Perceptions of Being International: Differences between British Adolescents Living Abroad and those at Home

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British adolescents living in Hong Kong and British adolescents living in the United Kingdom formed the two samples of adolescents who completed Hayden, Rancic and Thompson's (2000) 32-item instrument. Instead of following the original authors' approach to the analysis of the instrument, a more comprehensive technique was adopted. The data were first factor analysed to reveal new factor structures that were different from those in the original instrument. Subsequent MANCOVA and ANCOVA found that there were comparative differences in all of the new variables between the British expatriate adolescents and local British adolescents. The differences found in this study are concerned with international awareness, international mobility, flexibility, respect for others and national identity that British expatriate adolescents believed were the factors of being international.

International student, adolescents, expatriate, living abroad, factor analysis, Hong Kong, United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, those who go overseas on business tend to be single and predominantly male (Aryee, Chay and Chew, 1996; Borstorff, et al., 1997), but increasingly, overseas assignments are becoming a popular career move for female executives (Chusmir and Frontczak, 1990). Therefore, there is also an increase in the number of expatriate executives who take their family members on assignments with them as most of the suitable expatriate candidates are married and have children (McCoy, 1986; Regan, 1994; Sievers, 1998). This research study focuses on the children of these business expatriate families who have been largely overlooked in business expatriate research and even in educational research. They are only just starting to emerge as a point of interest (de Leon and McPartlin, 1995; Gerner and Perry, 2000; Gerner, et al., 1992; Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000; Useem, 2001).

The study of people with experiences and backgrounds in multi-cultural settings has been an interesting one. Debate over whether such multi-cultural experiences and backgrounds should have any effect on an individual's life has generated much discussion in previous literature. Some researchers have pondered about the differences by studying the immigrants' home culture and the new culture that they have resided in (Park, 1928; Stonequist, 1935). Other researchers have seen this as a matter of process and that eventual adaptation of the new culture is seen to replace the old one (Green, 1947; Golovensky, 1952). However, opinions have changed over time and it is generally agreed that people who have experience of living in a different culture for a period of time have developed different attributes and behaviours (Useem, 2001). The current research

looks at the needs of children of business expatriates and the need to include these results in the literature (Gerner and Perry, 2000; Gerner et al., 1992; Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000; Useem, 2001).

Useem (2001) describes children who are the accompanying members of internationally mobile families as 'third-culture kids'. In general, this definition portrays the children of families who are working overseas on corporate assignments, but the term has also been applied to military and missionary families stationed in foreign countries. Research on expatriate children has provided examples of their ability to adapt to new cultures. These children appear to possess the special skills and multi-cultural abilities to handle their everyday interactions with other people whether they are from different cultures or not. They are claimed to have preferences arising from their international mobility such as the desire to travel and foreign language ability (Gerner, et al., 1992; Gerner and Perry, 2000; Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000; Sampson and Smith, 1957; Useem, 2001). These assertions are not speculation as many of the current researchers in this field, including ourselves, have had similar multi-cultural experiences and some researchers had even observed such traits in their own children (Gerner and Perry, 2000).

Third-culture kids are described as individuals who have spent a significant part of their adolescent years in cultures other than the culture of their parents; developing a sense of belonging to all of the cultures they have been exposed to while not claiming full ownership to any of them (Fail, 1996). A typical anecdote would depict these adolescents as having a curious 'cultural marginality', which describes an individual living at the edges of two or more cultures, never really understanding those cultures but experienced enough not to offend anyone from any of them (Bennet, 1993; Kerckhoff and McCormick, 1955; Park, 1928; Schuetz, 1944; Siu, 1952; Stonequist, 1937).

RESEARCH QUESTION

The general exposure to other cultures together with the expatriate adolescents' normal period of development should endow these young people with cultural and behavioural frames of references from all the cultures that they have been exposed to. This would, in effect, result in the expatriate adolescents being more culturally aware than their peers who were brought up in a single culture (Bennet, 1993; Stonequist, 1935; Useem, 2001). Expatriate adolescents may take into consideration all the values of the cultures that they have been exposed to before taking any action that is a general compromise for the parties concerned. It may be hard for expatriate adolescents to agree and commit to any one course of action as their international experience has taught them that they must refer to their specially developed frames of references to seek a course of action so that no one is offended (Bennet, 1993; McCaig, 1991; Schaetti, 1999). With this in mind, we believe that expatriate adolescents should be able to develop a special mental capacity as a result of being international.

Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000) discovered that expatriate adolescents studying at international schools do differ in their assessment of their perceptions of being international more than their international school teachers. The bulk of the literature used American adolescents in the studies of third-culture kids (Gerner, et al., 1992; Useem 2001). However, we have not found any reported studies that investigated perceptions of being international that focussed on British adolescents living abroad. Therefore, in this study we intend to investigate British adolescents living in an overseas location and those living in the United Kingdom. The results of this study should be able to answer our principal research question.

Do British expatriate adolescents develop a different perception to being international than their peers at home?

METHODS OF RESEARCH

Instrument

Many of the investigations on expatriate adolescents seem to be somewhat simplistic in their design (de Leon and McPartlin, 1995; Gerner et al., 1992; Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000; Useem, 2001). They take the form of observations and qualitative reports, as many of them are exploratory studies (Useem, 2001). Further, some researchers have attempted a quantitative approach with psychometric instruments in the form of a questionnaire (Gerner, et al.. 1992; Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000). This study uses the original instrument developed by Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000) which has nine dimensional subscales: (a) international experiences, (b) parental factors and type of institution attended, (c) second language competence, (d) neutrality, (e) open-mindedness, (f) attitude towards other value systems and culture, (g) attitude towards own values systems and culture, (h) respect for others, and (i) tolerance of the behaviour and views of others.

The randomised order of statements was adopted from the original Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000) instrument. To maintain the original instrument's psychometric properties, there was rewording of only two statements. In addition, some explanatory words were supplied that had similar meanings in order to help the respondents understand difficult words or phrases in the statements.

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) 'strongly agree' to (5) 'strongly disagree'. The instruction, "*In order to be international it is necessary …"* as a guide to what to think about when answering the instrument was placed at the beginning of the list of items of the instrument in bold type and in a larger font.

The instrument used in this study to measure the perception of being international was constructed by Hayden, Rancic and Thompson (2000). It used an indirect method of questioning that projected the statements to a third-party rather than asking the respondents directly. This form of indirect questioning is called structured projective questioning (Fisher, 1993) and offered a glimpse into the hidden crevices of their (respondents') soul (Weschler, 1951). This meant that the answers or responses given were the actual psychological beliefs of the respondents (Fisher, 1993). Therefore, by using indirect questioning, we were actually probing the degree of the adolescents' perception of being international that provided an insight of how strongly international experiences affected their frame of reference.

Location

Hong Kong was a British colony for more than a century and a half. Its social structure and economy developed separately from mainland China so that even when Hong Kong returned to Chinese control in 1997 the colony was promised autonomy for another 50 years. The education system in Hong Kong is similar to the British system with primary, secondary and higher education, and all public institutions are funded to some extent by the Hong Kong Government. All children must attend public schools until they reach the third year of secondary school when they have a choice of continuing their education, joining a vocational course or leaving school. Education spending was 55.3 billion Hong Kong dollars in 2001/02 representing 19 per cent of the total of the Hong Kong Government's spending (Information Services Department, 2002). However, despite this spending, the language standards, both English and Chinese, have dropped over the last decade (Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, 2002).

Sample

Convenience sampling was used whereby two groups of British adolescents were selected for this research. The demographic breakdown of these two groups is shown in Table 1. There were responses from 63 British expatriate adolescents living in Hong Kong. In this group there was a total of 51 (81%) males and 12 (19%) females, their mean age was 14.1 years old (s.d.=1.6). They had lived in Hong Kong for a mean period of 35 months. Also, 28 of British adolescents in Hong Kong had lived in other countries as well. To avoid possible confusion only those who were born in the United Kingdom were included in the sample studied in Hong Kong.

Table 1. Demographics

Demographic Factors		British Expatriate Adolescents, n=63	Local British Adolescents, n=88
Place of Birth	United Kingdom	63	88
Gender	Male (%)	51 (81%)	26 (30%)
	Female (%)	12 (19%)	62 (70%)
Average Age in Years (s.d.)		14.11 (1.63)	14.66 (1.41)
Average Months in Hong Kong		33.8	
Lived in Other Countries (%)		28 (44%)	

The second group of respondents were British adolescents selected from several locations in the United Kingdom. A total of 88 respondents was used in the analysis, and only respondents born in the United Kingdom who had never lived abroad were included. There were 27 (31%) males and 63 (69%) females in this groups whose mean age was 15 (s.d.=1.4) years old.

