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## Article

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Zeitschrift für Personalforschung (ZfP)

## Provided in Cooperation with:

Rainer Hampp Verlag

*Suggested Citation:* Remhof, Stefan; Gunkel, Marjaana; Schlägel, Christopher (2013) : Working in the "global village": The influence of cultural intelligence on the intention to work abroad, Zeitschrift für Personalforschung (ZfP), ISSN 1862-0000, Rainer Hampp Verlag, Mering, Vol. 27, Iss. 3, pp. 224-250, [https://doi.org/10.1688/1862-0000\\_ZfP\\_2013\\_03\\_Remhof](https://doi.org/10.1688/1862-0000_ZfP_2013_03_Remhof)

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/113667>

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Stefan Remhof, Marjaana Gunkel, Christopher Schlägel\*

## **Working in the “global village”: The influence of cultural intelligence on the intention to work abroad\*\***

Firms' international activities require an early identification of potential employees with an intention to work abroad. Based on social cognitive theory the current study examines the influence of prior international exposure and cultural intelligence on the individual intention to work abroad. In particular, we examine the influence of language skills, international experience, and networks abroad on the intention to work abroad through cultural intelligence and the moderating role of cultural distance on this mediated relationship. Utilizing a sample of 518 German business students we show that networks abroad have a direct influence on the intention to work abroad, while cultural intelligence fully mediates the relationship between language skills as well as international experience and the intention to work abroad. Cultural distance moderates this mediation for two of the four cultural intelligence dimensions.

### **Arbeiten im „globalen Dorf“: Der Einfluss von kultureller Intelligenz auf die Absicht, im Ausland zu arbeiten**

Die internationalen Aktivitäten von Unternehmen erfordern eine frühe Identifikation von Mitarbeitern für potentielle Auslandseinsätze. Basierend auf der sozialkognitiven Theorie untersuchen wir den Effekt des vorherigen internationalen Einflusses sowie der kulturellen Intelligenz auf die individuelle Intention, eine Position im Ausland anzunehmen. Insbesondere betrachten wir den Einfluss von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen, vorheriger Auslandserfahrung und des bestehenden Auslandsnetzwerkes auf die Intention, im Ausland zu arbeiten und die moderierende Funktion der kulturellen Distanz auf die mediierende Wirkung der kulturellen Intelligenz auf diese Beziehung. Auf der Grundlage einer Stichprobe von 518 deutschen Studenten der Wirtschaftswissenschaften zeigen die Ergebnisse, dass das Auslandsnetzwerk einen direkten Einfluss mediert, während kulturelle Intelligenz den Effekt von Fremdsprachenkenntnissen und internationaler Erfahrung auf die Absicht, im Ausland zu arbeiten, mediiert. Die kulturelle Distanz moderiert diese Mediation für zwei der vier Dimensionen der kulturellen Intelligenz.

**Key words:** international exposure, cultural intelligence, cultural distance, intention to work abroad, self expatriation (JEL: F22, F23, F60, J61, M51)

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\*\* We would like to thank the coordinating editor Marion Festing as well as the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments which helped us to improve the paper significantly.

Article received: December 19, 2012

Revised version accepted after double blind review August 10, 2013.

## Introduction

With increasing global activities of companies, the international mobility of highly qualified individuals is of growing importance. As a result, individual careers become international and boundaryless (Carr, Inkson, & Thorn, 2005) leading to critical importance for corporations to understand how to identify and select potential expatriates (Altman & Baruch, 2012; Collings, Scullion, & Morley, 2007; McEvoy & Buller, 2013). Working abroad is regarded as an opportunity for individuals' career advancement (Chew & Zhu, 2001), for increasing individuals' work-related competencies (Suutari & Mäkelä, 2007), and for personal development (Osland, 2000; Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2000). In addition to the relevance and importance of assigned expatriates, research and practice in the past decade have shifted their focus towards self-initiated expatriation. While self-initiated expatriates are self-motivated to work abroad and work towards self-managed international careers (e.g., Selmer & Luring, 2012; Myers & Pringle, 2005), the stay abroad for assigned expatriates is supported by a company (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills, 2011; Suutari & Brewster, 2000). The self-initiated expatriates in particular are assumed to possess a high intention to work abroad independent of the opportunities their employers provide them.

In order to be able to identify and select potential expatriates, organizations need to better understand the motivational processes that lead to the intention to work abroad (Mol, Born, Willemsen, Van der Molen, & Deros, 2009). Due to high rates of refusal by managers to relocate overseas, internationally active firms need global human resource managers to develop a means to identify, motivate, and retain potential candidates for international assignments (Harvey, Napier, & Moeller, 2011). The selection of expatriates is made more challenging by the difficulty of identifying expatriate candidates' intention to work abroad (Mol et al., 2009). Prior research suggests that the career benefits of foreign assignments are mixed (Stahl, Miller, & Tung, 2002), which may contribute to low levels of intention to accept a foreign assignment. The unwillingness to accept an expatriate position, along with the potential employee's perception that the potential employer is seeking to hire and promote such individuals, may motivate a candidate to only pretend to be interested in expatriation. Consequently, firms would highly benefit from the ability to predict applicants' intention to work abroad (Mol et al., 2009). The ability to predict a potential candidate's intention to live and work abroad would likely lead to the selection of individuals who have higher willingness to work abroad, ultimately increasing the chances for assignment success. This view is supported by the finding that persuading originally unwilling expatriates corresponds negatively with cultural adjustment, job satisfaction, and intention to terminate the expatriate assignment (e.g., Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009; Pinto, Cabral-Cardosa, & Werther, 2012). These observations have led researchers to investigate the determinants of successful expatriate experiences, including how to identify qualified individuals who would have the intention to work abroad.

Prior research has in particular examined the outcomes of self-initiated expatriation, i.e., the development of career capital (Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari, 2008), the adjustment to the foreign environment (Froese, 2012; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009), performance (Selmer & Luring, 2012), and career satisfaction (Cao, Hirschi, & Del-

ler, 2013; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). Little theoretical and empirical work has been done to examine the determinants of self-initiated expatriation (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Doherty, Richardson, & Thorn, 2013; Doherty, 2013). Meta-analytic evidence in various management fields and related research areas suggests that intention is the single best predictor of actual behavior (e.g., Armitage & Conner, 2001). Recently, researchers have begun to incorporate the concept of intention and resulting intentional behavior in the expatriation research field by examining the factors that determine individual willingness and intention to expatriate (e.g., Borstorff, Harris, Field, & Giles, 1997; Hippler, 2009; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2009). While the majority of these studies investigated actual employees, only a very limited number of studies examined potential candidates for expatriation assignments before they actually started working for a corporation, such as students in their final year (e.g., Froese, Jommersbach, & Klautzsch, 2013; Lowe, Downes, & Koeck, 1999; Mol et al., 2009).

