

# *IBI Quarterly*

vol. 1 no. 2 – Spring 2002

## **Assessments in the Intercultural Field: The Intercultural Readiness Check and the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire**

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*Executive work is becoming more international in orientation and more and more employees have to be able to operate within foreign cultures. Many companies select high performers from their local firm for international assignments, assuming that their success will translate into the foreign work environment. However, competences related to success in the local firm may not suffice for success in an international context. Moreover, competences that traditionally have contributed to high performance may not even suffice in the local business environment either. Due to increased migration and personnel exchange following mergers and acquisitions, local business environments have become more culturally diverse, such that many employees of locally operating firms now have to be able to interact with colleagues and customers from cultural backgrounds other than their own.*

What then does it take to succeed in an intercultural work environment? Answers to this question will greatly be appreciated by international companies who are willing to invest in the selection and training of staff members operating across borders. Numerous factors have been proposed as contributing to success in intercultural work settings (see, for example, Adler, 1983; Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Campbell, 1990; Ronen, 1989). Drawing on ratings by international assignees, Arthur and Bennett (1995), for example, suggest five factors related to international success: Flexibility/Adaptability, Job Knowledge and Motivation, Relational Skills, and Extra-Cultural Openness. In an overview of the literature, Hannigan (1990) arrives at comparable factors:

Cultural Empathy, Openness for Ambiguity, Flexibility combined with Perseverance, Absence of Dogmatism, and Tolerance.

These competences all seem plausible and relevant, but are they indeed decisive? One obstacle to answering this question is the lack of a solid conceptual and theoretical framework that characterizes most of the studies cited above. Without such a framework, we do not know what exactly the proposed factors are – for example, are they fairly stable personality traits or rather trainable skills? If they are more or less stable traits, then little can be done within a realistic time span about the traits themselves if it turns out that a candidate doesn't possess them to a sufficient degree. This may mean that

the risks for an expatriate assignment may simply be too high, or that the candidate needs additional support in order to be able to succeed. In contrast, if the factors capture trainable intercultural skills, then test results can be used to formulate specific training needs and to see to it that such training is undertaken.

Answers to these and similar questions depend on solid empirical research in this area. Such research, however, is scarce (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000). To conduct this research, we need valid and reliable instruments that assess these factors. In this paper we present two such instruments, the MPQ and the IRC. Several studies have provided support for the reliability and validity of the MPQ. In the present study, we tested the psychometric properties of the IRC.

**The Multicultural Personality Questionnaire**  
The MPQ assesses five personality dimensions that seem relevant to multicultural effectiveness: Cultural Empathy, Open-mindedness, Social Initiative, Emotional Stability and Flexibility (Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001). *Cultural Empathy* refers to the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of members from different cultural groups. *Open-mindedness* refers to an open and unprejudiced attitude towards out-group members and towards different cultural norms and values (see Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Harris, 1973; Hammer et al., 1978; Ronen, 1989). *Social Initiative* is defined as a tendency to actively approach social situations and to take the initiative rather than to wait and see. *Emotional Stability* refers to a tendency to remain calm in stressful situations (e.g., Abe and

Weisman, 1983; Armes and Ward, 1989; Church, 1982). *Flexibility* has been discussed as important by a number of authors (among them, Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Ruben and Kealey, 1979; Torbiorn, 1982). In intercultural situations people need to be able to switch easily from one strategy to another, because familiar ways of handling things may no longer work. Moreover, they should not be afraid of new and unknown situations but instead feel attracted to them (e.g., Kets de Vries and Mead, 1991; McCall, 1994).

In earlier research, Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001) obtained support for the internal structure and construct validity of the MPQ. They also provided support for the concurrent and predictive validity of these dimensions against success and well-being in an intercultural context. In a longitudinal study among international students in Taiwan, Mol, Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2001) showed that higher scores on the MPQ are associated with a higher sense of psychological and social well-being in an intercultural context. In a study involving 106 students at international business schools, Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee (2002) found that the MPQ predicted aspects of adaptation and social interaction. At the beginning of the term, Open-mindedness correlated with physical health and subjective well-being; Emotional Stability correlated with psychological health. Emotional Stability also predicted psychological health after a period of 6 months. Likewise, Cultural Empathy predicted physical health after this period; moreover, Flexibility and Social Initiative predicted subjective well-being, and Social Initiative predicted the quality of social



interaction (defined as peer support and absence of negative social experiences).