RESULTS

Factor analysis

Instead of simply summing-up the items and comparing the means item-by-item as the original authors did, our analysis was more rigorous. The data set was analysed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) v.10 for Windows. The factor structure showed the relationships between the manifest and latent variables. The resultant latent variables were the basis for the research findings.

The whole data set was analysed initially using principal components factor analysis. The extracted components were then rotated orthogonally using the Varimax rotation procedure (with Kaiser normalisation) to show the hypothesised factor structure (Merenda, 1997). The result of the factor analysis is shown in Table 2 displaying each of the new factor's core components and corresponding Cronbach's alpha. The factor analysis revealed six factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 and item loadings of greater than 0.40 on relevant factors. Factor analysis accounted for 69.6 per cent of the variance, which is considered high (Kerlinger, 1986). Barlett's test of sphericity was highly significant (3411, $p<0.001$) and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.91, which is more than satisfactory (Hair et al., 1995).

Descriptive statistics and correlations

The descriptive statistics for the five latent variables are shown in Table 3. The magnitude of the correlations is found to be generally high indicating a potential multi-co-linearity problem. However, the results of our factor analysis indicate that the variables are distinct and our findings are therefore not entirely attributable to method variance.

Table 2. Factor analysis component matrix for Perceptions of Being International

Items	Loading	Alpha
Factor 1: International Awareness		**0.94**
not to feel my culture is superior to others.	0.74	
to be willing to try to find a pathway through an issue which does not offend people of any culture.	0.73	
to be willing to cooperate with other people.	0.70	
to be prepared to observe the cultural conventions of others when in their presence.	0.70	
to be aware of the cultural conventions of people from other parts of the world.	0.67	
to mix with people from other cultures rather than just live alongside them.	0.64	
to tolerate the views of others even though I do not agree with those views.	0.63	
to accept that all people have the right to express their views freely.	0.60	
to read newspapers and books from other cultures (either in their original language or in translation).	0.58	
to encourage others of different cultures to learn about my own culture.	0.55	
not to identify strongly with one culture	0.54	
to be prepared to have my personal opinions challenged.	0.54	
to be informed about people from other cultures.	0.54	
Factor 2: International Mobility		**0.88**
to have lived in more than one country.	0.74	
to have traveled in a number of countries.	0.73	
to be interested in what happens in other parts of the world.	0.60	
to be able to speak to more than one language fluently.	0.58	
not to be narrow minded.	0.53	
to be prepared to compromise over my own views.	0.51	
Factor 3: Flexibility		**0.83**
not to have any strong views of my own.	0.78	
to attend an international school/college.	0.71	
to have parents who are 'internationally minded'.	0.63	
to tolerate the behaviours of other people even though I find that behaviour completely unacceptable.	0.59	
to challenge preconceptions of others of different cultures.	0.58	
to be prepared to change my opinions about an issue.	0.56	
Factor 4: Respect for Others		**0.81**
to accept the rights of other people to put their views into practice within their own society, even though such practice would be unacceptable within my own society.	0.80	
to respect another person's viewpoint, even though if I totally disagree with it.	0.64	
to tolerate the views expressed by others even though I find those views completely unacceptable.	0.61	
to be more interested in the individual and his/her personality than in which his/her culture is from.	0.46	
Factor 5: National Identity		**0.54**
to have parents who are not both of the same nationality.	0.80	0.37 i.i.c.
not to identify strongly with one national system.	0.56	

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.
Alpha: Rotation converged in 13 iterations.
i.i.c.: inter-item correlation

Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations of the five new variables

	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5
1. International Awareness	2.02	0.67	1.00				
2. International mobility	2.12	0.82	0.79**	1.00			
3. Flexibility	2.72	0.78	0.62**	0.68**	1.00		
4. Respect for Others	2.19	0.66	0.74**	0.61**	0.52**	1.00	
5. National Identity	2.88	0.80	0.37**	0.52**	0.47**	0.40**	1.00

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Sample differences

Using analysis of variance (ANOVA), statistical significant differences were found between the two groups of British adolescents in terms of the background variables age and gender (Table 4).

