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LOCAL-EXPATRIATE CONTACT, CULTURAL CONTRASTS, AND THEIR ROLE
IN EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

The aim was to examine Turner's (1985) self-categorization theory and contact theory (Stephans, 1987) among expatriates working alongside host country nationals in Malaysia. *Meta-contrast ratios* are differences between self (expatriate) and others (Malaysian host country nationals) compared with the difference between self and less "exotic" others (fellow expatriates). Do they mediate between social contact and expatriate adjustment? Ninety-three expatriates from one expatriate community were surveyed about their level of social contact with (i) host country nationals and (ii) fellow expatriates. To assess meta-contrast, participants made comparisons on socio-cultural and psychological variables between themselves and fellow expatriates and between themselves and local hosts. This was then tested as a mediator between expatriates (i) level of social contact with host country nationals and fellow expatriates, and (ii) their overall expatriate adjustment. Fellow expatriates were consistently perceived as more similar to participants on socio-cultural and psychological indicators than host country nationals ($F(16,77) = 15.13, p < 0.000$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.832$). Mediation was not supported. Instead social contact and meta-contrast had direct effects on socio-cultural adaptation. Expatriates who perceived more similarity between themselves and host country nationals had better adjustment. This research has implications for both theory and practice. The operationalization of Turner's (1985) concept of meta-contrast provided a useful integrative measure of the competition for socialization between expatriate and local communities, with consequences for adjustment. A significant percentage of expatriates had no social contact with host country nationals, suggesting employers might enable more social contact with host national communities, especially during the orientation phase.

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Local-Expatriate Contact, Cultural Contrasts, and their Role in Expatriate Adjustment in Malaysia

Chapter 1: Introduction

Expatriate adaptation and retention is a key concern to multi-national organizations, in part because of high costs involved. When expatriation fails, resulting in early return of the expatriate, substantial financial losses accrue. Although there are no recently published figures, a commonly used formula puts the financial cost of failure at three times the expatriate's annual salary in addition to repatriation costs (Harvey, 1983). It has been estimated this figure is somewhere between 300,000 and 1 million dollars US, per failure (Maurer & Li, 2006). The most recent studies examining failures rates on foreign assignments have produced varied estimates of early return rates between 10-45 % (GMAC, 2008). This figure is higher than the domestic turnover rate for professional employees. For instance a UK based survey of 2,295 workplaces found the annual domestic turnover rate for higher-educated employees was 7.2% (Brown, Granno & Martin, 2009). Moreover, expatriate failure rates are conservative as they only represent early return and not adjustment-related, under par performance (Lee, 2007). Hence gaps between domestic and international rates of turnover may be due to the "international" nature of the experience. This project focuses on that experience.

Of course, financial cost is not the only consideration in early return, and possibly not the major one. The effects on expatriates and host counterparts themselves, along with their joint projects, can presumably also be considerable. Nor is the issue liable to be affected by recession. Despite the recent economic downturn, expatriation figures have continued to increase. Mercer's (2008) audit of 243 US-based multinational companies found that expatriate numbers have increased by 90% in three years to year end 2008.

There are also indications that while many companies are considering alternatives to long term expatriate assignment, they are optimistic that numbers will continue to increase in the foreseeable future, as companies continue to fill skill gaps, transfer management practices, and expand into “developing” markets. Hence, early return looks set to be a continuing social, personal and economic issue (GMAC, 2008).

“Expatriate adjustment” has been defined as the process through which an expatriate comes to feel comfortable with a new environment (Huang, Chi & Lawler, 2005). This adjustment is important as it is a likely indicator that the expatriate will successfully complete their assignment and be more satisfied in their work and home life (GMAC, 2008). Given the high frequency and high social, personal and, economic costs of turnover, a large base of research has gathered focused on isolating the factors causing difficulty in expatriate adjustment. Research has focused in particular on cross-cultural adjustment and failure, in terms of the characteristics of the individual, and their ability to cope with transition (Toh & Denisi, 2007). The present study expands that perspective on expatriate adjustment. It includes the impact of the social context. In particular, it includes the role and impact of both host country nationals and fellow expatriates, in the adjustment process.