These studies show the value of sound instruments for investigating personality factors contributing to intercultural effectiveness (see also Deller, 2000, who like wise investigated the influence of personality factors on intercultural effectiveness). Results do show that personality instruments can help us to better understand what is needed for successful adaptation and social interaction in intercultural work environments. However, in many situations we may wish to know more about the more dynamic aspects of a person's competences, i.e., about the skills that we can train in order to support people to function successfully in an intercultural context.

To this end, IBI developed the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC). We designed items of the IRC in order to assess six factors that we considered relevant for multicultural effectiveness. We will briefly present these factors, and then present results concerning the validity and reliability of the IRC.

What are the skills that are essential to effective functioning in an intercultural context? We assume that successful performance in intercultural settings depends on a number of factors, which include perceptual, communicative, interpersonal and managerial competencies, and the ability to tolerate uncertainty. With respect to perceptual ability, we were particularly interested in Intercultural Sensitivity. The intercultural sensitivity dimension (e.g., Hawes and Kealey, 1981) is probably the most frequently mentioned

dimension of cultural effectiveness (e.g., Arthur and Bennett, 1995; Cleveland, Mangone and Adams, 1960). In the area of intercultural training, Landis (1996), among others, stresses the importance of sensitivity to and adequate interpretation of intercultural differences. He demonstrated the effectiveness of training perceptual skills with the goal of changing participants' cognitions in ways considered relevant for intercultural settings. Empirical evidence that intercultural sensitivity is related to intercultural success has been provided by Hawes and Kealy (1981). We consider the dimension of *Intercultural Sensitivity* to cover the ability to recognize multiple perspectives on an event or behaviour, the ability to take into account norms and values that differ from one's own, and the ability to empathize with culturally different others. Flexibility of perspective taking, for example, is necessary in order for people to understand that their preferred way of doing things is but one of several possible approaches, and that members of other cultures may have different perspectives and preferences.

In line with Furnham (1989) and Furnham and Bochner (1986) and others, we assume that intercultural situations also require specific social skills. In particular, we focused on three of these skills: Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Relationship Building and Conflict Management. *Intercultural communication* is undoubtedly more difficult than mono-cultural communication. Empirical evidence indicates differences in communication style between people, depending on their national and ethnic background (Li, 1999; Tung, 1988). Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman (1978) asked cross-



culturally effective students to assess the importance of several dimensions discussed in the literature on multicultural effectiveness. Communication skills were rated as crucial for multicultural effectiveness. In the present study, we define *Intercultural Communication* to include both the ability to correctly interpret communicative intentions behind verbal and nonverbal behavior, and the ability to effectively communicate both verbally and nonverbally. Unlike Intercultural Sensitivity, the dimension refers to actual behavior in communicative situations. We call it Intercultural Communication to indicate that it depends on how flexible people are in adapting to communicative requirements that differ from those of their home culture.

*Intercultural Relationship Building* has likewise attracted a lot of attention in the literature. Several researchers have argued that the ability to establish and maintain contacts is relevant for multicultural success (Hawes and Kealey, 1981; Kets de Vries and Mead, 1991). Abe and Weisman (1983) and Hammer et al. (1978) provide empirical evidence for its relevance. The third dimension of social skills concerns *Conflict Management*. Two individuals, an individual and a group, or two groups, are said to be in conflict when and to the extent that at least one of the parties feels it is being obstructed or irritated by the other (Van de Vliert, 1998). According to Van de Vliert, each direct or indirect response to a conflict issue constitutes conflict management. In the present study, conflict management is defined in a normative sense, that is, to refer to the ability to deal with conflicts *effectively*. Conflict management has received little attention in the literature so far as being critical

for intercultural success. This is surprising given the clear tradition of research on conflict and diversity suggesting that cultural diversity tends to increase conflicts in work organizations (Jehn, Chadwick and Thatcher, 1997; Jehn, Northcraft and Neale, 1999). In general, communication is facilitated if others approach important issues from the same point of view. Similar points of view are also rewarding in that they confirm our judgments (Byrne and Clore, 1970; Newcomb, 1961). In intercultural interactions, the people involved tend to act according to their norms and values. To the extent that culture has influenced these norms and values, they will differ across partners (see Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Tajfel, 1982). Accordingly, communications between culturally different individuals can be difficult, complicating their coordination and making them vulnerable to interpersonal and managerial conflicts. Therefore, the ability to deal effectively with conflicts, and to reconcile different perspectives, seems an important prerequisite for multicultural effectiveness (see also Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2000).

