personality requirements of work. Whereas all respondents received skill requirement surveys (as described below), a subset of this group also received either the ability or personality requirements surveys because of survey length concerns (the different sample sizes are noted below). Usable surveys were returned by 64% of the employees. Of the respondents, 905 were male (69%) and 407 female (31%); 1,076 were Caucasian (82%) and 236 were minorities (18%). Although

**Table 1** Number of respondents for each position

Location	Career specialty					Total
	Administrative positions	Public relations positions	Economic analyst positions	Political analyst positions	Multifunctional positions	
Domestic	88	30	72	181	31	402
Overseas	256	185	158	143	168	910
Total	344	215	230	324	199	1,312



some aspects of these jobs might vary from location to location, they have common job descriptions in the agency's operations manual. Therefore, the jobs held by these individuals (within a career specialty) are assumed to be functionally equivalent.

### Measures

For the survey, job analysis consultants along with organizational representatives and subject matter experts chose to use skill, ability, and work style surveys from the Occupational Information Network (O\*NET). O\*NET contains a variety of domains that describe the world of work, and which were designed to be applicable to all jobs (Peterson *et al.*, 2001). The scales used in the present research were selected from O\*NET because they appropriately operationalized the hypotheses developed earlier. The scales used were identical to the scales outlined in Peterson *et al.* (1999) except where noted.

*Skill requirements:* The 1,312 mid-career workers rated the level of skills required in their current job on seven-point behaviorally anchored rating scales, where anchors were provided for the high, medium, and low points of the scale. Social skills were defined as the skills needed for developing and maintaining good interpersonal relationships. The *social skill* measure comprised five related skills:

- coordination (adjusting actions in relation to others' actions);
- persuasion (persuading others to approach things differently);
- negotiation (bringing others together and trying to reconcile differences);
- instructing (teaching others how to do something); and
- service orientation (actively looking for ways to help people).

Internal consistency reliability was 0.77.

Perceptual skills were defined as the skills for correctly perceiving reasons for and causes of others' behavior in order to make correct attributions. The *perceptual skill* measure comprised three related skills:

- active listening (listening to what other people are saying and asking questions as appropriate);
- monitoring (assessing how well one is doing when learning or doing something); and
- social perceptiveness (being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react the way they do).

This measure was created by taking the social perceptiveness item from the social skills domain, and the active listening and monitoring items from the process skills domain. Internal consistency reliability was 0.69.

*Ability requirements:* The level of reasoning abilities required in the job was rated by 420 employees on seven-point behaviorally anchored rating scales, where anchors were provided for the high and low points of the scale. Reasoning ability was defined as an individual's capability for making assumptions, interpreting, and making sense of situations or causal relationships. The *reasoning ability* measure was composed of seven related abilities:

- fluency of ideas (coming up with a number of ideas about a given topic);
- originality (coming up with unusual and clever ideas);
- problem sensitivity (recognizing there is a problem);
- deductive reasoning (applying general rules to specific problems to come up with logical answers);
- inductive reasoning (combining separate pieces of information to form general conclusion);
- information ordering (following a given rule to arrange things in a certain order); and
- category flexibility (the ability to generate rules so that each rule tells how to group a set of things in a different way).

Internal consistency reliability was 0.85.

*Personality requirements:* The level of personality characteristics required in the job was rated by 468 employees on seven-point behaviorally anchored rating scales, where anchors were provided for the high, medium, and low points of the scale. Adjustment orientation was defined as being calm, composed, and rational even when confronted with unfamiliar and stressful situations (Borman *et al.*, 1999). The *adjustment orientation* measure consisted of three related personality requirements:

- self-control (maintaining composure, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behavior);
- stress tolerance (dealing with high stress situations); and
- flexibility (being open to change).

Internal consistency reliability was 0.78.

Achievement orientation was defined as valuing working hard, persisting in the face of obstacles, and wanting to get ahead (Borman *et al.*, 1999). The *achievement orientation* measure was composed of three related characteristics:

- achievement/effort (maintaining challenging goals and exerting effort);
- persistence (persistence in the face of obstacles on the job); and
- initiative (willingness to take on job responsibilities and challenges).

Internal consistency reliability was 0.82.

*Confirmatory factor analyses:* Given the intercorrelations among the skill and personality requirement measures (see Table 2), a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) were conducted to examine discriminant validity. These analyses were conducted separately for each type of measure because different subsets of respondents provided the measures. We developed a series of one-factor and two-factor models standing in nested sequence (depending on the hypothesized factor structure of the measures) and conducted chi-square difference tests to determine which model best fitted the data (Kelloway, 1998; Netemeyer *et al.*, 1990). We found that the hypothesized factor structures provided a better fit to the data than any reduced model. For example, a two-factor (social and perceptual) model of skill requirements provided a better fit than a one-factor model ( $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}(1)=105.03$ ). A two-factor (achievement orientation and adjustment) personality requirements model provided a better fit than a one-factor model ( $\chi^2_{\text{difference}}(1)=36.05$ ).

The hypothesized factors were consistent with O\*NET, and all loadings were highly significant ( $t>12.39$ ). Notwithstanding the intercorrelations among the measures, these CFAs indicate that the measures should not be combined. The full results of the CFAs are available on request.