To do so, the research draws on self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985). This theory highlights mechanisms that help versus hinder intergroup relations, and hence precisely focuses on social context. The research firstly aims to find out whether social contact with host country nationals can help break down the barriers between expatriates and host country nationals, thus easing the expatriate’s adjustment. A second aim is to assess the impact of social contact with fellow expatriates, and especially whether such in-

group links, whilst supporting expatriates directly could also, ironically inhibit relations with host country nationals – ultimately disrupting the adjustment process in a wider, international sense. In summary, do fellow expatriates and host country nationals act as competing socializing agents for the expatriate newcomer?

A core construct of self-categorization theory speaks to this idea of competing social agents: Turner's (1985) concept of *meta-contrast* means the contrast; that is, the *difference* between you and me, can appear smaller when contrasted to the *difference* between us and some other, more visibly different out-group (meta-contrast). Meta-contrast is thus a proposed mechanism through which social identities become consolidated, often at the expense of developing new links with a more different out-group (Turner, 1985). Meta-contrast can become a barrier to good inter-group relations because it pushes the mildly different closer together, and further from the rest (in this case, "local" hosts). A natural tendency, Turner (1985) argues, is for individuals to emphasize or exaggerate similarity with in-group members, and emphasize or exaggerate differences with out-group members. This process entrenches group boundaries and aids the identity-building process by providing an individual with understandings of *who they are* and *who they are not*. Unfortunately though, in this process, new links may be stunted. Operationally, meta-contrast is defined in this research as the perceived difference between self (expatriate) and potential out-group (in this case; host country nationals) over the distance between the self and in-group (other expatriates; Turner, 1991).

As suggested above and shown in Figure 1, this research will explore whether social contact predicts meta-contrast. Specifically, social contact with fellow expatriates may entrench perceptions of difference with host country nationals via meta-contrasts.

Conversely social contact with host country nationals may reduce perceptions of differences (by lowering meta-contrast). Figure 1, also shows that meta-contrast is hypothesized to mediate the effects of social contact on one hand and expatriate adjustment on the other. Put simply, social contact with each group may affect the perceived gap between expatriate guest workers and their hosts, which in turn may make adjustment and associated stresses harder to manage.

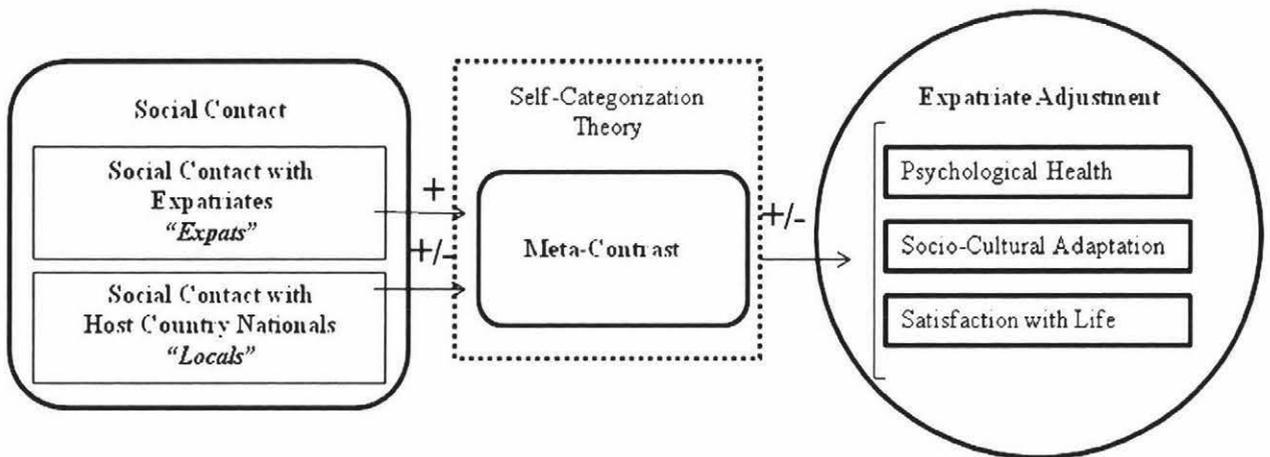


Figure 1. A Model of Expatriate Adjustment focusing on Social Contact, Meta-Contrast and Expatriate Adjustment.