Managerial or leadership skills refer to the extent to which employees support and champion others in the organization and unit (Campbell, 1990; Ones and Viswesvaran, 1997; Viswesvaran, 1993). Campbell (1990) mentions facilitating peer and team performance as important factors in his performance model. We define *Leadership* as the ability to stimulate interaction and collaboration between people, and to take the lead while at the same time keeping others on board. We also assume that it involves sensitivity to the dynamics within larger groups of people inside and outside the



organization, an understanding of these dynamics and the ability to benefit from it. A high score on this dimension is particularly relevant in managing multicultural teams and team members from cultures other than one's own.

Finally, we were interested in the ability to deal with uncertainty, termed *Preference for Certainty*, defined as the tendency to avoid uncertain and unpredictable environments. Hofstede (1980/2000, 1991) defines Uncertainty Avoidance as the amount of ambiguity about the future that can be tolerated, and proposes that this value orientation explains differences in organizational and national cultures. Hofstede uses the term to capture differences in value orientations between cultural groups, while our term Preference for Certainty intends to capture differences between individuals. As such, it is more closely related to what Ronen (1989) and Arthur and Bennet (1995) call Tolerance of Ambiguity, again in the context of dimensions relevant to international success. Preference for Certainty seems particularly related to the ability to adapt to new and unknown features of an intercultural context, features that threaten predictability.

In sum, the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC) was developed in order to assess the 6 dimensions Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Relationship Building, Conflict Management, Leadership and Preference for Certainty. The present study concerned the psychometric evaluation of the IRC. We first examine the internal structure and validity of the IRC by drawing on data from a sample of international employees, and then evaluate the psychometric

qualities of the IRC against the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire. Recall that the IRC-scales are intended to assess competencies with a clear skill component, i.e., trainable competencies, while the MPQ assesses competencies with a trait component. However, the dimensions targeted by both instruments, are clearly conceptually related. We therefore decided that the two overlap sufficiently in order to warrant testing the IRC's psychometric properties by comparing it to the MPQ.

We expected the following relationships between scales of the IRC and the MPQ. We assumed that the IRC-scale for Intercultural Sensitivity should correlate most strongly with the MPQ-scale for Cultural Empathy. Recall that Cultural Empathy refers to the ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of members from different cultural groups. Both terms thus seem conceptually close and at times are even used interchangeably in the literature. We expected the IRC-scales referring to interpersonal and managerial skills (Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Relationship Building, Conflict Management and Leadership) to correlate most strongly with the MPQ-scale of Social Initiative. We expected the IRC-dimension for Preference for Certainty to correlate most strongly with the MPQ-scale assessing Flexibility in that both refer to an ability to deal with unpredictable and uncertain situations.

We furthermore undertook an initial test of the predictive validity of the IRC by using two indicators of international orientation, intercultural aspiration and previous experience of living abroad.



## Method

### Participants and procedure

One-hundred and thirty-seven individuals participated in the study. Sixty-five percent of the participants were male, 35 per cent was female. Table 1 gives an overview.

Age	Percent of respondents	Nationalities (total 21)	Percent of respondents	Education	Percent of respondents
< 20	1.6	Dutch	33.6	Middle education	4.8
21-28	19.4	Belgian	11.2	Higher education	17.7
29-36	29	British	10.4	University Degree	74.2
37-44	29	German	8.8	Other	3.2
44 >	21	US-American	8.0		
		Other	28		

Respondents received a questionnaire containing the MPQ, the IRC and questions concerning their biographical background, and were asked to fill in the questionnaires at home.

Questionnaires were returned by fax, by electronic mail or by regular mail. Upon request, participants received feedback on their MPQ-results.

### Instruments

The MPQ was used as an indicator of personality. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes. Scale scores were obtained by taking the unweighted mean of the item scores, after first recoding the items that were mirrored. In case of missing values, the personal mean over the remaining scale items was computed, provided at least half of the items were answered.