**Task survey data**

Even though the domestic and international jobs shared common job descriptions, it was still possible that the tasks performed in the US might differ from those performed in international jobs. As some of our hypotheses involve comparing domestic and international jobs, it was necessary to show that the jobs are largely the same. This was essential because, if the tasks performed in the job were the same, any observed differences in the requirements as measured by the skill, ability, and work style surveys could be attributed to differences in working context.

In order to examine differences in domestic and expatriate jobs, existing task surveys were examined for each of the five career specialties. These surveys included such dimensions as ‘Evaluating requests for good and services’, ‘Formulating and evaluating policies and procedures’, ‘Compiling and analyzing data or information’, ‘Evaluating consistency with US policies’, and so on. Depending on specialty, each task survey contained between 42 and 52 different task dimensions, with between three and 26 tasks per dimension. Incumbents were instructed to rate the time spent performing the tasks in their current position on a five-point response scale, where 1=much less time than most tasks and 5=much more time than most duties. Thus, incumbents made between 246 and

**Table 2** Descriptive statistics and correlations for worker requirements, behavioral requirements, and cultural values

Variable	N	Mean <sup>a</sup>	s.d. <sup>a</sup>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Mean <sup>b</sup>	s.d. <sup>b</sup>
1. Social skills	1,310	4.97	0.91	—							0.05	-0.05	5.11	0.33
2. Perceptual skills	1,312	5.40	0.85	0.72**	—						0.03	-0.07	5.54	0.30
3. Reasoning ability	420	4.89	0.88	0.69**	0.67**	—					-0.11	-0.04	4.99	0.39
4. Adjustment orientation	468	5.86	1.00	0.46**	0.43**	—	—				0.00	-0.01	5.97	0.59
5. Achievement orientation	468	5.84	1.01	0.57**	0.54**	—	0.61**	—			-0.09	0.04	6.03	0.52
6. Relationship-oriented behavior	1,301	4.05	0.94	0.43**	0.33**	0.32**	0.36**	0.31**	—		-0.36**	0.24*	4.26	0.38
7. Administrative behavior	1,290	4.51	1.12	0.27**	0.18*	0.16**	0.21**	0.14**	0.56**	—	-0.18	0.22	4.75	0.51
8. Individualism–collectivism	50	—	—								—	-0.68**	43.98	25.78
9. Power distance	50	—	—									—	56.50	22.41

<sup>a</sup>Individual level.

<sup>b</sup>Nation level.

\* $P<0.05$  (one-tailed); \*\* $P<-0.01$  (one-tailed).

Note: Individual-level correlations below the diagonal. Nation-level correlations above the diagonal.

319 ratings of the time spent performing the tasks in their specialty. Examining differences at such a fine-grained task level represents the strongest possible test for differences because it offers the most decomposed view of the jobs. Internal consistency reliability ranged from 0.84 to 0.91 across career specialties for both domestic and international samples.

### Analysis strategy

To test differences between domestic and expatriate work, we conducted dummy-coded multiple regression analyses (Cohen and Cohen, 1983). To control for potential differences across the five career specialties, four dummy-coded variables were entered in the first step of the regression equation. Then we entered the dummy-coded work location (domestic *vs* expatriate or English-speaking *vs* non-English-speaking expatriate assignment) variable to test the hypotheses.

## Results

### Potential differences in domestic and international jobs

As noted, prior to examining the hypotheses it is necessary to examine the extent to which domestic and international jobs are the same. To do this, we conducted a series of analyses using the task survey data in order to determine whether there were mean differences in time-spent ratings between domestic and international jobs. As there are literally hundreds of comparisons (42–52 task dimensions across five specialties), we have summarized the results of these analyses. An average of 13% of the task scales was significantly different between domestic and international positions across the five different career specialties. Although this is greater than what one would expect by chance alone, the fact that, on average, for 87% of the tasks there are no significant differences

suggests the jobs are much more similar than different.

To gain a greater understanding of the significant differences, we examined the content of the task scales to check whether the differences would have any effect on the interpretation of our hypotheses. For example, ‘Using computers’ and ‘Compiling and analyzing data or information’ were significantly different, yet these two job aspects do not appear to depend on the job context and would not appear to be related to the skill, ability, or personality requirements investigated here because they are not affected by cultural unfamiliarity. Similarly, the significantly different task categories ‘Communication with department and US government agencies’ and ‘Seeking expert/legal advice’ concerned internal activities rather than interactions with HCNs. Hence these activities would require little adjustment on the part of expatriates, and would not be responsible for observed differences in skill, ability, or personality requirements. Overall, this suggests that the small task differences found are not likely to substantively influence our hypotheses.

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics and correlations between all the variables are reported in Table 2. The skills and abilities are highly related, and adjustment and achievement orientation are moderately related to the skills and abilities.

### Hypothesis testing

The first five hypotheses concern whether expatriate jobs have higher social skill (Hypothesis 1), perceptual skill (Hypothesis 2), reasoning ability (Hypothesis 3), adjustment orientation (Hypothesis 4), and achievement orientation (Hypothesis 5) requirements than domestic jobs. Table 3 summarizes the results. For Hypotheses 1 and 2,

**Table 3** Comparison between domestic and international locations

Variable	N	Domestic		Expatriate		Mean difference
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	
Social skills	1,310	4.76	0.94	5.06	0.88	0.30**
Perceptual skills	1,312	5.14	0.91	5.51	0.79	0.37**
Reasoning ability	420	4.72	0.92	5.00	0.85	0.28**
Adjustment orientation	469	5.61	1.05	5.97	0.96	0.36**
Achievement orientation	469	5.61	1.12	5.94	0.94	0.33**

\*\* $P < 0.01$ . (two-tailed).