Until recently, there has been a low volume of research on the impact of this social context (in particular the host country national community) on expatriate adaptation. In a review of 249 expatriate research articles within the PsycINFO database from 2000 to 2009 only six focused directly on the human context and role of host country nationals in expatriate adjustment (Wang, 2002; Au & Fukuda, 2002; Wiese, 2005; Toh & Denisi, 2005; Varma, Toh & Budhwar, 2006; McGinley, 2008). In view of the difficulties of research focused on the expatriates individual characteristics, this current research argues

for a movement beyond isolating individual characteristics to consider the broader structure which incorporates the social context within which expatriates live, which specifically includes host country nationals and their contribution to expatriate adjustment.

Social Contact: the Role of Host National Counterparts

The role of host country nationals in expatriate adjustment models has previously been seen to be small or negligible (Amir & Bizman, 1973; Church, 1982). Cross-cultural literature however, has put forward the hypothesis that contact between expatriates and host nationals is in fact critical in the adjustment process (Toh and Denisi, 2007). Qualitative studies based on interviews with expatriates while on assignment and expatriate returnees, have highlighted that friendships between host country nationals and expatriates can assist an expatriate to overcome the stresses of the initial phases of adjustment, by helping with cultural knowledge learning, establishing a local support network, and reducing general anxiety and frustration (Selltiz and Cook, 1962; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Selmer, 1999; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk, 2005). Furnham and Bochner (1986) found that sojourners who have close friendships with host country national counterparts at work had a higher level of satisfaction, contentment and success with their experience. Pellico and Stroh (1997), in their research which interviewed expatriate partners and spouses, linked adaptation difficulties with lack of social support particularly from host country nationals. Osland (1995) argued that friendship and mentorship by host country nationals can differentiate between successful and unsuccessful expatriates based on a qualitative study of returned expatriates. In summary, there is evidence to suggest that contact with host country nationals is beneficial

for expatriate adjustment. In Figure 1, social contact with host country nationals is represented as a potentially positive predictor of expatriate adjustment.

One potentially relevant hypothesis is contact hypothesis (Stephans, 1987). Stephans (1987) argues that contact enables knowledge of the other and the ability to reality test socially conditioned generalizations, stereotypes or prejudices. Further, contact enables a dissipation of inter-group anxieties that stem from uncertainty of unfamiliar norms and customs; the fear of being rejected, embarrassed, or discriminated against. In a related vein, Festinger Schachter and Back (1950) argued that propinquity, that is, physical proximity, promotes attraction between people because they are accessible. Through continued contact, the *other* becomes more familiar and known and therefore has a higher possibility of being liked. Festinger and colleagues (1950) discovered that students who lived close to one another were more likely to be liked and considered attractive. This finding further supports Figure 1; social contact with host country nationals may help to break down any perceived barriers between expatriate individuals and host groups (lower the meta-contrast ratio) (-).

On the basis of his work on inter-group contact, Pettigrew (1997) suggested that friendship with host nationals works to reduce maladjustment by (i) improving cross-cultural perspective-taking and (ii) promoting positive evaluation of host nationals. A study of Koreans in Seoul versus Tokyo (Kim, Cho and Harajiri, 1997) did find that expatriate integration with host country national communities did reduce negative stereotyping of the Japanese. The expatriate Koreans emphasized more positive characteristics of the Japanese and were less likely to endorse traditional negative stereotypes. Yet empirical evidence is equivocal. Kozmitzki (1996) for example, studied

both German and American born nationals living either at home or expatriated, creating four sample groups – (1) home-based Americans (2) expatriated Americans living in Germany (3) home-based Germans and (4) expatriated Germans living in America. Each group was asked to rate both the desirability and the similarity of the other national group. Kozmitzki (1996) found that the participant's location (home or abroad) did not predict out-group desirability evaluations. However, those living abroad (expatriates) rated the out-group (hosts) as more characteristically dissimilar than home country-based samples. Counter-intuitively, this finding suggests that expatriate contact with host country nationals may not improve relations.

The Kozmitzki (1996) results could possibly be explained by a “crystallization” process (Triandis and Valliliou, 1967), whereby increased inter-group contact sharpens intergroup perceptions and stereotypes, leading to an increased awareness of out-group differences and inequalities. Sherif and colleagues, high profile Robbers Cave experiments (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood & Sherif, 1954) in which summer camp children were separated into groups and then brought into situations of contact with one another, provides some classical evidence that inter-group contact can lead to conflict rather than harmony.