Since the developing characteristics and traits of adolescents may be associated with either or both of these background variables (Neilsen, 1996; Newman and Newman, 1997), they can be used as covariates in the further analysis of the two adolescent groups.

Table 4. Sample differences

	Mean (s.d.)		Univariate *F*-ratio
	British expatriate adolescents, n=63	British home (UK) adolescents, n=88	
Sex (1=male, 2=female)	1.19 (0.40)	1.69 (0.46)	48.6**
Age	14.11 (1.63)	14.67 (1.41)	5.1*

** p <0.001, * p <0.01

Analysis

A summary of the five-by-two multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is shown in Table 5. There is an overall significant effect between the two groups of adolescents *(F=29.1, p<0.001) and* we also found significant differences are reported for each of the variables between the groups (p<0.001).

Table 5. Summary MANCOVA and ANCOVA analysis

	Mean (s.d.)		Multivariate Effect	Univariate *F*-ratio
	British expatriate adolescents, n=63	British home (UK) adolescents, n=88		
			29.11***	
1. International Awareness	1.56 (0.43)	2.37 (0.60)		71.98***
2. International Mobility	1.47 (0.44)	2.55 (0.65)		100.78***
3. Flexibility	2.08 (0.49)	3.18 (0.60)		97.97***
4. Respect for Others	1.79 (0.44)	2.48 (0.64)		48.11***
5. National Identity	2.50 (0.63)	3.17 (0.78)		18.91***

*** p <0.001

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

1. International Awareness

There are 13 items that formed this variable giving a Cronach alpha (α) of 0.94 (Nunnally, 1978). This latent variable, reveals what 'being international' is all about. The formulation of this variable comes from the expatriate adolescents' understanding that multi-cultural awareness and the acquisition of further cultural knowledge contributes to being international.

Items such as 'not to feel my culture is superior to others' and 'not to identify strongly with one culture' form the basic idea behind being international and multi-cultural awareness. There has been a general consensus among writers that expatriate adolescents who have been exposed to cultures other than their own in an overseas setting may develop cultural values and traits that were neither for nor against any of the cultures that they had experienced, including their own (Minami, 1993; Nagao, 1998; Schaetti, 1999; Sutherland, 2000; Useem, 2001). The exhibition of cultural neutrality by the expatriate adolescents might have arisen from the fact that holding strongly to their own cultural values would get you nowhere in a different or multicultural setting like Hong Kong. This culturally neutral awareness might have developed when expatriate adolescents entered a new country, a new social environment, or perhaps a new school. To make new friends from other cultures would have involved the additional sensitivity of not openly commenting to others about their customs or way of dress, for example. Therefore, cultural neutrality was an integral part of international awareness, and it was an admittance of not complying wholly to a person's own or any other cultural values, but rather being more receptive towards other people and their culture (Bennet, 1993).

The second part of the international awareness variable comes from the expatriate adolescents' understanding that the way to develop cultural knowledge is by being international. Sample items are 'to read newspapers and books from other cultures (either in their original language or in translation)' and 'to be informed about other cultures'. It is believed that the British expatriate adolescents felt that an appreciation of the knowledge gained from other cultures helped them to develop, support and maintain an international stance and outlook (Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000; Useem et al., 2001).

There were four items which factored on this variable that are also noteworthy: 'to be willing to cooperate with other people', 'to tolerate the views of others even though I do not agree with those views', 'to accept that all people have the right to express their views freely', and 'to be prepared to have my personal opinions challenged'. It was thought that these items showed signs of the students' ability to be cooperative, to be tolerant, and show sound moral reasoning. Adults might find these abilities to be part of their knowledge base that might be use regularly. Indeed these abilities had been developed in most adults from late adolescence, but the British expatriate adolescents had a mean age of 14.1 (s.d.=1.6) years, and they were between their early and middle adolescent period of development where these abilities had not yet fully developed (Neilsen, 1996; Newman and Newman, 1997). It was believed that these expatriate adolescents developed these abilities ahead of their peers and the only rational explanation was that the expatriate adolescents' had international exposure (Pollock and Van Reken, 1999).