**Table 4** Comparison between English-speaking and non-English-speaking expatriate locations

Variable	N	Non-US English-speaking		Non-US non-English-speaking		Mean difference
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	
Social skills	913	5.15	0.88	5.04	0.82	-0.11
Perceptual skills	913	5.47	0.79	5.52	0.70	0.05
Reasoning ability	268	4.93	0.85	5.03	0.81	0.10
Adjustment orientation	334	5.63	0.96	6.01	1.27	0.38*
Achievement orientation	334	5.76	0.94	5.95	1.12	0.19

\* $P < 0.05$  (two-tailed).

expatriates reported higher social skill ( $\Delta R^2=0.03$ ,  $\beta=0.18$ ,  $t(1,310)=6.03$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) and perceptual skill requirements ( $\Delta R^2=0.05$ ,  $\beta=0.22$ ,  $t(1,312)=7.88$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) than domestic workers. For Hypothesis 3, expatriates reported higher reasoning ability requirements ( $\Delta R^2=0.02$ ,  $\beta=0.14$ ,  $t(420)=2.82$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Finally, for Hypotheses 4 and 5 expatriates reported higher adjustment orientation ( $\Delta R^2=0.03$ ,  $\beta=0.21$ ,  $t(468)=4.06$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ) and achievement orientation requirements ( $\Delta R^2=0.03$ ,  $\beta=0.20$ ,  $t(468)=3.96$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). These results support the hypothesis that these worker requirements are higher in expatriate jobs than in domestic jobs.

Hypothesis 6 concerns whether expatriate jobs in non-English-speaking countries have higher requirements than those in English-speaking countries. Inspection of Table 4 reveals the level of support for this hypothesis. Although there was an increasing trend across all the requirements except social skills, only adjustment orientation was significantly higher in non-English-speaking countries ( $\beta=0.17$ ,  $t(334)=2.04$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ). This provides limited support for the hypothesis that these worker requirements are increased because of the language requirements of work. It appears that something else about the cultural context is responsible for the differences.

**Real differences or bias in self-reports?**

These results indicate that expatriates report consistently higher skill, ability, and personality requirements than comparable domestic US workers. As the requirements are self-report measures and the results are consistently higher, however, one question that may arise is whether this reflects real differences in requirements or simply some sort of inflation in job analysis responding (see Morgeson and Campion, 1997, for a discussion of inflation). In essence, the expatriates might have described their jobs as more difficult because of

impression management. To investigate this issue, we examined several other skill, ability, and personality requirements that are *not* expected to evidence any differences between domestic and expatriate respondents. Such differential predictions will rule out potential bias explanations.

Two skills not expected to differ were content skills (capabilities that allow people to acquire information and convey this information to others) and technical skills (capabilities for working with technology), because they are unlikely to be related to social and cultural adjustment (Tung, 1987). There were no significant differences between domestic and expatriate workers in terms of content ( $\beta=0.05$ ,  $t(312)=1.68$ , NS) or technical skills ( $\beta=0.03$ ,  $t(172)=0.85$ , NS). In terms of ability requirements, there were no differences in psychomotor abilities ( $\beta=0.02$ ,  $t(325)=0.30$ , NS) or perceptual abilities (speed and flexibility of closure, and perceptual speed;  $\beta=0.03$ ,  $t(412)=0.57$ , NS). These results suggest that expatriate responses were not subject to systematic inflation.

**Supplemental analyses**

In making comparisons between domestic and international work, we have dichotomized the nation-level data. In so doing, it is possible that some important information about differences between nations has been lost, such as the degree of cultural similarity to the US. This would serve to reduce the amount of variance explained by cultural differences. As of this, we have conducted supplemental analyses to examine nation-level differences. These analyses were conducted on the social and perceptual skills only, because these were the only worker requirement data available across the entire sample.

Examining the amount of variance explained by nation-level differences is the most fine-grained analysis of culture differences in skill requirements, and will yield an upper estimate on the amount of



variance attributable to national culture. The regression analyses showed that, when examining social and perceptual skills at the nation level of analysis (utilizing a series of dummy variable codes for nation; Cohen and Cohen, 1983), considerably more variance was explained than was explained in the domestic and international analyses previously conducted (see above;  $\Delta R^2=0.15$ ,  $P<0.05$ , and  $\Delta R^2=0.17$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). The change in  $R^2$  reflects the increase in  $R^2$  when dummy variables for nations were entered after the career specialty dummy variables. Although virtually every country showed higher skill requirements than the US, some countries were particularly high. For example, the mean difference for social and perceptual skill requirements between Kuwait and the US was 0.92 and 0.79, respectively. The mean difference was even higher between Bulgaria and the US, with differences of 1.24 and 1.19 for social and perceptual skill requirements, respectively. These differences are much greater than those found with the domestic vs international dichotomy.