Although recent research has enriched the understanding of the antecedents of self-initiated expatriation and willingness to work abroad, such as international experience as well as individual characteristics, skills, and abilities (e.g., Ryan, Silvano, & Brown, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2010), we still know little about the process through which the intention and willingness develop. Thus, increasing understanding of this process is both theoretically and practically important (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013; Dickmann, Doherty, Mills, & Brewster, 2008; Doherty, 2013). In an effort to address the identified gaps in the existing literature, this study, based on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, aims to develop a framework that seeks to explain the development of the intention to work abroad. We argue that an individual's international exposure affects their cultural intelligence, which in turn influences the intention to work abroad. Furthermore, we argue that this mediation is moderated by the cultural distance between the home country and the potential foreign country.

The purpose of this study is threefold: First, we aim to test the influence of international exposure on individuals' intention to work abroad. Through the identification and empirical testing of international exposure factors, we respond to calls to examine the impact of individual characteristics in this research context (e.g., Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010; Tarique & Schuler, 2008). Little is currently known about factors that cause individuals to hold more positive intentions toward working abroad. Therefore, the first contribution of our study lies in the extension of current research on self-initiated expatriation by examining the influence of language skills, international experience, and networks abroad on the intention to work abroad. The second purpose of our study is to examine the mechanism that underlies the formation of individual intention to work abroad and through which international exposure affects the intention. The literature has primarily focused on direct relationships between intention to work abroad and its determinants. Previous studies have not comprehensively tested the mechanism through which international exposure affects intentions of individuals toward self-initiated expatriation. This study proposes that international exposure influences the intention to work abroad through the development of cultural intelligence, which in turn positively affects the intention. By examining the process through which international exposure affects individual intention, we provide a more complete and more detailed picture of the process from whence positive intentions

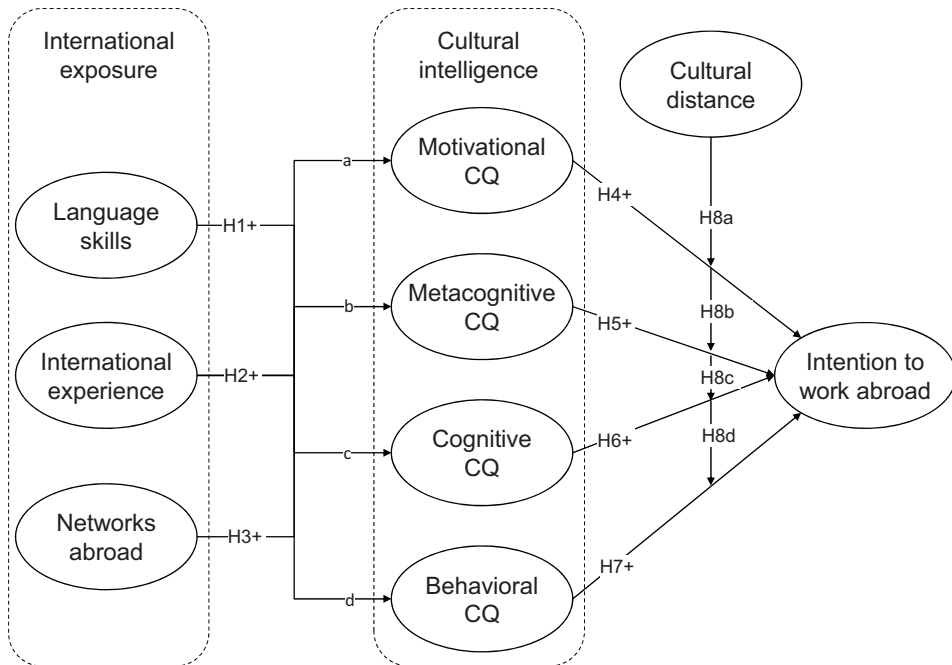
arise. Therefore, a second contribution of this study lies in the identification of the mechanism through which cultural intelligence develops, ultimately resulting in a more favorable intention toward working abroad. Finally, the third purpose of this study is to assess the moderating role of cultural distance on the relationship between cultural intelligence and the intention to work in a country, which the individual considers as an option for self-expatriation. In this way, the study contributes to the existing literature by improving the understanding of the conditions under which cultural intelligence enhances individual intentions, ultimately contributing to a better understanding of when individual abilities affect individuals' intentions to work abroad.

## **Theoretical framework**

Prior international exposure encompasses an individual's personal history related to cross-cultural experiences (Altman & Baruch, 2012), such as learning a foreign language, a stay in a foreign country, or contact with relatives and friends that might live in a foreign country. Previous research investigating the direct impact of prior international exposure on the willingness, readiness, and intention to work abroad yielded inconclusive findings (e.g., Froese, Jommersbach, & Klautzsch, 2013; Kim & Froese, 2012; Lowe, Downes, & Kroeck, 1999; Mol et al., 2009; Otto & Dalbert, 2012; Wang & Bu, 2004). The reasons for these inconclusive findings are twofold: First, prior expatriate and migration literature does not sufficiently account for the fact that working abroad is a complex process that is planned and, therefore, is the outcome of an intentional process. In this regard, models that focus on direct effects and parallel predictors inadequately reflect that the influence of individual characteristics on the intention to work abroad, such as prior international exposure, occurs through attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive factors at the individual level (Froese, Jommersbach, & Klautzsch, 2013). That is, prior international exposure indirectly influences the intention to work abroad mediated through attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive variables, rather than having a direct impact on intention. In a world where national boundaries are crossed and companies operate globally, individuals have to possess intercultural skills, knowledge, and a positive attitude towards intercultural contexts in order to act effectively in a global and multicultural surrounding (Amiri, Moghimi, & Kazemi, 2010; Groves & Feyerherm, 2011). The concept of cultural intelligence (hereafter CQ) includes these different but related facets of cultural competences that provide individuals the capability to adapt effectively to new cultural settings or contexts (Earley & Ang, 2003; Ng & Earley, 2006). We propose that CQ functions as a mediator of the relationship between international exposure and the intention to work abroad: CQ includes attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive elements that are affected by international exposure and in turn affect individual intention to work abroad. A potential second reason that prior research has failed to fully describe the development of these intentions is that previous studies have largely neglected moderating factors which may buffer or intensify the potential impact of distal factors, such as international experience, via proximal attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive factors. In sum, literature on the effects of prior international exposure on the intention to work abroad constitutes a rather heterogeneous mosaic of empirical findings. While direct effects and parallel predictors have been addressed by prior literature, these approaches have been criti-

cized due to their limited explanatory power (e.g., Froese, Jommersbach, & Klautzsch, 2013; Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen, & Bolino, 2012). Research that focused on direct effects has not fully disentangled the influences of different types of exposure and therefore conflicting results remain. Consequently, there is still need for a more differentiated understanding of the relationship between prior international exposure and individuals' intention to work abroad. Based on the conceptual model presented in Figure 1 we propose a framework for understanding the development of intentions to work abroad. In the following, we explain the different relationships and develop the hypotheses along this conceptual model.

**Figure 1: Theoretical model**



### *International exposure and cultural intelligence*

Social cognitive theory considers knowledge, skills, and abilities crucial for the development of an individual. Competencies are acquired through prior experience (Bandura, 2002). Prior exposure can be experienced in two different ways: observation and direct experience (Bandura, 1977). Learning a foreign language enables individuals to experience an important part of a foreign culture. Gaining direct international experience may be obtained by stays abroad, vacations, or prior expatriation experiences. During these events individuals are also likely to observe the behavior of others. Networks abroad are another source of experience and observation. Linking prior international exposure to the concept of CQ, the following sections develop a comprehen-



sive rationale as to how international exposure impacts the intention to work abroad mediated by CQ.