Each IRC scale consisted of items describing concrete behaviors considered to indicate a given dimension. The scale for Intercultural Sensitivity consisted of 29 items, for example, *Is aware of own cultural values* and *Likes to interact with people who hold different beliefs*. The scale for Intercultural Communication consisted of 28 items, including items like *Picks the right moment for raising difficult topics* and *Is able to control expression of anger*. For Intercultural Relationship Building we formulated 14 items, for example, *Uses existing contacts to build new networks* and *Feels uncomfortable with initiating contacts with others*. Conflict Management included eight items, such as *Knows how to combine different value orientations to maximize the outcomes for all parties in a conflict* and *Sees compromise as the best possible solution when dealing with conflicting interest (-)*. The scale for Leadership consisted of 15 items, including items like *Sees which people could work well*



together and *Stimulates people to contribute*. Finally, Preference for Certainty was composed of 9 items, for example, *Feels comfortable with having to change plans* and *Performs best when absolutely sure about the situation*. Participants could answer on a 5-point-scale, ranging from *totally not applicable* [1] to *completely applicable* [5], and needed approximately 10 minutes to complete the instrument. Again, scale scores were obtained by taking the unweighted mean of the item scores, after recoding the items that were mirrored. In case of missing values, we used the same procedure as described above for the MPQ.

The biographical questionnaire contained questions on the respondents' age, gender, national and cultural background, educational level and profession. In addition, respondents were asked to assess how much experience they had living in another country on a 5-point scale ranging from *never* [1], *less than 6 months* [2], *7-12 months* [3], *1-2 years* [4] to *more than 2 years* [5]. Seven additional items were included referring to international inspiration defined as self-rated aptitude for and interest in intercultural activities (e.g., *I can perform well in a job that involves cross-cultural interactions* and *I like having a profession that involves working abroad for longer than three months*). The reliability of this scale was high ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

## Results

### Internal Structure of the IRC

First, we examined scale characteristics of the a priori IRC-scales. The scales for Intercultural Relationship Building and Conflict Management were only moderately reliable.

Except for Preference for Certainty, which seemed reasonably independent, all scales were interrelated. A principal component analysis was performed to examine the internal structure of the instrument more closely. After varimax rotation, four factors emerged with eigenvalues  $> 4$  that explained 29.4% of variance. The first factor had items referring to Intercultural Sensitivity, such as *Is aware of own cultural values* and *Picks up picks up the emotional signals behind people's words*. The second factor was labelled Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation. High loadings on this factor were found for items that refer to executive behaviors such as *Gets others committed*, *Encourages exchange between people* and *Is able to identify networks relevant to his/her business context*. This factor corresponds to the Leadership scale described in more detail above. We decided to term the factor Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation rather than Leadership for two reasons. First, the term does capture what we considered to be shared by the items of the scale. Second, we felt that calling our dimension Leadership would be too dependent on certain culture-specific interpretations of what leadership means. To avoid imposing such a culture-specific interpretation on the feedback we give to future IRC respondents, we decided to use a more neutral term.

The third factor had items referring to a preference for stable, familiar and predictable environments, for example, *Avoids networks whose organization is unfamiliar* and *Sticks to own circle of people*. This captures what we termed Preference for Certainty. The final factor was labelled Intercultural Communication. Sample items are *Tends to criticize others' way of*



*doing things* (-) and *Picks up the right moment for rising difficult topics* (+). No support was obtained for separate dimensions for Intercultural Relationship Building and Conflict Management.

Next, scales were developed by selecting those items that a) had a loading on one factor that exceeded .35, and b) had loadings below .30 on the remaining three factors. Table 2 reveals the scale means, the number of items of the resulting scales as well as reliabilities and intercorrelations. The table reveals that all scale means were biased in the direction of the social desirable scale end, indicating a possible social desirability bias. We will discuss the role of social desirability in more detail below. The reliability of the scale for Intercultural Communication was satisfactory, the reliabilities of the scales for Intercultural Sensitivity, Preference for Certainty and Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation were high. The four scales were moderately correlated.