### Discussion

The results for comparisons between US domestic and expatriate work reveal that expatriate jobs required higher social and perceptual skill, reasoning ability, and adjustment and achievement orientation personality than domestic jobs. Language differences generally did not account for these domestic–expatriate requirement differences.

Several studies have speculated about the relationship between various worker requirements and expatriate adjustment (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Arvey *et al.*, 1991; Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Harrison *et al.*, 1996; Cui *et al.*, 1998; Ones and Viswesvaran, 1999; Caligiuri, 2000). Few studies have actually measured these requirements and then matched them to a comparable group working domestically. In other words, although previous research has found relationships between skill, ability, and personality characteristics and expatriates' adjustment or performance, it has not established whether those characteristics are *more important* for expatriate workers than for domestic workers – in part, because these characteristics are likely to be important for domestic workers as well. By empirically testing differences in requirements between domestic and international work of the same type in the same organization, we can conclude that these skill, ability, and personality requirements are greater for expatriate than for domestic workers.

Thus, our findings imply that expatriate jobs have higher worker requirements in order to adapt to the new and unfamiliar cultural settings.

Interestingly, the results highlighted in Tables 3 and 4 suggest that the increase in social and perceptual skill requirements was due largely to changes in cultural context as opposed to language differences, because the effect of language differences on English vs non-English expatriate requirements was minimal. However, language differences had a significant influence on the adjustment orientation requirements, suggesting that there may be increasingly higher levels of adaptation needed as one moves from a domestic assignment to an English-speaking expatriate assignment to a non-English-speaking expatriate assignment. These results have implications for the role of language differences in expatriate requirements (cf. Shaffer *et al.*, 1999) in that the requirements for the relationship and the perceptual dimensions of expatriate adjustment (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985) may be less affected by language differences than those for the self dimension. This was an unexpected finding, and further research is required to better understand how language differences affect expatriate work requirements.

### Study 2: Relationships between behavioral requirements and cultural values

When an expatriate works within a local culture, he or she needs to exhibit appropriate work behaviors to be effective in that particular cultural context. Thus, Study 2 is designed to examine the relationships between cultural values and specific work behavior requirements. The skill, ability, and personality requirements examined in Study 1 focused on the underlying worker requirements needed to perform in a particular job. Behavioral requirements, on the other hand, reflect the variety of behaviors that need to be performed in a particular job. Although there are natural connections between worker and behavioral requirements, they reflect fundamentally different phenomena. A key difference is that most worker requirements are relatively difficult (if not impossible) to change in the short run (because they reflect stable attributes that take a long time to develop), whereas behaviors are easier to modify or adapt to a given context. In other words, it might be difficult or impossible for expatriates to enhance their perceptual and social skills, reasoning abilities, and personality to better adjust to the local culture within the expatriate period. Yet, through vicarious

learning processes (e.g., behavioral training) and direct experience, they may be able to relatively quickly adjust their behaviors to host countries' cultural values to better interact with HCNs and to better fulfill their expatriate assignments.

Thus, the skill, ability, and personality requirements *vs* behavioral requirements should be considered in different stages. During the pre-departure stage, organizations focus on selecting individuals who are more likely to be successful in expatriate assignments with the required skills, abilities and personality. Once the individuals are chosen, however, organizations focus their attention on training expatriates to successfully adapt to the particular cultural context in which they will find themselves.

In Study 2, we therefore, examined another key, but often untested, assumption of the expatriate literature: that expatriates need to adjust their behavior to be congruent with the host culture (Brewster, 1995). This would suggest that the behavioral requirements of expatriate work will be consistent with the cultural context because cultural values are likely to influence the appropriateness of different work behaviors. For example, Vance and Paik (2002) found that workforces from different countries had different perceptions of behaviors positively and negatively affecting work performance. If adjustments are necessary, it would have significant implications for the preparation for expatriates, especially post-arrival behavioral training.

A variety of cross-cultural leadership studies have investigated the interaction between managerial behavior and cultural values (Smith *et al.*, 1992; Dorfman, 1996; Bass, 1997; Dorfman *et al.*, 1997; Jung and Avolio, 1999). This research has tended to examine the generalizability of leadership behaviors across cultures, however, rather than focusing on the relationship between expatriate behavior and cultural values. Put another way, this research has focused on the consistency of managerial behaviors across cultural contexts, whereas the focus of the present research is on how expatriate behaviors might vary according to the cultural context.

The mechanisms through which expatriate workers are influenced by cultural values can be explained from both the value theory of culture (Hofstede, 1980; House *et al.*, 1997) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) perspectives. According to the value theory of culture (Hofstede, 1980, 1993), cultural values impact on individual values, and individuals' behaviors depend on the

cultural values to which they are exposed. To fit in and perform their assignment effectively, expatriates will need to behave in ways that are consistent with prevailing cultural values. This is particularly important, because expatriates typically work with a large number of HCNs (such as supervising a large group of employees), and working well with these HCNs is often essential to job success (Black, 1988; Gregersen and Black, 1990).

In addition, social learning theory suggests that individuals can learn vicariously, and future behaviors are guided by vicarious learning (Bandura, 1977). For example, Weiss (1977) showed how other people in the social context conditioned, in part, first-level supervisors' work behavior. This suggests that expatriates could learn culturally appropriate and inappropriate behaviors by observing HCNs' culturally successful behaviors. In fact, this may be one of the most important influences on behavior, given the oftentimes extensive interaction between expatriates and HCNs. This experience can serve to shape behavior over time, thereby altering work behavior to be congruent with the prevailing cultural values. In other words, as they socially learn and develop cognitive maps appropriate to the local cultural values, expatriates' behaviors will tend to follow the values emphasized by the HCNs.