CQ is regarded as a capability, which can increase and develop over time (Shannon & Begley, 2008; Thomas, 2006) and which is connected to successful cross-cultural experiences (Earley & Ang, 2003). CQ defines a “person’s capability to adapt effectively to new cultural contexts” (Earley & Ang, 2003, p. 59). Comprised of a set of capabilities and skills, CQ helps one to interpret unfamiliar behaviors or cultural situations as if one was a member of that culture (Van Dyne, Ang, & Livermore, 2010). Individuals with a high level of CQ demonstrate a pronounced interest in unfamiliar and new cultures. They also possess the necessary skills to adapt to changes within intercultural settings (Lee & Templer, 2003). CQ improves the ability to deal with confusion in the interaction with others from different cultures (Brislin, Worthley, & Macnab, 2006). Individuals reduce their uncertainty by imitating and learning behaviors that are appropriate in the new culture (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012). CQ is a multidimensional concept – including mental (cognitive and metacognitive), behavioral, and motivational components. Metacognitive CQ reflects the knowledge and control of cognition (i.e., an individual’s process of acquiring and understanding knowledge), one’s capability to think strategically about culture and cultural differences, as well as to understand different cultural contexts. Cognitive CQ defines the understanding of the idea of a culture and the knowledge about the ways in which cultures are similar or different from each other. It covers individual knowledge and knowledge structures. Motivational CQ focuses on the direction of energy as a locus of intelligence. It reflects one’s interest, drive, and energy in experiencing other cultures and adapting cross-culturally as well as the extent to which an individual calculates their own capability to interact effectively with people who have different cultural backgrounds. Behavioral CQ focuses on an individual’s capabilities at the actions level. The behavioral component of CQ defines one’s capability to change behavior to fit in other cultures, including non-verbal behaviors (i.e., body language, physical gestures, and facial expressions) as well as verbal behaviors (i.e., accent, tone, and expressiveness), thus showing flexibility (Ang & Inkpen, 2008; Ang, Van Dyne, & Koh, 2006). Information which has been encountered in various social experiences is integrated to the newly acquired competencies through further experiences (Grusec, 1992). Social cognitive theory proposes that an individual develops through learning from others (Herrmann, Call, Hernández-Lloreda, Hare, & Tomasello, 2007; Shannon & Begley, 2008; Tarique & Takeuchi, 2008). Bandura (1991) considers human behavior as being motivated and regulated by exercise of self-influence. The exercise of self-influence leads to perceived self-efficacy, which is described as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1991, p. 257). Individuals show enduring interest in activities and actions in which they judge themselves to be self-efficacious (Bandura, 1991).

Culture is defined by multiple factors, with language being one of the most important elements (Peterson, 2004). Within this definition, language skills refer to the ability of an individual to speak easily and accurately in a specific language required by cross-cultural interactions. In order to be culturally competent, communication in the

language of the respective cultural group is necessary (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Language skills are a fundamental instrument to acquire cultural knowledge in order to understand the economic, legal, and social systems of different cultures (Shannon & Begley, 2008). Uebelmesser (2006) discusses language skills as an essential prerequisite for economic and social integration of an individual in the potential destination. Language skills are also necessary for interpersonal communication and relationships, for interpersonal communication and relationships, thus increasing an individual's effectiveness in the potential destination (Bandura, 2002). Thus, language skills are viewed as an instrument to understand the dynamics of a new culture (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985) and to interact successfully with others from the culture (Peterson, 2004). Earley (2002) shows that language acquisition is positively associated with behavioral CQ. As language conveys many details and characteristics of a culture (Earley, 2002) and further demonstrates cultural core values, e.g., norms, conventions, and differences in thought patterns, and furthermore demonstrates cultural core values, language can be regarded as a way to transmit cultural knowledge. Shannon and Begley (2008) specify that language skills are related to cognitive CQ because language skills increase one's CQ in the verbal and nonverbal behaviors during cross-cultural interactions. Earley and Ang (2003) demonstrate that language skills are further positively associated with the motivational facet of CQ as language skills increase one's willingness to attempt to interact with members of the host culture using their language. By covering cultural differences, it can be asserted that language skills enable one to think strategically about these differences between cultures. Language skills are further assumed to be positively related to the fourth facet of CQ, metacognitive CQ. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 1: Language skills are positively associated with a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ.

We expect that individuals who have international experience will display higher levels of intention to work abroad. Moreover, this relationship is expected to be mediated by the attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive facets of CQ. In deciding where to work, individuals draw relevant information primarily from their own experience. Besides drawing from experiences such as interactions within their home country with others from foreign countries, individuals are also able to utilize prior experiences in foreign countries in the cognitive decision-making process. Previous research shows that international experience is an important component of human capital for potential expatriates (e.g., Froese, Jommersbach, & Klautzsch, 2013). Prior international experience in foreign countries is likely to influence individual attitudes with respect to working abroad. The cultural environment of a foreign country is likely to be very different from the cultural perception within the home country. As a result, the international experiences an individual has and the interpretations of these experiences are likely to foster the development of attitudinal, behavioral, and cognitive aspects. Moreover, such international experiences allow individuals to directly evaluate the personal consequences of living and working in a foreign country. Ng and Earley (2006) state that “CQ is an ability that is expected to improve with experiences” (Ng & Earley, 2006, p. 15). According to Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), the intercultural sensitivity and cul-



tural awareness gained through experience can be seen as a result of one's knowledge structure, which is a part of the social cognitive theory. The knowledge structure enables individuals to anticipate dealing with the challenges and uncertainties related to unfamiliar environments (Tharenou, 2009). Previous international work and non-work experience may help to enhance cross-cultural competencies, thus enhancing CQ (Crowne, 2008; Tarique & Takeuchi, 2008) through the gained cultural consciousness, awareness, and knowledge (Shannon & Begley, 2008). International work and non-work experience can be classified as antecedents of CQ (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2012). In line with social cognitive theory, former international experience has an impact on attitudes about foreign colleagues and behaviors in one's personal surroundings. Individuals enhance their perceived self-efficacy by gaining different cultural experiences. Therefore, they possess a higher confidence to deal with cultural challenges, which in turn affects the motivational CQ (Li, Mobley, & Kelly, 2013). Working in an unfamiliar cultural context has a direct impact on one's own attitudes and behaviors (Hart, 1999). Those with international experience are expected to discover other cultures from a learning perspective. The international experience enables them to develop appreciative attitudes and appropriate behaviors toward cross-cultural situations. Individuals who are open to learning new things seek out and act on new experiences to extend their repertoire of behaviors beyond daily and routinely habits (Shannon & Begley, 2008). The behavioral facet of CQ describes these interpersonal skills and the ability to engage in high-quality social interactions in cross-cultural settings. An internationally experienced individual has the required resources to migrate, as previous experiences in the potential destination have provided the necessary information about the location (Chen, Kirkman, Kim, Farh, & Tangirala, 2010). Crowne (2008) shows that those who possess more accumulated international experience accumulated by visits to foreign countries for employment or education score higher in the cognitive facet of CQ. Earley and Ang (2003) as well as Shannon and Begley (2008) show that international experience is related to metacognitive CQ and motivational CQ. The results of Tarique and Takeuchi (2008) as well as Tay, Westman, and Chia (2008) demonstrate that the length of the stay in a foreign country impacts metacognitive and cognitive CQ. Based on the reasoning above, we propose:

Hypothesis 2: International experience is positively associated with a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ.