2. International Mobility

Six items contributed to this latent variable with an acceptable reliability of 0.88 (Nunnally, 1978). The items showed that some obvious aspects of international movement and travel might contribute to being international. Examples are (a) 'to have lived in more than one country' and (b) 'to be able to speak more than one language fluently'. The sample of British expatriate adolescents could almost be described as seasoned expatriates with 44 per cent of them having lived in other countries outside of the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. However, in the business expatriate literature, at least, the amount of previous international experience did not appear to affect or prepare someone for an international move (Selmer, 2002), but the evidence presented suggested that these British expatriate adolescents certainly think that it did.

This finding might not be contradictory, but is supplementary instead. The business expatriate literature refers to findings about adults who had fully developed cultural values and behaviours, however, expatriate adolescents had not developed these behaviours (Neilsen, 1996; Newman and Newman, 1997). Rather, adolescents as a whole were *tabula rasa*, a blank slate, and could absorb new cultural information very quickly (Muss, 1968). International travel may have prepared these British expatriate adolescents to be open to new international and cultural contacts as there are two items indicating that openness was needed in international mobility; 'not to be narrow minded' and 'to be prepared to compromise over my own views'. The understanding of these abilities is important, (a) not to generate a stereotypical image of the place or the people (Sampson and Smith, 1957; Stuart, 1992); and (b), to be able to examine new perspectives that were respected abilities even in adults. Also, the British expatriate adolescents in the sample would seem to have developed a desire for international news and information and to learn other languages fluently to support being international and their desire for international mobility.

3. Flexibility

This latent variable contained six items from the factor analysis and had an acceptable reliability of 0.83 (Nunnally, 1978). Flexibility in being international, as described by the British expatriate adolescents in this study, is thought of first as mental flexibility or flexibility in the ways of thinking. This can be seen in the items 'not to have any strong views of my own', 'to tolerate the

behaviours of other people even though I find that behaviour completely unacceptable', and 'to be prepared to change my opinions about an issue'. This is reflected in anecdotal evidence (McCaig, 1991; Minami, 1993; Schaetti, 1999; Sutherland, 2000), but has rarely been recorded statistically.

Second, international flexibility could be promoted by having parents with an international outlook, 'to have parents who are 'internationally-minded''. In general, adolescents did not mix well with their parents during this important developmental stage of their lives, but the British expatriate adolescents in this study seemed to think that parental input contributes to their flexibility in being international much more than their peers back home do. The reason for this parental and family harmony might be due to the fact that these expatriate families needed to be mutually supportive especially when going to live in a new and different country. This idea is supported by the research of Schaetti (1999), Stuart (1992), and Sutherland (2000). In the first few months of an international move, when all family members, were trying to get settled, it might be necessary to share new experiences with other family members. Another contribution to international flexibility came from attending an international educational institution, 'to attend an international school/college'. Most of the British expatriate adolescents living in Hong Kong seem to attend an international educational institution of one kind or another. The expatriate adolescents might feel that these institutions are able to give them international flexibility because these educational institutions typically contain a varied selection of expatriate adolescents. An international school in Hong Kong might have students from more than 16 countries. In effect, a typical school day in one of these institutions may be likened to visiting 16 countries in just one day (de Leon and McPartlin, 1995; Kanno, 1996; Kumagai, 1977). This argument lent support to Hayden, Rancic and Thompson's (2000) and Hayden and Thompson's (1997) general finding that international school children found that attending international institutions contributes to their being international.

4. Respect for Others

Four items gave this variable an acceptable reliability of 0.81 (Nunnally, 1978). There were three items that included accepting, respecting and tolerating other people's views. A typical item was 'to accept the rights of other people to put their views into practice within their own society, even though such practice would be unacceptable within my own society'. Rather than just acknowledging differences, the variable suggested that British expatriate adolescents felt the actual acceptance and tolerance of the differences between cultures and people were important to being international. To respect others certainly showed positive signs of acceptance but toleration is a little more ambiguous since to tolerate might mean that some one was being forced to accept the views or opinions of others. As ambiguous as it might be, to tolerate might be better than an unconsidered acceptance of the differences between cultures and people. It was thought that these British expatriate adolescents felt that to tolerate might actually involve a process from initial encounter to accepting the differences, and in between, the expatriate adolescents may challenge their own values or understanding of the matter and form a better perspective of it for the future. Again, the ability to reason is certainly a trait that older adolescents might have developed properly (Neilsen, 1996; Newman and Newman, 1997), but the average British expatriate adolescent in this study were still in their early or middle adolescent, suggesting that international living encourages them to develop these qualities faster than their home counterparts.