Given the potential influence of culture on expatriate behavior, it is important to outline exactly how specific values affect work behavior. Perhaps the most commonly investigated cultural value is individualism–collectivism (Triandis *et al.*, 1988; Earley, 1989, 1993). Individualism–collectivism is the degree to which people define themselves as individuals or as members of groups (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis *et al.*, 1988). Individualist cultures assume the importance of 'personal and family life' and the unimportance of 'cooperative colleagues' and 'good working relations' (Singh, 1990). Cultures high in individualism tend to emphasize calculative involvement with companies, loose ties between co-workers, self-orientation, autonomy, individual initiative, and achievement (Hofstede, 1980). By contrast, collectivist cultures emphasize interdependence, group embeddedness, in-group harmony, and personalized relationships (Clugston *et al.*, 2000). This suggests that individualistic cultures will emphasize more self-oriented behaviors, whereas collectivistic cultures will focus on behaviors centered on interpersonal relationships. Consequently, expatriates working in countries high in collectivism will

focus more on relationship development with others, and show more relationship-oriented behaviors such as coordinating team members, encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among team members, and coaching and developing others.

**Hypothesis 1:** Expatriates working in countries high in collectivism will be required to perform more relationship-oriented behaviors than those in countries high in individualism.

Another cultural dimension likely to be related to expatriate behavioral requirements is power distance. Power distance is 'the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally' (Hofstede, 1988: 10). Power inequality is more accepted in countries high in power distance than in those low in power distance (Hofstede, 2001). With 180 managers in five countries, Pavett and Morris (1995) found a negative relationship between power distance and worker participation. In addition, Nasierowski and Mikula (1998) suggest that close supervision is more accepted (or tolerated) by subordinates in countries high in power distance than by those low in power distance. This suggests that HCNs in cultures high in power distance would expect greater administrative behavior, which would include managing and directing activities, general administrative activities, and monitoring and controlling resources.

**Hypothesis 2:** Expatriates working in countries high in power distance will be required to perform more administrative behaviors than those working in countries low in power distance.

## Method

### Sample

The sample was a subset of the full sample used in Study 1. Only respondents working in countries that could be matched to the cultural value data were used ( $N=948$ ). Table 5 reports the number of respondents in each nation or region, using Hofstede's (1988) groupings. The average number of respondents per nation was 19 if the US is included, 11 if the US is not included. Although a handful of the countries had a small number of respondents, this should not affect the representativeness of the data for two reasons. First, respondents acted as informants about their job aspects, as

**Table 5** Number of respondents per nation

<i>Nation</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Nation</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
Argentina	5	Malaysia	6
Australia	14	Mexico	31
Austria	5	Netherlands	4
Belgium	16	New Zealand	2
Brazil	12	Norway	5
Canada	28	Pakistan	6
Colombia	5	Panama	5
Costa Rica	3	Peru	8
Denmark	4	Philippines	13
Ecuador	5	Portugal	4
England	14	Singapore	6
Finland	3	South Africa	10
France	11	Spain	15
Germany	25	Sweden	7
Greece	9	Switzerland	17
Guatemala	9	Taiwan	7
Hong Kong	5	Thailand	12
India	13	Turkey	15
Indonesia	7	Uruguay	4
Ireland	4	US	398
Israel	15	Venezuela	2
Italy	21	Yugoslavia	4
Jamaica	2	Arab	80
Japan	28	West Africa	7
Korea	9	East Africa	8

*Note:* This table includes only the 50 nations and regions into which work behavior measures were aggregated. Only these nations and regions could be matched with Hofstede's (1988) cultural index.

opposed to providing their personal views. This should reduce problems associated with idiosyncratic responding. Second, the interrater reliability and agreement analyses (as described later) indicate that the mean ratings were reliable at the country level. This indicates that respondents tend to agree in their ratings within a given country. Also, the organization did not have an assessment and placement system centered on behavioral styles. Finally, the organization had very few early returns based on failure to adjust to the culture.

### Measures

Two different measurement sources were used. The generalized work activity (GWA) surveys from O\*NET (Jeanneret *et al.*, 1999) were used to measure the behavioral requirements. For the measurement of cultural values, we used Hofstede's (1988) 47 national and three regional cultures' relative indexes. Three of the original 53 national indexes had no sample and were excluded.

*Behavioral requirements:* Employees rated the frequency of their work behaviors on a seven-point scale that asks, 'How often is this activity performed on this job?' Scale anchors ranged from 'hourly or more often' to 'once per year or less'. The frequency of work behavior reflects the kinds of behavior required in the job. The *relationship-oriented behavior* measure comprised five related items:

- coordinating teams (coordinating members of a work group to accomplish tasks);
- developing and building teams (encouraging and building mutual trust, respect, and cooperation among team members);
- teaching others (identifying educational needs and teaching others);
- coaching and developing others (identifying development needs of others and coaching or otherwise helping others to improve their knowledge or skills); and
- providing consultation and advice to others.