(cf. Table 2, p. 16)

Relationship between the IRC and the MPQ  
As shown in Table 3, we found significant raw correlations of each IRC-scale with the five MPQ-scales, except for the correlation between Intercultural Sensitivity (IRC) and Emotional Stability (MPQ), which was insignificant. Hierarchical regression revealed that, in line with our hypotheses, Intercultural Sensitivity was indeed best predicted by Cultural Empathy. Unexpectedly, Intercultural Communication was most strongly related to Cultural Empathy and Emotional Stability, and not, as we predicted, to

Social Initiative. Consistent with our predictions, Building Commitment/Enhancing Collaboration was most strongly related to Social Initiative. Finally, we found, as predicted, a strong relationship between Preference for Certainty and Flexibility. Thus, the pattern of relationships with the MPQ-scales went in the expected direction, supporting the construct validity of the IRC.

(cf. Table 3, p. 16)

Group differences on the IRC and the MPQ  
Gender-differences were found for none of the IRC-scales but were found for the MPQ-scale Emotional Stability, with females scoring lower than males. Age was significantly related to three of the four IRC-dimensions, and again for Emotional Stability. The older participants were, the *higher* they scored on Intercultural Communication, Building Commitment/Enhancing Collaboration (both IRC) and Emotional Stability (MPQ), and the *lower* they scored on Preference for Certainty (IRC). No effect of educational level on the results was found, possibly due to the low variation in participants' level of education. We also examined the influence of executive responsibility. Participants had been asked to indicate how many co-workers directly reported to them. Interestingly, this indicator was significantly related to the MPQ-scales for Social Initiative and Emotional Stability, such that with more executive responsibility, participants scored higher on Social Initiative and Emotional Stability. For the IRC-scales, we found that Intercultural Communication, Preference for Certainty, and Building Commitment/Enhancing Collaboration, were significantly



related to executive responsibility, again indicating that with more executive responsibility, participants' IRC scores went in the desirable direction. These relationships sustained after controlling for the effect of age. The only exception was the relation between executive responsibility and Preference for Certainty, which was no longer significant. Overall, the MPQ-scales explained 22% of the variance in executive responsibility, and IRC-scales explained 34% of the variance.

#### Indicators of International Orientation

Next, we tested to what extent both instruments would predict participants' international orientation. First, we computed the correlations between the scale scores from both instruments and our 7-item indicator of international aspiration. This indicator correlated significantly with all scales from both instruments, except for Emotional Stability (MPQ). Hierarchical regression analysis was performed in order to compare the predictive value of both instruments. Regression of international aspiration on the MPQ-scales revealed that, together, the MPQ-scales explained 55% of variance in our criterion, compared to 40% for the IRC. Apparently, the MPQ-scales are slightly more predictive. Significant independent predictors were the MPQ-scale for Open-mindedness and the IRC-scales for Intercultural Sensitivity and Preference for Certainty (for which the relation was negative, as we expected). A second indicator of intercultural orientation was the extent to which participants had already lived in a country other than their home country. The pattern of raw correlations revealed that this indicator was significantly related to the MPQ-scales for Open-mindedness, Social

Initiative and Flexibility and to the IRC-scale for Preference for Certainty. Separate regression analyses of previous experience on the scales of each instrument showed that the MPQ-scales explained 14% of the variance in previous experience with Open-mindedness as significant independent predictor, and that the IRC-scales explained a somewhat higher percentage of variance (17%), with Preference for Certainty as the main predictor. Both instruments appeared to be about equally predictive of both criteria, with the IRC-scale for Preference for Certainty and the MPQ-scale for Open-mindedness as most important predictors.

## Discussion

The present study compared two instruments for multicultural effectiveness: the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) and the Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC). Earlier studies already provided evidence for the internal structure and construct validity of the MPQ-scales (Cultural Empathy, Open-mindedness, Social Initiative, Emotional Stability and Flexibility) as well as evidence that the instrument significantly relates to international aspiration, well-being and social adjustment in an international context (Mol, Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2001; Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001; Van Oudenhoven and Van der Zee, 2002). Most of these studies, however, included students as subjects. In contrast, the subjects of the present study were employees of internationally operating companies, who were thus highly representative of the group for which the MPQ was developed. The present study therefore represented an additional test of the MPQ, and,



as described in detail in Van Oudenhoven and Brinkmann (2002), its results again support the MPQ's psychometric qualities. Scale reliabilities were sufficiently high and factor analyses provided reasonable support for its internal structure. This is remarkable, given that the subject group was highly heterogeneous with respect to age, profession, national background, and native language.