Studies conducted around the *mere exposure effect* (Zajonc, 1980) may provide further insight into why inter-group contact may be disharmonious. The mere exposure effect is a robust finding that exposure to something unfamiliar increases liking of that object. However later studies examining this effect revealed that while initial exposure increased “liking” repeated exposure commonly led to ambivalence or a decrease in liking (Bornstein, 1989; Brooks & Highhouse, 2006). These later studies suggested that on

repeated exposure the new or unfamiliar were re-appreciated to be “not as perfect,” “nor as desirable,” as the person first believed (Bornstein, 1989; Brooks & Highhouse, 2006). Norton, Frost and Ariely (2007) surveyed 294 participants who had used online dating services and found that the more an individual knew about another individual the less they were liked and vice versa. They suggest a *less is more effect* which they believe is due to the “cascading nature of dissimilarity:” (p. 97) Once evidence of dissimilarity is encountered, subsequent information is thought to be interpreted as further evidence of dissimilarity, leading to decreased liking. Referring again to Figure 1, these findings suggest a converse hypothesis to social contact with locals being beneficial: social contact with host country nationals may actually increase the perceived distance between the expatriates and their host national counterparts (i.e., increasing meta-contrast) (+).

Social Contact: the role of Expatriates

Alternatively, it could be argued that being located in a foreign country does not lead to high levels of social contact with local people and fellow workers, quite the reverse in fact. In Koszmitzki’s study (1996) for instance, it is possible and even probable that the participating Americans living in Germany may have continued to work for an American company, belonged to American club and sent their children to an American school and remained socially disconnected from German life because of physical, language and cultural barriers. Having lived in Germany as an expatriate I can verify from observation that such enclaves exist. Hence it is possible that the expatriates enhanced perception of difference with host country nationals is not caused by social contact with, but by defensive isolation from the very visible out-group (host country nationals). It is possible that the salience of one’s pre-existent national identity is heightened because of the ever

present *other* foreign culture. In Figure 1, this scenario is represented by social contact with host country nationals influencing the meta-contrast ratio positively, that is, no or little social contact with host country nationals will increase meta-contrast (+): a higher ratio means a greater perception of difference between expatriates and host country nationals.

To sum up, one possible hindrance to the development of expatriate and host national relations is the associations that expatriates have with each other. In many settings worldwide, there is a tendency for expatriates to socialize predominantly and for some exclusively with fellow expatriates. This “expatriate bubble” phenomenon, has been documented in historical volumes (Courtauld & Holdsworth, 2001; Ampudia, 2007), popular fiction (Luchessa, 2000; Trenowden, 2000; Bell, 2001), and in anthropological studies (Fechter, 2007). Fechter (2007), based on her ethnographic study of expatriates in Indonesia, argues that expatriates create boundaries between themselves and the local communities. She suggests these boundaries are created in order to protect the expatriate from the “unfamiliar” and preserve the expatriate status, but may also exacerbate misunderstandings and greaten the geographical and cultural distance between communities.

It is arguable that these boundaries are in place well before the expatriate arrives, where both the physical setting and assumed expatriate role are strongly reminiscent of a colonial past – housing, schooling and clubs being nestled in an expatriate area or compound and a way of being *an expatriate*, modeled by those around. Expatriates are commonly orientated by fellow “expats” who provide information as to where expatriates live, eat, shop and socialize. While comforting to a newcomer searching for reference

points, I would argue contributes to group boundaries and to the perceived cultural distance between the groups by emphasizing in-group behaviors and norms. Domestic helpers in Malaysia, for example, are referred to by expatriates as “amahs” (a transliteration of the Hindi word ‘ayah’), this word is not Malaysian, but was brought to Malaysia by the first European settlers and has been used exclusively in expatriate circles since - despite suggestion that it is an inappropriate term. Making different choices requires the expatriate to work against a pre-existing system. These examples indicate that group pressures and processes are significant forces in expatriate adjustment and that adjustment maybe more fruitfully examined from a wider contextual perspective.

In Figure 1, the scenario of the “expat bubble” is represented by social contact with expatriates: Expatriates who socialize primarily with their in-group are hypothesized to perceive a greater gulf between themselves and host country nationals (represented by high meta-contrast) and a greater affinity with each other (+). This scenario is hypothesized to negatively impact on expatriate adjustment (Figure 1) by contributing to the expatriate feeling separated from the country and host community in which they live.