Internal consistency reliability was 0.80.

The *administrative behavior* measure was composed of three activities:

- managing (providing guidance, direction and motivation to subordinates);
- performing administrative activities; and
- monitoring and controlling resources.

The administrative behavior measure was the same as reported in Jeanneret *et al.* (1999), except for the addition of 'managing' and the exclusion of 'staffing organizational units.' We included the managing item from the relationship-oriented behavior measure because it concerned providing instructions and monitoring the behavior of subordinates. We did not include the staffing behavior item because this is not something that most respondents in this sample perform, and it is not a day-to-day administrative activity as the other items in this scale are. Internal consistency reliability was 0.66.

*Cultural values:* Hofstede's (1980, 1988) dimensions for work values are probably the most frequently used in cross-cultural studies (e.g., Gerstner and Day, 1994; Dorfman *et al.*, 1997). Although there has been a great deal of debate about these measures (Hofstede, 2002; Spector and Cooper, 2002), they have shown acceptable validity, and have been empirically supported and widely used (Dorfman and Howell, 1988;

Shackleton and Ali, 1990; Elangovan, 1995; Peterson *et al.*, 1995). We employed national scores for Hofstede's (1988) cultural dimensions as proxies for the cultural influence on expatriate behaviors. Each dimension indicates the extent to which certain values characterize a culture. If a nation is high in individualism or power distance, the national scores for individualism–collectivism or power distance are high.

### *Analysis strategy*

To test the relationships between cultural values and expatriate behavior, we examined the correlations of the national cultures' index with scores on the three behavior scales. To get the scale measures, we aggregated the measures of the respondents to the nation level, and then to Hofstede's index level. The measures of national averages in the region of East Africa, West Africa, and Arab countries were aggregated into each region to be matched to Hofstede's regional indexes (Hofstede, 1988).

As the work behaviors were aggregated, it is necessary to provide empirical justification for the aggregation (Morgeson and Hofmann, 1999). To do so, we estimated both interrater reliability (via the intraclass correlation, ICC(1,*k*); Shrout and Fleiss, 1979) and interrater agreement ( $r_{wg}$ ; James *et al.*, 1984). The interrater reliability estimates represent the relative consistency of ratings among raters, whereas interrater agreement reflects the extent to which raters within a given nation make similar mean-level ratings. The interrater reliabilities were as follows: relationship-oriented behavior, 0.60; administrative behavior, 0.65. All the interrater reliability estimates were statistically significant at the  $P < 0.05$  level (using a one-way analysis of variance with nation as the grouping variable). Interrater agreement differs from interrater reliability estimates in that it does not depend upon the amount of between-nation variance. The median interrater agreement estimates were as follows (similar results were obtained with mean estimates): relationship-oriented behavior, 0.90; administrative behavior, 0.77. As a group, these levels of interrater reliability and agreement meet or exceed the levels of reliability and agreement found in previous research that has dealt with aggregation issues (Campion *et al.*, 1993). In addition, it is consistent with common rules of thumb about the levels of interrater reliability needed to justify aggregation (Ostroff and Schmitt, 1993). In sum, given the consistency of behavior within a nation, it was appropriate to aggregate this

individual-level construct to the national level, which is the level of our theory.

## Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations between all the variables are reported in Table 2. The strong relationship between individualism–collectivism and power distance is a spurious one. Hofstede's research (1984) has shown that this is due to the relationship of both dimensions to national wealth. Table 6 provides correlations between the cultural and work behavior measures at both the scale and item levels.

Hypothesis 1 suggested that expatriates working in nations high in collectivism will focus more on behaviors related to relationship development, because collectivism emphasizes interpersonal relationships. In the individualism–collectivism scale, lower scale values indicate a more collectivistic culture. We found a significant negative correlation between individualism–collectivism and relationship-oriented behavior requirement ( $r=0.36$ ,  $P<0.01$ ), which supports the hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2 suggested that host nations' cultures high in power distance would be positively related to expatriates' administrative behavior. The relationship between the administrative scale and power distance just failed to meet conventional significance levels ( $r=0.22$ ,  $P<0.07$ ). But both performing administrative activities ( $r=0.26$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) and monitoring and controlling resources ( $r=0.24$ ,  $P<0.05$ ) were significant. Managing was not significant ( $r=0.14$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 received mixed support.

## Discussion

Drawing from both the value theory of culture and social learning theory, this study suggests that expatriates need to adjust their behavior to the host culture. In particular, the results indicated that certain expatriate work behavior requirements (relationship-oriented and administrative behavior) were related to certain cultural values (collectivism and power distance). Hypothesis 2, however, received mixed support. One possible explanation for the lack of support at the scale level would be measurement issues associated with the cultural values, which we shall address in the general discussion.