The final item in this latent variable points to being interested in the actual person rather than their cultural heritage. It is a rather revealing that British expatriate adolescents appeared to have developed a 'world-mindedness' attitude in their interactions with other people. The expatriate adolescents saw through the national or cultural veneer of the individuals they were talking to and saw people as they really were. In fact, when the expatriate adolescents were approached to fill in the questionnaires and were asked if they were British, some of them had to stop and think before

they replied, "*I'm originally from England, but I've been in Hong Kong (or another place overseas) a long time…*" It seems that these British expatriate adolescents wanted others to see them not as belonging to a single place but as world-minded people belonging to the world (Sampson and Smith, 1957).

5. National Identity

Two items that formed this latent variable were, (a)'to have parents who are not both of the same nationality' and (b)'not to identify strongly with one national system'. This variable had a Cronbach alpha of 0.54 but since Cronbach's alpha was, to some extent, a function of the number of items, Nunnally (1978) suggests that the inter-item correlation (*i.i.c.*) is a better measure of reliability for two-item factors. In this case the *i.i.c.* is 0.37.

The British expatriate adolescents might think that they did not need to rely on or be identified with one culture or nationality. Similarly, the expatriate adolescents could try to prove that singularity of origin may even be a barrier to being international. From the discussion of Variable 4. *Respect for Others*, the British expatriate adolescents in this study felt that it was hard to describe where their place of origin was. Many authors have described the problem of identity and attributed it to the confusion that young people might experience when they are brought up in a mixture of cultures (Gerner, et al., 1992; Kanno, 1996; Kumagai, 1977; McCaig, 1991; Minami, 1993; Nagao, 1998; Sampson and Smith, 1957; Schaetti, 1999; Sutherland, 1999; Tsai, Ying and Lee, 2000; Useem, 2001). However, it was felt that this might not completely explain the situation. Expatriate adolescents might want people to know about their international abilities and their so-called 'internationalness' rather than just being associated with the nationality that was on their passports. In general, adolescents wanted to stand out, and in order to be exclusive with a so-called 'in-crowd', this sample of British expatriate adolescents might have wanted just that. The only thing that would really set them apart was their cross-cultural abilities (Ussem, 2001). Furthermore, having parents of different nationalities definitely would provide many international benefits, such as, cultural mixing, multiple language familiarity, and food variety. Perhaps, this might also be the reason expatriate adolescents thought that having internationally minded parents also contributed to being international.

Variable 6

The sole item that loaded to form this factor was 'to be prepared to defend my own value system to those who do not share it'. Unfortunately, since single-item variables are often poorly defined and unreliable it was decided not to discuss this factor, nor include it in the analysis so that a parsimonious solution could be retained from the factor analysis (Saranga and Knezevic, 2000; Scher, 1997; Tabachnick and Fidell, 1989; Tiffany, Carter and Singleton, 2000).

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that only one national group of adolescents is investigated in a single host location. Since Hong Kong is a modern metropolis that offers more contemporary conveniences than other places, this may have introduced some bias to the investigation. It would be rather interesting to see whether data collected from a location lacking the modern amenities available in Hong Kong would yield similar results. In addition, the approach to the data collection in this study might be biased since it is done with a self-report questionnaire. However, the general condemnation of self-reporting methods is found to be over-exaggerated (Crampton and Wagner, 1994). The fact that an indirect method of questioning is used that projects the statements to a third-party to obtain actual psychological beliefs reduces the social desirability bias (Fisher, 1993). Nevertheless, it is desirable to reduce any problems of method bias by arranging the items of the instrument randomly to remove the problem of respondents'

dependence on a cognitive set of rules when evaluating items intended to measure constructs that are supposed to be conceptually different (Lord and Maher, 1991).

It was necessary to use a convenience sample and cross-sectional analysis in this study. Convenience samples may have produced data with ensuing statistical limitations (Ackoff, 1953), but the use of convenience samples could be justified in exploratory investigations such as in the current study (Ferber, 1977; Frankel and Frankel, 1987; Smith, 1983). The cross-sectional nature of this investigation might have made the causal inferences doubtful and a longitudinal study over a period of time with improved investigative control might have produced a far more convincing result (Menard, 1991). However, the fact is that longitudinal studies on the whole are expensive and take much more time and commitment from the respondents involved. Further, business expatriate executives and their families usually stay in a foreign location for only a limited time, making the choice of an appropriate method of investigation particularly limited.

