# Minimizing Cross-Cultural Maladaptation: How Minority Status Facilitates Change in International Acculturation

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Culturally savvy organizations recognize that selecting and developing people who can be effective in a global workforce is important in today's business environment. Nevertheless, many companies struggle to identify and develop talent who are happy and successful working and living outside their home country. We examine 1 factor that may foster success in a host country—minority status in 1's home country—as a predictor of change in acculturation over time. Specifically, we draw on the conservation of resources model to suggest that international students who have been a member of more minority groups in their home country have unique experiences working with dissimilar others that offer advantages when acculturating to new cultures and novel situations. Then, change in host country acculturation is explored as a mechanism to explain how minority status in the home country relates to intentions to leave the host country and psychological well-being 6 months after entry. Two moderators (cultural intelligence, perceived diversity climate of the host institution) of these relationships are also examined. Results revealed that the relationship between minority status in the home country and change in host country acculturation was positive and stronger for those with higher cultural intelligence. Further, the relationship between change in host country acculturation and psychological well-being was positive when perceived diversity climate of the host institution was high, but was not significant when perceived diversity climate was low.

*Keywords:* minority status, cultural intelligence, well-being, perceived diversity climate, international students

Globalization has contributed to a dramatic increase in people living, going to school, and/or working, outside their home countries (Pisani, 2008). In the United States, 12.9% of the population (Britz & Batalova, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), 5% of students in higher education (Institute of International Education, 2015), and nearly 17% of the labor force in 2017 were foreign-born (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). In this paper, we define foreign-born people as anyone who is not a U.S. citizen at birth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Accordingly, many organizations (e.g., schools, workplaces) are reliant on people who go overseas to accomplish a job-related goal (Sinangil & Ones, 2001; cf. Wang & Takeuchi, 2007), contributing to a global environment within many organizations. Foreign-born persons (e.g., students,

workers) are particularly susceptible to high turnover and low levels of well-being (Ang et al., 2007; Black & Gregersen, 1999; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Garonzik, Brockner, & Siegel, 2000). Despite numerous calls for empirical inquiry on how to reduce turnover and foster psychological well-being among foreign-born persons (Fischlmayr & Kollinger, 2010; van der Zee, Ali, & Salomé, 2005; Wang & Kanungo, 2004), research has not explained fully the international adjustment process. For example, the selection research has focused primarily on personality (e.g., the Big Five, self-monitoring, social initiative), language skills, and international experience as predictors of adjustment and retention in foreign-born persons (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Mol, Born, Willemsen, & Van Der Molen, 2005; Oh & Kilduff, 2008; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006). Though these factors are important, maladjustment and turnover among foreign-born people remain high. This suggests the need for new approaches to better understand the acculturation and cultural adaptation process.

The current study develops and tests a model of how one's minority status in his or her home country fosters adjustment in an international experience. We argue that individuals who are minorities in their home country are uniquely prepared for interactions with people different from themselves (e.g., host country nationals). Though minority status is often considered a liability