The study was the first psychometric test of the IRC. Factor analysis confirmed four of the a priori scales: Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication, Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation, and Preference for Certainty. Unfortunately, Conflict Management and International Relationship Building were not confirmed as separate scales. Both scales were subsumed under the remaining factors Intercultural Sensitivity, Intercultural Communication and Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation.

For both instruments, the scale means were higher than the midpoint of the scale. This indicates that the scales are keyed in the socially desirable direction. It is unclear whether this indeed reflects a social desirability tendency or whether people tend to actually behave in socially desirable ways (Edwards, 1953). While we cannot answer this question at this point, we have reason to assume that social desirability did not dominate the results: On the whole, the scales of the instruments were only moderately interrelated. The influence of social desirability may be larger in selection situations in which respondents have a strong interest in presenting a positive image of one's traits and skills. Under those circumstances, combining self- with other

ratings on the scales is likely to provide more valid outcomes (see also Van der Zee and Van Oudenhoven, 2001).

To examine the construct validity of the IRC, intercorrelations of the four dimensions with the MPQ-scales were examined. As predicted, the scale for Intercultural Sensitivity correlated most strongly with Cultural Empathy, Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation with Social Initiative and Preference for Certainty with Flexibility. As mentioned earlier, the scale for Intercultural Communication was more strongly related to Cultural Empathy and Emotional Stability than to Social Initiative. In retrospect, the former finding is not surprising: The ability to empathize with the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of individuals from a different cultural background is clearly a prerequisite to effective intercultural communication. The correlation with Emotional Stability may be due to those items of the IRC-scale that refer to criticizing others and being impatient in communicative situations. These items imply reference to potentially difficult communicative actions, which therefore are likely to be emotionally taxing. Management of these emotional responses is critical to effective intercultural communication in that they may otherwise lead a person to inadvertently cause loss of face. Avoidance of loss of face in turn is essential for communicative success in all interactions (Brown and Levinson, 1977), and tends to be especially difficult in intercultural interactions (see, for example, Ting-Toomey, 1994).

Both instruments were about equally predictive of intercultural aspiration and actual experience,



with Open-mindedness and Preference for Certainty as most potent predictors. While intercultural aspiration may be confounded with these predictor measures, the indicator of previous experience is unobtrusive and does not share any method variance with either instrument. The findings are in accordance with Deller's (2000) study among German expatriate employees in Korea. Deller found a positive relationship between Openness and Tolerance of Ambiguity and expatriate adjustment as assessed by the Alienation Adjustment Scale.

The pattern of correlations of the IRC-scales with the MPQ-scales and with indicators of interest in international work provide evidence that the IRC does indeed assess relevant and important aspects of intercultural competence. But do we need both instruments? After all, IRC- and the MPQ-scales *are* highly interrelated and the MPQ already predicts international orientation and explains about the same variance as the IRC. Nevertheless the data demonstrate the advantage of having both instruments at our disposal.

Recall that our goal in developing the IRC was to assess trainable intercultural competencies rather than more stable traits, while the MPQ was developed to measure such traits. The data clearly suggest that we succeeded in this endeavour: The IRC-scales revealed far stronger age influences than the MPQ. Age correlated with three of the IRC-scales (Intercultural Communication, Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation and Preference for Certainty) in the expected direction, but correlated with only one MPQ-scale (Emotional Stability). Moreover, controlled for the effect of

age, executive responsibility correlated with two IRC-scales in the expected direction, i.e., Intercultural Communication and Building Commitment/Enhancing Cooperation. Here again the IRC was more predictive of executive responsibility than the MPQ.

### Conclusion: When to use the IRC and the MPQ

We recommend using both instruments if you need to decide about an expatriate assignment. Expatriate assignments are highly taxing, and wrong decisions extremely costly – both psychologically and financially (see Brinkmann and van Weerdenburg, 2002, for an overview of research in this area). For these decisions, then, you may wish to gain as much information as possible. We also recommend that the partner and/or family of the candidate fill in the two instruments, as the well-being of an expatriate's partner/family can affect the quality and duration of the assignment.