Implications

One obvious implication that can be inferred from these results is for large multi-nationals or institutions with global interests to consider older expatriate adolescents as a credible source for their international human resources. These expatriate adolescents may constitute ideal business executives to be sent on foreign assignments, especially with their international perceptions already molded and shaped from living abroad in other cultures. This experience alone already qualifies many business expatriate candidates since organisations can only provide their candidates with cross-cultural training in the artificial setting of lectures and simulations (Gudykunst, Guley and Hammer, 1996) that often yields dubious results (Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Deshpande and Viswesvaran, 1992; Selmer, 2002).

It suggests that educational institutions should bear in mind the special abilities that these expatriate adolescents may have developed and should encourage the nurturing of these qualities. Educational institutions such as international schools and colleges should generate a curriculum that supports and encourages such international perspectives in expatriate adolescents, and indeed in all their students, expatriate or not. However, at the moment, it seems that teachers in these international educational institutions are not particularly in tune with the international perceptions of their responsibility, and attention may be needed as to the way in which 'being international' is being portrayed (Hayden, Rancic and Thompson, 2000). Careful attention is needed to help expatriate adolescents understand their multi-cultural identities in order for these young people to be able to use their special abilities constructively throughout their lives and not let these abilities become a burden to them (Alvah, 2000; Bennet, 1993; Nagao, 1998; Pollock and Van Reken, 1999; Useem, 2001). Educational institutions in the home culture need to know how to treat returning expatriate adolescents.

Many expatriate adolescents have reported feeling neglected and isolated when they return to their home countries (Alvah, 2000; Cortell and Useem, 2001; Minami, 1993; Pollock and Van Reken, 1999; Useem, 2001). First, students say that the educational establishments do not openly show much appreciation of the usefulness of their international experiences. Second, their peers do not understand or want to share the expatriate adolescents' international experiences. The neglect and isolation adds pressure to the conflicting perceptions of how the expatriate adolescents perceive their international experiences. In some cases, expatriate adolescents seem to prefer to forget about their international experiences and revert to their home culture norms. Others have become reclusive as they are not able to use their international experience (Useem, 2001). Therefore, home educational establishments should provide training for the teachers who supervise these returning expatriate adolescents. Schools may also establish counselling to assist the returnees to retain the specialised international and cross-cultural advantages that these adolescents have gained which may become one of their most valuable assets (Bennet, 1993).

Parents of these expatriate adolescents also need to realise what special children they have and help foster international perspectives in them. Unlike adolescents living in their home country, expatriate adolescents may have replaced the need for peer association with parental support. Certainly, the amount of time being spent with parents increases dramatically when travelling and living in different locations around the world (Stuart, 1992; Useem, 2001). The transitional nature of expatriate adolescents' lives makes it difficult to bond closely with friends of the same age group, but parents are usually present during their travels. Taking advantage of this positive family relationship, parents of expatriate adolescents could support their children's international developments in many ways and simply inquiring more about their experiences is one method. Since parents have become the expatriate adolescents' peer group, the parents are in a position to get closer and know if their children are having developmental problems associated with their international experiences.

CONCLUSION

It is demonstrated in this study that British expatriate adolescents living in Hong Kong have a more varied view than their home country counterparts in terms of being international. The results provide empirical evidence to support previous presuppositions and anecdotal evidence on the distinct characteristics of adolescents with international experience. A rigorously designed empirical investigation is used in this study to enable statistical comparisons to be made between expatriate adolescents and their local peers in the home country. Whereas the previous application of the instrument by its authors used simple means comparisons, the responses to principal components factor analyses were made to identify a statistically valid factor structure for both samples and variables measured.

Finally, the results of this exploratory investigation offer empirical findings on promising expatriate recruitment sources as well as important practical implications that are directly relevant to corporate globalisation. The findings also point to the need for a more careful curriculum design in educational institutions in locations that cater for expatriate adolescents that can help to support international perspectives. There should also be support from educational institutions in home country for returning expatriate adolescents who might feel uncomfortable in the single-culture environment of their home country. Furthermore, parents of these expatriate adolescents should spend more time and effort encouraging their children's sense of being international.

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