The social cognitive theory emphasizes the effect of behavior acquisition through the observation of others and proposes that individuals learn and improve their capabilities from others in their environment (Bandura, 1977). Observational learning from others influences the formation of attitudes which in turn form intentions (Bandura, 1977). As a consequence, the degree of diversity and the number of social contacts an individual has in the potential destination have a positive impact on CQ (Ang, Van Dyne, & Tan, 2011). Cross-cultural and international encounters help to reduce stereotypes and enhance one's accessibility (Shannon & Begley, 2008). Social cognitive theory suggests that the observation of others, such as parents and friends living in a foreign country, influences attitudes toward different career alternatives. Individuals observe occupational behaviors of others important to them and, at the same time,

form cognitive evaluations of their own actual or future capabilities and interests and hence generate outcome expectations in the observed career field. Thus, being exposed to parents and friends shapes individual attitudes in regard to working and living in a foreign country. Networks abroad in the form of family members and/or friends are essential to provide one with necessary information about the potential destination, thus reducing risk and uncertainty as potential obstacles to working abroad. Networks abroad may also affect individuals' self-efficacy with respect to living and working abroad. Certain skills and behaviors, which are necessary for living and working in a foreign country, such as CQ, may be learned by observing other individuals who are or have been in the same situation. In this way, specific knowledge is transferred from individuals that are close to a person, resulting in a stronger desire to successfully execute the behaviors related to living and working in a foreign country, ultimately leading to a higher self-efficacy. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3: Networks abroad are positively associated with a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ.

### ***Cultural intelligence and the intention to work abroad***

The relocation process, and subsequently living and working in an unfamiliar surrounding, might be regarded as an exciting and thrilling step. However, puzzling and threatening expectations may predominate over one's plans to work abroad (Richards, 1996). The intention to work abroad is often based on incomplete or second-hand information, with the associated risk that this information is obsolete or incorrect (Vandor, 2009). Living and working in an unfamiliar cultural surrounding is an event which involves a considerable amount of stress, requiring adaptation to unfamiliar physical and psychological experiences (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). These uncertain conditions and circumstances require a high level of CQ.

Ang, Van Dyne, and Tan (2011), Earley and Petersen (2004) as well as Templer, Tay, and Chandrasekar (2006) show that CQ is a prerequisite for a successful cross-cultural adjustment, i.e., to work, life, and interactions in new cultural environments. Moreover, CQ is required for the development of good working relationships (Triandis, 2006). Since individuals with higher CQ enjoy interactions with others from different cultures, it is likely that they are open-minded and curious about other cultures (Van Dyne, Ang, & Nielsen, 2007). Those with a high level of motivational CQ are attracted to intercultural situations due to the fact that they appreciate the benefits of intercultural interactions. Furthermore, they are confident in their ability to cope with the inherent challenges of cultural differences (Van Dyne, Ang, Ng, Rockstuhl, Tan, & Koh, 2012), which they confront when leaving their home country. Metacognitive CQ covers one's strategic thinking about cultural differences. A high level of metacognitive CQ enables individuals to understand the importance of preparation or planning for intercultural interactions that will occur when an individual lives and works abroad. Preparing and planning include cross-cultural training programs or exposure to different cultural norms and values in advance of intercultural interactions (Van Dyne et al., 2012). These preparatory steps can be seen as a strong predictor of the intention to work abroad. Given one's understanding of how cultures are similar or how cultures differ, reflected by cognitive CQ (Van Dyne & Ang, 2005), the capability may

act as a predictor of intention to work abroad. The fourth facet of CQ, behavioral CQ, may influence the intention to work abroad as it includes changes in both verbal and nonverbal actions with the aim to meet the specifics of respective cultural interactions or settings. Since living and working in a new intercultural setting requires willingness to modify verbal and nonverbal behavior in response to the respective cultural surrounding, a high level of behavioral CQ may have a positive influence on the intention to work abroad.

In sum, international exposure influences the different facets of CQ, which in turn influences the intention to work abroad. Consequently, the CQ dimensions mediate the effect of international exposure on the intention to work abroad. On this basis, we propose the following set of hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 4: Motivational CQ is positively associated with the intention to work abroad and mediates the relationship between language skills, international experience, networks abroad, and the intention to work abroad.
- Hypothesis 5: Metacognitive CQ is positively associated with the intention to work abroad and mediates the relationship between language skills, international experience, networks abroad, and the intention to work abroad.
- Hypothesis 6: Cognitive CQ is positively associated with the intention to work abroad and mediates the relationship between language skills, international experience, networks abroad, and the intention to work abroad.
- Hypothesis 7: Behavioral CQ is positively associated with the intention to work abroad and mediates the relationship between language skills, international experience, networks abroad, and the intention to work abroad.

### ***The moderating role of cultural distance***

One's ability to effectively adapt and adjust abroad depends on the novelty of the foreign culture. Some national cultures seem to be more difficult to adapt to than others. Generally, it can be said that the more different the host culture is from one's own culture, the more difficult it is to adjust to the host culture (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). The extent to which different cultures and cultural norms between two countries are similar or different is measured by cultural distance (hereafter CD) (Manev & Stevenson, 2001; Shenkar, 2001). The construct of CD has been applied to examine different aspects in the fields of expatriation as well as cultural intelligence, i.e. expatriate staffing (Colakoglu & Caligiuri, 2008), expatriate effectiveness (Chen et al., 2010), expatriate job satisfaction (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013), and expatriate adjustment (Zhang, 2013). CD may influence the effect CQ has on the intention to work abroad. For example, a large CD between the country of origin and the destination would imply that motivational CQ would need to be high in order to overcome the difficulties related to the differences. A large cultural distance also implies being more

conscious about the skills, knowledge, and capabilities (metacognitive CQ) one has in respect to the specific foreign culture. The larger the distance between the home culture and the culture of the desired destination, the more knowledge (cognitive CQ) about the country of destination is necessary to positively influence the actual intention to work in that country. A large CD would require a higher willingness to adapt behavior and action (behavioral CQ) in the desired destination. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 8: CD moderates the positive relationship between a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, d) behavioral CQ, and the intention to work abroad, such that the relationship is weaker for a larger CD than for a smaller CD between individuals' home country and the preferred country of destination.

## Method

### *Sample and data collection*

To analyze the influence of international exposure on the intention to work abroad through CQ and the moderating role of CD on this mediated relationship, a questionnaire was distributed to German business students during class room sessions. All subjects were born in Germany and are currently citizens of Germany.