Low scores on the IRC profile will indicate specific training needs (see below). Low scores on the MPQ may indicate that it is better not to go/send the person abroad. Such a dramatic decision, however, should be weighed against the requirements of the task, with factors like degree of managerial responsibility, cultural distance between the host and the home culture, availability of social and logistic support in the host culture, and degree of required social interaction all influencing the decision (see Tung, 1988). In case of doubt, you may also wish to include additional assessments, for example, the Intercultural Development Inventory (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, 1998),



which assesses attitudes towards cultural differences such as Defense versus Acceptance. In earlier work, we found that the attitude of Defence toward cultural difference is unaffected by amount of international experience, which suggests that candidates scoring high on Defence at the beginning of their assignment are likely to maintain that attitude throughout the assignment, with potentially negative implications for their intercultural effectiveness (Brinkmann and van Oudenhoven, 1999; see also IBI Quarterly 1).

For decisions about the right type of intercultural training (for example, training for members of multicultural teams), use of one instrument will be sufficient. In this case, we recommend using the IRC, as it is focused on trainable skills rather than personality traits. The IRC will provide company-internal decision-makers with information about which type of training they should invest in (for example, whether to focus on intercultural communication skills, multicultural teamwork, skills for managing in an international environment, etc.). As a provider of intercultural trainings, you can use the IRC profiles of your participants in order to decide both about appropriate training content and process (see J.M. Bennett and M.J. Bennett, 1998, for important work in this area). For example, you may wish to include training modules and exercises specifically designed for improving participants' Intercultural Sensitivity (Landis, 1996). For emotionally challenging exercises like role plays, you can use the IRC scores to assign participants to certain roles. For example, a participant who strongly prefers certainty should better not be confronted with a role that

requires highly flexible responses to unpredictable situations: As a result of such a confrontation, the participant may 'shut down' and no longer be willing to be open toward and interested in the topic of cultural difference (see Castelan Cargile and Giles, 1995, for potentially negative effects of role plays like Bafa Bafa). These are just some examples of how the IRC can help you to customize your training and consultancy to the specific needs of your client.

What do you need to do in order to use these instruments in your work?

The MPQ is the sole propriety of Dr. Jan Pieter van Oudenhoven and Prof. Dr. Karen van der Zee (University of Groningen, The Netherlands). Intercultural Business Improvement is licensed to use the MPQ in their direct work with clients. If you wish to use the MPQ for company-internal purposes, please contact Prof. Dr. Karen van der Zee or Dr. Ursula Brinkmann.

If you are interested in using the IRC in your work, please contact the office of Intercultural Business Improvement. You may also wish to consider participating in one of our IRC Licensing Courses. The next IRC Licensing Course is scheduled for August 29-30, 2002. You will find detailed information about this course on our website: <http://www.ibinet.nl>, Section IBI Services.



If you have any questions that this paper has not addressed, or wish to receive additional information about our work in the area of intercultural assessment, please do not hesitate to contact us at Intercultural Business Improvement. We will be happy to be of help.

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	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	2	3	4
Intercultural Sensitivity (22 items)	3.77	.38	.86	-.30*	.54*	.33*
Preference for Certainty (17 items)	2.36	.50	.86		-.40*	-.35*
Building Commitment/ Enhancing Co-operation (11 items)	3.79	.49	.84			.42*
Intercultural Communication (10 items)	3.63	.44	.72			

Significance levels \*  $p < .01$

	Intercultural Sensitivity		Uncertainty Avoidance		Building Commitment		Intercultural Communication	
	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>r</i>	$\beta$
Cultural Empathy	.69**	.46**	-.34**	.12	.55**	.21**	.40**	.32**
Open-mindedness	.66**	.39**	-.54**	-.27**	.58**	.25**	.28**	-.01
Social Initiative	.32**	-.01	-.43**	-.10	.67**	.43**	.26**	.05
Emotional Stability	.07	-.15*	-.50**	-.26**	.44**	.21**	.42**	.34**
Flexibility	.29**	.02	-.70**	-.49**	.28**	-.13	.18**	-.03
<i>R</i>		.52		.75		.78		.77
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.26		.57		.62		.60

Significance level \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