Another possible explanation for the partial support for the hypothesis is the nature of expatriates' acculturation process. It may not be so much a one-way process as a two-way process. That is, HCNs may perceive and interpret expatriate managers' behavior given the situational cues, and create behavioral scripts (Shaw, 1990). For better interaction with their managers, they might be motivated to create and follow the behavioral scripts that are close to their expatriate managers' exhibited culture. From the expatriates' perspective, the behavior exhibited by the local subordinate becomes the basic information by which judge what work behavior would be necessary to interact with the HCN subordinates. In other words, expatriates' level of cultural adaptation might have affected the HCNs' behavioral responses, which in turn influence the expatriates' understanding of the local culture (Thomas and Toyne, 1995). Notwithstanding these possibilities, it should

**Table 6** Correlations between cultural values and behavioral requirements

Managerial behaviors	Cultural values	
	Individualism–collectivism	Power distance
Relationship-oriented behavior	−0.36**	0.24*
Coordinating teams	−0.39**	0.33**
Developing and building teams	−0.33**	0.16
Teaching others	−0.29*	0.14
Coaching and developing others	−0.25*	0.21
Providing consultation and advice to others	−0.10	0.11
Administrative behavior	−0.18	0.22
Managing	−0.02	0.14
Performing administrative activities	−0.28*	0.26*
Monitoring and controlling resources	−0.20	0.24*

\* $P<0.05$  (one-tailed); \*\* $P<0.01$  (one-tailed).  
 $n=50$ .

also be noted that the direction of the relationships was the same as predicted, and that the sample size was small ( $n=50$ ). Future studies should address how cultural distance and the acculturation process affect expatriates' interpretation of HCNs' behavior.

In sum, by showing that at least some expatriate behavioral requirements could vary with the host nations' cultural values, this study encourages future research to investigate the process through which expatriates adjust themselves to the host nation's culture. In this study, because the expatriate behavior and the cultural values measures were methodologically separate, these relationships are unlikely to be attributable to response biases.

### General discussion

Overall, the results largely support the hypotheses that worker requirements are higher in expatriate jobs, and that expatriates adjust their behavior to specific cultural values. The findings offer three key contributions to research. First, to adapt to culturally dissimilar environments, expatriate work requires higher levels of social and perceptual skills, reasoning ability, and achievement and adjustment orientation than domestic work. This is the first study to empirically demonstrate these relationships. Although previous research has concluded that some skills and personalities are important for expatriate adjustment, it has not directly compared expatriate and domestic jobs. This is critical, because the comparison allows one to determine whether the worker requirements are *more important* in expatriate jobs. Given a domestic comparison group, our study provides needed empirical validation of Mendenhall and Oddou's (1985) theoretical arguments.

Second, we investigated the role that language plays in increasing worker requirements. Language differences are a large and potentially important contextual difference. Contrary to our expectations, language affected only the adjustment orientation personality requirement. In retrospect, perhaps this should not be surprising. Language differences require greater adaptation (and therefore adjustment) because they reflect another salient contextual difference, whereas the other skill, ability, personality requirements are less tied to differences in language. Another potential explanation is that, in this organization, all expatriates undergo extensive language training prior to departure. This may serve to minimize the effects of language differences.

Third, this study demonstrates that expatriate workers are required to behaviorally adapt to some aspects of the local culture. This is an important finding, because it explicitly tests what has only been implicit in expatriate research up to this point by linking specific work behaviors to specific cultural values.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, the results of this study have several practical implications for both the pre-departure and post-departure stages of expatriation. US international organizations have been criticized for neglecting the role of cultural adjustment in selection and training. This may be due to a lack of understanding of what skills, abilities, and personality traits to emphasize in expatriate selection and training (Oddou, 1991; Arthur and Bennett, 1995). For example, if an expatriate has high levels of social and perceptual skills, then he or she will better adjust to the culturally unfamiliar working environment because of the skills in building social relationships and correctly perceiving and attributing the causes of HCN behavior. With a high level of reasoning ability, expatriates will be better able to deal with the uncertainties and stress caused by cultural unfamiliarity. Furthermore, expatriates high on adjustment or achievement orientation will be more tolerant of or motivated to tolerate the uncertainty or discomfort produced by being in unfamiliar cultures. By recognizing the skill, ability, and personality requirements of expatriate work, public-sector international organizations can design and implement better selection tools for expatriates in the pre-departure stage.

As the supplemental nation-level analysis in Study 1 suggests, expatriates assigned to more culturally dissimilar countries may be required to have higher levels of social and perceptual skills. If the host country's culture was more dissimilar to that of their home country, then greater adaptability would be needed. In addition, the results of testing the language hypothesis partially support this argument. Namely, in expatriate jobs where one has to adapt to a new culture *and* language, greater adjustment orientation is required than when simply learning a new culture. Thus, public-sector international organizations need to consider the cultural similarity between home and host countries in choosing the required level of the skills for foreign assignments.

Finally, by considering the relationships between cultural values and work behavior requirements in



the post-arrival stage, organizations may be able to train expatriates so they can adjust themselves to the host culture more quickly, have closer relationships with HCNs, and perform more effectively. For example, if an organization needs to send expatriates to Eastern Asian countries where HCNs emphasize interpersonal relationships, it should select individuals who are prone to engage in relationship-oriented behaviors or have training that emphasizes the importance of these behaviors when interacting with HCNs. Furthermore, the idea that certain sets of behaviors should be learned for a certain cultural value may be very useful for post-arrival training, which is often behaviorally based (Selmer *et al.*, 1998; Selmer, 2001). Thus, by studying the relationships between cultural values and desirable expatriate behaviors, organizations can select and train expatriates more appropriately for different cultures.