The final sample consisted of 518 completed questionnaires. All respondents were undergraduate students from economics and management study programs at two German public universities. Business students in their final year of studies represent the next generation of managers (Tharenou, 2003). Students at this crucial point of their life face important career decisions regarding their vocational preferences and, therefore, represent an appropriate sample for examining the intention to work abroad. The sample included 274 (52.90%) female students and 244 (47.10%) male students. The respondents were, on average, 22 years old, with four semesters completed at the time of the study. The survey was conducted in the German language. Following recommendations from previous studies (Harzing, 2005), the survey questions, which were originally developed in English, were translated into German by one individual. A second individual then translated the questions back into English, and a third individual reconciled the differences between the two translations (Brislin, 1986).

### *Measures*

The dependent variable *intention to work abroad* was measured with a set of four questions, which were adapted from Vandor (2009). The four questions asked the individuals to indicate the potential period of time within which the individual intended to live and work outside Germany, thus emphasizing a culture-specific frame: “With a probability of \_\_% I will live and work in another country than Germany in the course of my life”; “With a probability of \_\_% I will live and work in another country than Germany within the first 5 years after having finished my studies”; “With a probability of \_\_% I will live and work in another country than Germany within the first 2 years after having finished my studies”; “With a probability of \_\_% I will live and work in another country than Germany within the first 6 months after having finished my studies”. Adapting the scale of Krueger, Reilly, and Carsrud (2000), the partici-

pants were asked to rate the likelihood of living and working outside their home country on a scale ranging from 0 to 100% (measured in 25% intervals). We further included a culture-specific question by asking the respondents about their preferred country to live and work (“To which country would you most likely emigrate?”).

We measured *language skills* using an item adapted from Liebig and Sousa-Poza (2004) (“How well can you speak the language of the country to which you would most likely emigrate?”; 1 = “not at all”; 5 = “native language”) and a second item derived from Ang, Van Dyne, Koh, Ng, Templer, and Chandrasekar (2007) (“I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages”).

*International experience* was assessed with two questions, measuring the general experience abroad and specific experience in the potential destination country (measured in months). Using six questions, adapted from Epstein and Gang (2006) as well as Vandor (2009), respondents were asked to state the number of relatives and friends in the potential destination country (*networks abroad*, e.g., “I have family/relatives who live and worked in my potential destination”).

Ang et al.’s (2007) 20-item CQ-scale was used to measure an individual’s CQ. Examples of items include “I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me” (*metacognitive CQ*; four items); “I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures” (*cognitive CQ*; six items); “I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures” (*motivational CQ*; five items); and “I change my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it” (*behavioral CQ*; five items). Unless otherwise indicated, we used a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = “strongly disagree”; 5 = “strongly agree”). Following the suggestions by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), we used the four-step process to identify and impute missing data or delete respective cases: (1) determination of the type of missing data, (2) determination of the extent of missing data, (3) definition of the levels of randomness of the missing data, and (4) selection of the imputation method for missing data. Missing data were identified as missing completely at random (MCAR). We used mean substitution as the method to impute missing values.

*Cultural distance* between Germany and the possible destination country was measured using the index of Kogut and Singh (1988) in combination with Hofstede’s (2001) country-specific scores. Two demographic variables (age and gender) and the number of semesters completed, which have been found to be related to the willingness to work abroad (e.g., Vandor, 2009), were controlled for. Age was measured in years and gender was measured as a dichotomous variable, coded as 1 for female and 0 for male.

## Analysis and results

### *Validity and reliability of measurement model and common method variance*

To provide evidence of construct validity, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as the first step of the analysis. Due to the large sample size ( $n = 518$ ), the results of the chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) statistic were not considered crucial for the evaluation of our model: the  $\chi^2$  statistics is not an adequate test of model fit within large sample sizes ( $n > 250$ ) (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). Therefore, we used several other widely



accepted fit indices (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Following Browne and Cudeck (1993) as well as Hu and Bentler (1999), we used the comparative fit index (CFI) in combination with the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Models resulting in CFI values of .90 or higher are considered acceptable (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), while for the RMSEA fit index values lower than .05 are indicators of a close fit and values up to .08 show an acceptable model fit.

We conducted a series of CFAs to determine the best-fitting conceptualization of cultural intelligence. First, we examined the fit to the data of the hypothesized four-factor CQ model with the four metacognitive items, six cognitive items, five motivational items and five behavioral items loading on their CQ factor of correspondence ( $\chi^2 = 519.84$ ;  $df = 164$ ; CFI = .90; RMSEA = .06). Following suggestions by Imai and Gelfand (2010), we compared this model with a three-factor model (items of metacognitive CQ and cognitive CQ loading on a single factor of mental CQ:  $\chi^2 = 589.62$ ;  $df = 167$ ; CFI = .89; RMSEA = .07), a one-factor model (all CQ items loading on one single aggregated CQ-factor:  $\chi^2 = 881.02$ ;  $df = 170$ ; CFI = .81; RMSEA = .09), and a second-order factor model ( $\chi^2 = 522.10$ ;  $df = 166$ ; CFI = .89; RMSEA = .07). Although the initial measurement model with the four-factorial CQ did not show fully satisfactory fit with regard to the fit indices, chi-square difference tests and comparison of the other fit indices showed that this model achieved a significantly better fit than the three-factor model, the one-factor model, as well as the second-order factor model.

Following suggestions by Byrne (2010), we eliminated items from each construct with the aim to improve validity and reliability of the measurement model. The item purification process was based on (1) the analysis of item intercorrelations, (2) the analysis of item-total correlations, and (3) the results of the CFA. As suggested by Harrington (2009), all constructs consisted of at least three indicators after the purification process. The following items were eliminated: two items within the motivational CQ construct (“I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me”; “I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture”), one item within the metacognitive CQ construct (“I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures”), two items within the cognitive CQ construct (“I know the rules (e.g., vocabulary, grammar) of other languages”; “I know the arts and crafts of other cultures”), and one item within the behavioral CQ construct (“I change my verbal behavior (e.g., accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it”). All these items showed factor loadings below the recommended .6 threshold (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). One item was eliminated within the intention to work abroad construct (“With a probability of \_\_% I will live and work in another country than Germany within the first 2 years after having finished my studies”), which showed multicollinearity within the construct. After modifying the initial measurement model, the fit indices of the revised measurement model showed satisfactory fit ( $\chi^2 = 289.40$ ;  $df = 109$ ; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05). The range of loadings for the CQ variables were as follows: metacognitive CQ, .61 to .80; cognitive CQ, .58 to .70; motivational CQ, .63 to .78; and behavioral CQ, .63 to .77. The factor loadings of the intention to work abroad measures ranged from .60 to .87. These results suggest high reliability as well as validity for the



construct measures (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, correlations coefficients, and reliabilities for the construct measures.

**Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients**

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Intention to work abroad	2.70	0.86	(.74)									
2. Motivational CQ	3.70	0.77	.57	(.76)								
3. Metacognitive CQ	3.75	0.65	.39	.62	(.71)							
4. Cognitive CQ	2.95	0.74	.36	.52	.61	(.73)						
5. Behavioral CQ	3.41	0.71	.35	.51	.57	.51	(.79)					
6. Language skills	3.36	0.84	.33	.36	.35	.38	.27	(.90)				
7. International experience <sup>a</sup>	3.99	8.33	.30	.32	.26	.24	.22	.30	(.90)			
8. Networks abroad	1.76	0.80	.37	.34	.29	.26	.19	.35	.40	(.73)		
9. Age	22.00	2.16	-.12	-.10	-.10	-.11	-.10	-.21	.00	-.10		
10. Gender (% female)	52.90		.06	.11	.14	.06	.08	.10	.07	.00	-.16	
11. Semesters	4.04	1.84	-.13	-.19	-.16	-.17	-.09	-.19	-.09	-.10	.36	-.23

Note: *N* = 518. Reliability measures (Cronbach's alphas) for each variable are displayed in parentheses on the diagonal. All correlations above |.09| are significant at *p* < .05.

<sup>a</sup> in months.

To assess a potential common method variance in our data (Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, & Eden, 2010), we ran a second CFA with an additional common method factor loading on each item (e.g., Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). No significant item loading on the common method factor was identified within the measurement model, which suggests that common method variance is not a significant source of bias in the theoretical variables.

### ***Test of hypotheses***

Regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses related to the direct effects (H1a-d, H2a-d, H3a-d, and H4 to H7) as well as moderated regressions to test hypotheses H8a-d. Table 2 presents the ordinary least squares estimates for the impact of language skills, international experience, and networks abroad on the four CQ dimensions. The first set of hypotheses state that language skills are positively related to a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ. The estimates indicate that language skills are positive and significantly related to cognitive CQ but not to metacognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ. The results only support hypothesis 1c. The second set of hypotheses predicts that international experience is positively related to a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ. The results show that international experience is positively related to all four dimensions of CQ. Therefore, hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d are supported. The third set of hypotheses states that networks abroad are positively related to a) motivational CQ, b) metacognitive CQ, c) cognitive CQ, and d) behavioral CQ. The results show that networks abroad are positively related to all four dimensions of CQ. Thus, hypotheses 3a, 3b, 3c, and 3d are supported. Further, net-

works abroad have a positive direct effect on the intention to work abroad. Language skills and international experience do not have a significant effect on the intention to work abroad.

**Table 2: Regression results for testing mediation**

Variables	Intention to work abroad					
	Motivational CQ	Metacognitive CQ	Cognitive CQ	Behavior CQ	Step 1	Step 2
Intercept	3.41 (.32)***	3.43 (.31)	2.95 (.33)***	3.64 (.35)***	2.56 (.41)	.34 (.42)
<i>Main effects</i>						
Language skills	.03 .03	.04 (.03)	.09 (.03)**	.04 (.03)	.04 (.04)	.02 (.03)
International experience	.02 .00***	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)**	.01 (.00)***	.02 (.01)**	.01 (.00)
Networks abroad	.18 .04***	.15 (.04)***	.13 (.04)**	.11 (.04)*	.29 (.05)***	.18 (.05)***
Motivational CQ						.60 (.06)***
Metacognitive CQ						.37 (.06)***
Cognitive CQ						.32 (.05)***
Behavioral CQ						.36 (.05)***
<i>Controls</i>						
Age	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)	-.02 (.02)
Gender (female)	.08 (.06)	.09 (.06)	.00 (.06)	.10 (.06)	.05 .07	-.01 (.06)
Semesters	-.04 (.02)*	-.03 (.02)	-.04 (.02)*	-.01 (.02)*	-.02 (.02)	.00 (.02)
$R^2$	.15	.11	.14	.10	.17	.36
<i>Adjusted <math>R^2</math></i>	.14	.10	.13	.09	.16	.34
$\Delta R^2$						.19
$F$	15.54***	10.99***	13.79***	9.12***	16.94***	28.00***

Note: N = 518. Coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

The regression results for testing mediation are reported on the right side in Table 2. To establish mediation, four conditions need to be fulfilled (Baron & Kenny, 1986): (1) the independent and mediating variables must be related; (2) the independent and dependent variables must be related; (3) the mediator and dependent variable must be related, and (d) the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable should be weaker (partial mediation) or nonsignificant (full mediation) when the mediator is added. Hypotheses 4 to 7 predict that motivational CQ (H4), metacognitive CQ (H5), cognitive CQ (H6), and behavioral CQ (H7) are positively related to the intention to work abroad and mediate the relationship between language skills, international experience, networks abroad, and the intention to work abroad. The four dimensions of CQ are all positively related to the intention to work abroad. Therefore, hypotheses 4, 5, and 7 are partially supported, as networks abroad and international experience had an effect on all four CQ dimensions, while language skills had an effect solely on cognitive CQ. Given the influence of all three distal variables on cogni-

tive CQ, hypothesis 6 is fully supported. The results demonstrate that, after the four cultural dimensions were taken into account, the effect of international experience became nonsignificant, which suggests full mediation. The effect of networks abroad became weaker, albeit still significant, which suggests partial mediation. Following the procedures suggested by James, Mulaik, and Brett (2006), we also tested the mediation using structural equation modeling. We compared a full mediation model ( $\chi^2 = 383.00$ ;  $df = 148$ ; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .06) with a partial mediation model ( $\chi^2 = 375.83$ ;  $df = 145$ ; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .05) as well as with a non-mediated model ( $\chi^2 = 500.73$ ;  $df = 149$ ; CFI = .90; RMSEA = .07) and compared the fit indices across these alternative models. The results indicate that the partially mediated model had the best fit and, consequently, confirmed the results of the regression analyses. We also employed Sobel's (1982) tests and bootstrapping analyses to confirm that the mediating effects were significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). Overall, the results support the mediation condition for the four CQ mediators and further suggest the direct impact of networks abroad on the intention to work abroad.

We then examined whether the interactions for CQ and CD were significant in predicting the intention to work abroad. As shown in Table 3, moderation effects are supported if the model containing the interaction terms represents a significant improvement of the explained variance over the model containing the direct effects only (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For all four CQ variables as well as CD, we centered all variables prior to entering them in the models to minimize multicollinearity with the interaction terms. Variables are centered when the mean score is subtracted from each case prior to computing the interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). All variance-inflation factors in the regressions were below 2, suggesting that multicollinearity does not affect the analyses (Allison, 1999). We followed the recommendations in the literature and regressed intention to work abroad on the predictor variables in three steps: (1) control variables, (2) independent variables, and (3) the interaction variables. If the change in  $R^2$  is significant for the third model, then one can conclude the moderation is significant. Hypotheses H8a to H8d predict that CD moderates the relationship between a) motivational CQ, b) cognitive CQ, c) metacognitive CQ, d) behavioral CQ, and the intention to work abroad in such a way that a larger CD results in a stronger effect of the respective CQ dimension on the intention to work abroad. Results testing hypotheses 8a to 8d, shown in Table 3, revealed that CD was a significant predictor of the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad as well as between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. The interaction effect for motivational CQ and CD was not significant. Therefore, hypothesis 8a was not supported. In contrast to hypothesis 8b, CD had a negative moderating effect on the relationship between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. In line with hypothesis 8c, CD had a positive moderating effect on the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. The interaction effect for behavioral CQ and CD was not significant. Thus, hypothesis 8d was not supported. To further validate the findings of the moderated mediation relationships, we examined the conditional indirect effects of language skills, international experience, and networks abroad via the four CQ dimensions determined to be different for individuals who plan to work abroad in countries with higher or lower CD compared to Ger-