Meta-Contrast, Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorization Theory

Meta-contrast (Figure 1) is a concept within self-categorization theory; itself a theory which has emerged from social identity theory. Social identity theory began from an attempt to explain the behavior of individuals when placed in “minimally-defined groups” (Tajfel, 1970; Turner, 1975). These are groups created purely by experimenters with little or no previous relevance to the participants (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy & Flament, 1971). Tajfel and colleagues (1971) found that the participant’s awareness of being in

one minimal (arbitrary) group as opposed to another was sufficient to trigger processes of in-group favoritism, out-group discrimination, and competition.

Social identity theory has since been studied in naturally occurring groups and Tajfel and colleagues (1971) finding of the tendency for in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination have been robustly supported. Hennessy and West (1999) for example, tested social identity theory in a team-based community-health care organization in Aston (USA). They looked specifically at perceptions of intergroup competition in the face of scarce healthcare resources. After collecting questionnaire data from 112 participants, they found that strong work group identification was linked to high levels of in-group favoritism. In a more recent Edinburgh based study, Lonsdale and North (2009) found that in-group favoritism could be found amongst groups of people who shared the same musical taste, but were otherwise unknown to each other. In relation to Figure 1, the findings of Hennessy and West (1999) and Lonsdale and North (2009) are suggestive of group categorization (i.e., “us” versus “them;” and in Figure 1, “expat” versus “local”).

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1970) has focused on an individual’s behavior within a group environment. In particular understanding the emotional drivers that provide the milieu for creating and maintaining group distinctiveness - a primary one considered within social identity theory has been *self-esteem*. Tajfel (1970) postulated that individuals are motivated to view their own groups more favorably because, being part of a positively esteemed group, in a linear fashion, increases positive self-regard for the individual. “Expats” therefore, may feel more positively about themselves by perceiving their group as: “more skilled,” “better educated,” “more efficient” and so on. Certainly, research in naturalistic settings has found support for the self-esteem hypothesis. Aberson, Healy and

Romero (2000) in their meta-analysis of 34 studies of adults which focused on group identification, self-esteem and in-group bias, did find support for the hypothesis that positive in-group bias was correlated with higher levels of personal self esteem (overall effect size = 0.23, 95% confidence interval 0.19 – 0.26).

The findings of Aberson et al. (2000) support a basic hypothesis of social identity theory; that “pressures to evaluate one’s own group positively through out-group versus in-group comparisons lead social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other,” (Tajfel & Turner, 1996, p.16). Tajfel & Turner (1986) postulated three variables as preconditions to maintaining positive self-regard through group identification: (1) accepting membership of a group, (2) having relevant points-of-difference with other groups and (3) having a relevant, salient and proximal group to compare with. In relation to Figure 1, (1) expatriates can be assumed to have an internalized self concept of themselves as “expats;” (2) the operationalized measure of meta-contrast draws on relevant points of comparison and; (3) host country nationals provide the most proximate and salient out-group for comparison.

Further evidence suggests however, that in-groups are not always favored. In one New Zealand based study of 175 secondary school students, Lynskey, Ward and Fletcher (1991) found that Maori students had a weak tendency to favor Pakeha (rather than their own group) in group stereotype and attribution tasks, while Pakeha had a strong tendency to favor their own group. Lynskey et al.’s (1991) findings are suggestive of more complex group processes than Tajfel (1970) initially suggested. Individuals within groups with more power may be motivated by maintaining distinctiveness (increasing the meta-contrast ratio, Figure 1) while individuals within groups with less power and may be motivated to

be more similar to higher status groups. In relation to Figure 1, social identity theory would predict a motivation for expatriates, with a higher economic status, to create and maintain boundaries between themselves and the local community; increasing the distance between the communities thus maintaining positive self-regard (increasing the meta-contrast ratio, Figure 1).

Self-categorization theory is narrower in scope than social identity theory. It focuses more specifically on the cognitive processes that take place within the individual in group contexts, and reciprocally the influence of the group on the individual (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994). Turner (1985) argues that people categorize themselves and others into groups with some similarity to how they categorize for example cups, into coffee cups and tea cups - based on assessments of similarity and difference and knowledge of what is “typical” for that category. As with objects, the categorization of people, it is suggested, is in part to do with an individual’s desire for order. It is also easier to judge and make decisions when there are clear divisions of “them” and “us,” for example, “he is an expatriate therefore I can assume he won’t mind going to that expensive restaurant.” Hence, categorization of people into groups enables and encourages assumptions about what people (self and other) are like. In Figure 1, meta-contrast is indirectly operationalized as a measure for perceived assumptions about one’s own category (in-group) versus another category (out-group).