Such selection and training, however, might also take into consideration what has been termed the 'cultural distance paradox' (O'Grady, 1994). When expatriates expect relatively minor cultural adjustments, yet discover that some cultural adjustment is in fact required, it may be paradoxically more shocking (and hence a greater adjustment) than if the expatriate had expected a highly novel cultural context. For example, if an expatriate is assigned to a country that is culturally dissimilar to her native culture, she may have high levels of anxiety before departure, which is likely to prompt greater preparation and produce the expectation that a great deal of adjustment is required. If an expatriate is assigned to a country that is culturally similar to her native culture, on the other hand, the low levels of anxiety before departure are likely to lead to lower levels of preparation and the expectation that little adjustment will be needed. If any adjustment at all is needed (which is likely even for a culturally similar assignment), this is likely to be more shocking because of the lack of expectations that any adjustment is needed. This paradox may partly explain the weak support for Hypothesis 6 in Study 1 concerning the relationship between language and worker requirements. As expatriates in the sample received more language training if they were assigned to countries with languages that were very different from English (such as Korea, Russia, and Arab countries), this may have moderated any effects of differences in language at the expatriate assignment. Even though this paradox concerns only Hypothesis 6, this phenomenon should be considered when examining expatriates' adjust-

ment process, because the pre-departure expectations of cultural similarity could affect selection and training and post-arrival motivation for behavioral training.

Several methodological strengths increase our confidence in the findings. First, the study was conducted in one large, public international organization. This eliminates the potentially confounding effects that organizational factors might have on the results. Second, expatriates in this organization worked in cultural contexts that either spoke English or did not. This enabled an examination of whether language differences were accounting for the effects. Finally, the dataset is large ( $N=1,312$ ) and comprehensive (156 countries), thereby providing high variance and generalizability.

Although possessing many strengths, this study is not without its limitations. The current study used Hofstede's measures of cultural values, which are the most comprehensive, publicly available measures. Notwithstanding the strengths noted earlier, legitimate concerns have been raised about these measures, including a lack of exhaustiveness, adequacy of the sample of nations, generalizability, possible historical changes, and some validity problems (Schwartz, 1994; Spector *et al.*, 2001). Future research should directly measure cultural values, which should provide more accurate information. This is likely to produce stronger relationships than those obtained in our study.

The effect sizes in Study 1 were small. As the supplemental analysis in Study 1 demonstrates, the relatively simple US domestic/expatriate comparisons probably obscure meaningful differences between nations. Future research should take a more fine-grained approach by investigating other potential factors (e.g., specific differences in religious, social, and political systems) that may be responsible for differences in expatriate work. We view our study as an initial attempt to demonstrate that these differences exist, given that little existing research has empirically examined these differences with comparable groups. Clearly, additional research directly examining more proximal reasons for the differences will help us better understand why certain countries have higher skill, ability, and personality requirements.

In addition, because these data were cross-sectional in nature, it is impossible to determine whether expatriate behavior is influenced by culture, or whether certain types of individual are assigned to countries with a certain set of cultural values that suit their behavioral style. The fact that



the organization studied did not have an assessment and placement system that specifically focused on behavioral styles matching to particular cultural contexts suggests that potential self-selection bias should not be a critical problem. Yet there is some potential for self-selection bias because the designated nation a worker was assigned to was decided based on both the organization's needs and the assignee's preference. Further research is clearly needed on this issue (e.g., Wilk and Sackett, 1996).

Another potential limitation concerns the nature of the data. Although self-report job analysis data are often taken to reflect what a job requires, recent research suggests that some forms of job analysis data may be subject to systematic forms of bias (Morgeson and Campion, 1997; Morgeson et al., 2004). Although we investigated this issue directly and found little evidence for systematic bias, future research should employ designs whereby data are gathered from such non-incumbent sources as job analysts or supervisors.

Given that our sample worked in an international agency of the US government where workers expect and desire to work in international assignments, future research should be conducted to determine whether the present findings generalize to private multinational corporations. However, we believe that the effects of self-selection (workers in a public administration context would have more positive expectations or perceptions of expatriate requirements) would not seriously limit generalization of the results, for two reasons. First, the workers in both domestic and international positions in our sample had the same expectations and career goals. In effect, the willingness or desire for international work was a constant. Also, because they were all at mid-career stage, both the domestic and the international workers had a similar amount of previous overseas and domestic experiences. Second, if this organization did originally select

candidates with the requisite skills and abilities (with the anticipation of working abroad), then our findings are *more* conservative than in other organizations because we still found the requirement differences between the domestic and the international positions (i.e., this kind of pre-selection would serve to reduce variance on our key constructs). It is important to recognize that we simply asked the incumbents to specify the job requirements of their current position. Our focus was on the position requirements, not on the individuals in the position. The fact that the respondents of this study were those who had worked both domestically and internationally for multiple tours of duty, given their career stage, is a testament to the possibility that they discriminated between the two contexts easily, which may further convince us of the real, not simply the statistically significant, differences. For these reasons, we are cautiously optimistic that the results of this study can be generalized to MNCs.

Finally, we did not examine the process by which host nations' culture influences expatriates' behavior. Although the present study does not allow us to directly investigate the adjustment process, our findings do suggest some of the worker requirements needed for expatriates' adaptive job performance. To better understand how the host culture influences expatriates' behavior, it would be important to examine the interaction process between expatriates and HCNs, and how cultural values are enacted (Dubin, 1978).

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