many. We used Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes' (2007) significance test to compute the confidence intervals for the indirect effects. We tested moderated mediation separately for each of the three distal variables. Table 4 presents the estimates, standard errors, and confidence intervals. The results confirm the initial findings. In sum, while hypothesis 8c was supported, hypotheses 8a, 8b, and 8d were not supported. A plot of the interaction between metacognitive CQ and CD, displayed in Figure 2, reveals that the positive relationship between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad was weaker for high CD. A plot of the interaction between cognitive CQ and CD, displayed in Figure 3, reveals that the positive relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad was stronger for high CD.

**Table 3: Regression results for testing moderation**

Variables	Intention to work abroad									
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Intercept	2.49	(.37)***	2.45	(.37)***	2.50	(.37)***	2.49	(.37)***	2.45	(.37)***
<i>Main effects</i>										
Language skills	.07	(.04)	.07	(.04)	.08	(.04)*	.07	(.04)	.08	(.04)*
International experience	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)	.00	(.00)
Networks abroad	.18	(.05)***	.18	(.04)***	.18	(.04)***	.18	(.05)***	.18	(.04)***
Motivational CQ	.55	(.05)***	.55	(.05)***	.54	(.05)***	.55	(.05)***	.54	(.05)***
Metacognitive CQ	.41	(.05)***	.41	(.05)***	.39	(.05)***	.41	(.05)***	.39	(.05)***
Cognitive CQ	.34	(.05)***	.34	(.05)***	.33	(.05)***	.34	(.05)***	.34	(.05)***
Behavioral CQ	.38	(.05)***	.38	(.05)***	.36	(.05)***	.38	(.05)***	.37	(.05)***
Cultural distance (CD)	.09	(.04)**	.10	(.04)**	.11	(.04)**	.10	(.04)**	.11	(.04)**
<i>Interaction effects</i>										
CD × Motivational CQ	-.01	(.03)							-.03	(.04)
CD × Metacognitive CQ			-.07	(.03)*					-.08	(.04)
CD × Cognitive CQ					.09	(.03)**			.07	(.04)
CD × Behavioral CQ							-.01	(.03)	-.02	(.04)
<i>Controls</i>										
Age	-.02	(.02)	-.02	(.02)	-.02	(.02)	-.02	(.02)	-.02	(.02)
Gender (female)	-.01	(.06)	-.01	(.06)	-.01	(.06)	-.01	(.06)	-.01	(.06)
Semesters	.01	(.02)	.01	(.02)	.01	(.02)	.01	(.02)	.01	(.02)
R <sup>2</sup>	.37		.38		.38		.37		.39	
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.36		.36		.37		.36		.37	
ΔR <sup>2</sup> (Step 2 in Table 2)	.01		.02***		.01*		.01		.03***	
F	24.40***		25.11***		25.38***		24.40***		20.59***	

Note: N = 518. Coefficients are unstandardized; standard errors are in parentheses.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

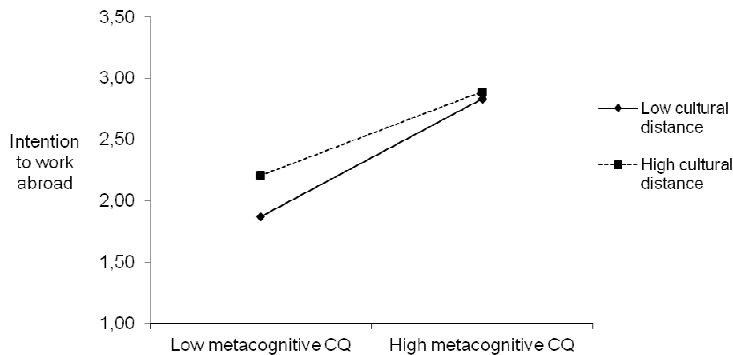
\*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Table 4: Moderated mediation results for levels of cultural distance**

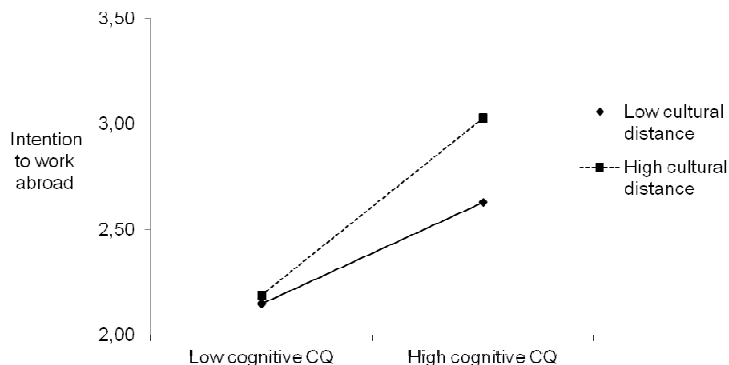
	Moderator: Cultural distance Level	Motivational CQ					Metacognitive CQ					Cognitive CQ					Behavioral CQ				
		Cond. indirect effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Cond. indirect effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Cond. indirect effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Cond. indirect effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI	Cond. indirect effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Language skills	Low	.08	.02	.04	.12	.01	.01	-.01	.04	-.01	.01	-.03	.02	.01	.01	-.01	.03	.01	.01	-.01	.03
	High	.08	.02	.03	.12	-.03	.02	-.08	-.01	.04	.02	.01	.08	.02	.01	.00	.05	.02	.01	.00	.05
International experience	Low	.01	.00	-.00	.01	.00	.00	-.00	.01	-.01	.00	-.01	.00	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	-.00	.01
	High	.01	.00	-.00	.01	-.01	.00	-.01	-.00	.01	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	-.00	.01
Networks abroad	Low	.11	.02	.07	.15	.01	.01	-.01	.04	-.01	.01	-.03	.02	.01	.01	-.01	.03	.01	.01	-.01	.03
	High	.11	.02	.07	.16	-.05	.02	-.11	-.02	.04	.02	.01	.08	.03	.02	.01	.06	.03	.02	.01	.06

Note: LLCI denotes lower level confidence interval and ULCI denotes upper level confidence interval.

**Figure 2: Moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad**



**Figure 3: Moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad**



## Discussion

The first aim of our study was to examine the effect of prior international exposure on the intention to work abroad in order to gain a better understanding of how prior international exposure influences individuals' intention to live and work abroad. We examined how different types of international exposure (language skills, international experience, and networks abroad) influence an individual's intention to work abroad, mediated by the four CQ dimensions. Our results show that international experience and networks abroad have a positive effect on all four facets of CQ. Language skills only have an effect on cognitive CQ. All four CQ dimensions had a positive effect on the intention to work abroad. We found empirical support for the theoretical prediction that CQ mediates the influence of prior international exposure on the intention to work abroad. The effects of networks abroad on the intention to work abroad are partially mediated through CQ, while the effects of language skills and international experience are fully mediated by the CQ dimensions. These findings are consistent with the formulation of theoretical models that propose that the effect of personal characteristics, such as prior international exposure, on cognitive outcomes, such as intention, is mediated by the four CQ dimensions (e.g., Ang & Van Dyne, 2008). This result may explain why prior research on individual characteristics testing models with direct effects of parallel predictors instead of applying indirect intention-based frameworks often lead to inconclusive results. The second aim of our study was to examine the moderating role of CD on the relationship between the four dimensions of CQ and the intention to work abroad. In line with our hypothesis, we found a negative moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. In contrast with our hypothesis we found a positive moderating effect of cultural distance on the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. We found no effect for behavioral CQ and motivational CQ.

### *Theoretical implications*

Our results contribute to the understanding of the mechanism through which the intention to work abroad develops and under which conditions cultural distance to the envisioned foreign destination might be beneficial or detrimental for the intention to work in abroad. We extend prior research by showing that motivational CQ, behavioral CQ, metacognitive CQ, and cognitive CQ are better predictors of the intention to live and work abroad compared to direct effects of individual characteristics such as prior international experience. While in particular larger networks abroad as well as previous international experience positively influence the development of CQ, these results show that all four facets of CQ have a positive influence on the intention to work abroad. Individuals, who possess a high CQ, have a higher intention to search for and accept a position in a foreign country. These findings suggest that networks abroad directly and indirectly influence the intention to work abroad. Prior international exposure can occur through direct international experience, through the observation of others, as well as through foreign language skills. While we found a significant connection between prior international experience and the intention as well as between networks abroad and the intention mediated by the four CQ dimensions, we



found hardly any significant connection between language skills and the intention mediated by the four CQ dimensions. Language skills only positively influence cognitive CQ, whereas they have no significant effect on the other CQ dimensions. Hence, individuals with better language skills develop more cognitive CQ. However, they are neither more motivated, nor do they feel more capable of successfully performing in an intercultural context compared to individuals without language skills. In sum, these findings at least partially resolve ambiguous results of prior research analyzing the direct effects of international exposure on the intention to work abroad.

The results shed light on the moderating effect of CD on the relationship between CQ and the intention to work abroad. The results also show that CD moderates the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad in such a way that individuals possessing a high cognitive CQ develop a stronger intention to work abroad the more distant the culture of the destination. This finding suggests that individuals with more cultural knowledge develop higher levels of intention to work abroad in more distant countries. In other words, the larger the CD between the home country and the country of destination, the more cultural knowledge about the country of destination is required in order to develop the actual intention to work in this country. These results suggest that the interplay between CQ and CD has an important role in the developmental process of forming the intention to work abroad. CD also moderates the relationship between metacognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad. The findings suggest that individuals who possess higher levels of metacognitive CQ develop comparable intentions to work abroad for both countries that are more distant as well as countries that are less distant. Individuals possessing lower levels of metacognitive CQ develop stronger intentions to work abroad for countries that are less distant. Previous studies showed that distance moderates the relationship between individual characteristics and various outcomes in the expatriation context, such as expatriate adjustment (Stahl & Caligiuri, 2005; Zhang, 2013), expatriate effectiveness (Chen et al., 2010), and career success (Cao, Hirschi, & Deller, 2012). Our findings extend this stream of research by showing when and how cultural distance affects the development of the intention to work abroad.

### ***Managerial implications***

The key findings of this study offer several important implications for organizations and management practices. Especially as organizations search for employees for potential foreign assignment, these results provide help in selecting and training employees for stays abroad, thus contributing to an efficient expatriate selection process (Bonache, Brewster, & Suutari, 2001) and improving expatriate mentoring (Mezias & Scandura, 2005). Specific cultural training and mentoring increase expatriate job satisfaction (Froese, 2012). As previous literature has shown that CQ has a positive influence on the success of a foreign assignment (e.g., Kim, Kirkman, & Chen, 2008; Lee & Sukoco, 2010), the HRM of an organization may want to search for employees who are culturally intelligent or have potential to be culturally intelligent. An analysis of applications and resumes might help to detect individuals with international exposure, which, according to these results, is positively related to CQ. Since language skills are important determinants of CQ, organizations might also invest in language trainings

before international assignments in order to increase the CQ of potential expatriates. In addition, providing access to a network in the destination country as well as contact to prior, current, and future expatriates might also help to develop CQ, which prepares employees better for the foreign assignment. As CD moderates the relationship between cognitive CQ and the intention to work abroad, it becomes important for HRMs to invest in knowledge of the foreign culture (e.g., knowledge about economic and legal systems, values and norms, or linguistic rules), especially if the expatriate plans to work in a country with a very different culture than the home culture. An individual's intention is a good predictor of future behavior (Armitage & Conner, 2001). Therefore, the intention to work abroad can be seen as a necessary condition for a successful expatriate assignment. Our results provide valuable information for practitioners on how to efficiently select and train employees for international assignments.

### ***Limitations and future research directions***

Our findings need to be interpreted in the context of several limitations. First, the study examined three international exposure factors. While the three factors included in this study have been identified by prior research as important determinants of CQ as well as the intention and willingness to work abroad, there are other exposure variables that might have an influence on CQ. Eisenberg, Lee, Brueck, Brenner, Claes, Mironski, and Bell (2013) propose that education, especially courses in cross-cultural management, might positively affect CQ and found a positive effect of such education on two of the four CQ dimensions. In addition, this study does not include a qualitative dimension that assesses, for example, whether the prior international experience has been perceived as a positive or negative experience. Negative experience in a foreign culture could lead to an unrealistic view about the host culture (Peltokorpi, 2008). Second, the sample consisted of business students, which limits the generalizability of the results. Given the changes in the demographic structure with the workforce and the importance of the transmission of tacit knowledge within the organization, expatriation in later career stages might be a crucial success factor for organizations. Future studies might examine different age groups in order to detect differences in the formation of CQ and its influence on the intention to work abroad in different career stages and life phases of employees. Third, this study used a relatively broad operationalization of networks abroad, in particular examining the network sources. Future research might investigate the strength of the different ties (strong ties vs. weak ties) in the foreign country for the development of CQ and the intention to work abroad (Mäkelä & Suutari, 2009). Fourth, the data rely on a self-report study and might be prone to social desirability bias. However, self-report measures assess an individual's own perspective (Barker, Pistrang, & Elliott, 2002). Even though intentions are measured as accurate predictors of subsequent behavior (e.g., Ajzen, 1991), future research might assess actual behavior of working abroad with longitudinal studies. Finally, the cross-sectional character of the data does not allow testing for causality of the observed effects. The hypothesized effects of international exposure and CQ on intention could be studied over time to exclude the possibility of causal bias as well as to test the effect of the intention to work abroad on the actual behavior. Despite these limitations,

our results provide a better understanding of the factors that facilitate CQ and the intention to work abroad.

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