Turner (1985) postulated that individuals use groups to define themselves and create social identity. For example, expatriates might use the term “expat” (Figure 1) as a self definition. Being more than a label, the term “expat” carries meanings; it is a descriptor of perceived status (economic and social) as well as a predictor and prescriptor

of likely behaviors – where one might shop, dine, socialize and holiday for example, as distinct from places to avoid. Thus by using the term “expat,” an expatriate is *self-stereotyping*: defining themselves and behaving in a way that is perceived as typical for that group. For example, Fechter (2007) in her ethnographic study of expatriates in Indonesia discusses the employment of maids as an overt expectation of expatriate behavior: “that is what expatriates do.” The act of employing a maid adds layers of definition such as “privilege” and “status” further reflected in expatriate discourse, where privilege can be justified by the “hardship” experienced living away from home in a developing nation. Thus, pressures within the group encourage members to be more similar to each other in behavior, belief, and rhetoric; and perceive high levels of similarity due to a shared definition of what it means to be “a typical expat.” In terms of meta-contrast (Figure 1) it is predicted that expatriates will perceive and rate significantly higher levels of similarity to fellow expatriates than host country nationals, despite cultural differences within the expatriate group – differences that might be considered significant in another, more homogeneous social context, such as an Englishman and a Scotsman both living in Scotland.

A major tenet of self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) is that *self* is defined in relation to, or comparison with the other. Continuing the current example, expatriates commonly refer to host country nationals as “locals.” In Malaysia this is so, despite the host national community also comprising of several ethnic groups. The term “local” carries different meanings, descriptions and predictions of behaviors that for the expatriate define this out-group as separate or distant from their own. Fechter (2007) describes common stereotypes of host country nationals within the expatriate community, in

Indonesia. These include that “they” (host country nationals) “have poor hygiene standards,” “are less safety-conscious,” and “have little respect for the environment.” According to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987), as group members become more similar to each other, other groups are concurrently “pushed away” (seen as more distant or dissimilar). Turner argues (1987) that inter-group stereotypes such as in Fetther’s (2007) example, are often passed-on, and feature exaggerated and erroneous beliefs about what the *other* is like. They work to exacerbate the perceived dissimilarity between groups, creating false and socially divisive boundaries and misunderstandings. In terms of meta-contrast (Figure 1) it is predicted that expatriates will rate significantly lower levels of similarity with host country nationals than fellow expatriates. The ratio of difference between self and host country nationals over self and fellow expatriates is expected to be greater than 1.

To sum up, Turner’s (1987) self-categorization theory attempts to explain the pressures that push groups apart; and from experience of living as an expatriate in various countries, the theory resonates with experience – for example, the pressures of expected expatriate behaviors have been felt; beliefs about and attitudes towards the “local” community have been passed-on before they have been experienced. Reflexively, I have had the experience of becoming a “fairly typical expat.” My experience has also been that expatriates, especially in emerging and developing countries typically socialize with other expatriates and can live far removed from the host community in which they reside. Under these conditions, there is little opportunity to challenge erroneous stereotypes by allowing expatriates to appraise similarity as well as difference from their own experience in a social setting. By merging contact hypothesis (Stephens, 1987) with self-categorization theory

this research hypothesizes that social contact may to some degree counteract the pressures that distance two groups and specifically allow expatriates to appraise similarity and difference from experience, rather than from passed-on stereotype.

The present study is particularly interested in whether, from Figure 1, social contact with host country nationals can fudge the boundaries between the groups - inhibiting or reversing a process that motivates individuals to build boundaries in the first place. If there is an exaggeration of perceived differences between groups, then it would seem reasonable that opportunities to socially interact with the other group would reality test these perceptions, thereby reducing the perception of difference and lowering the meta-contrast ratio (Figure 1). By operationalizing Turner's (1987) meta-contrast this study aims to discover if social contact with host country nationals can reduce the perception of difference between the groups - expatriate and host country national. Specifically it is expected that more contact with host nationals will reduce meta-contrast.

Exemplary research on expatriate life from a self-categorization perspective is limited. One example however comes from Toh and Denisi (2003). They examined the role of host country nationals as socializing agents for expatriate managers of multinationals companies. They hypothesized that the degree to which host country nationals viewed expatriates as members of an out-group would influence the degree to which they would provide helpful assistance to expatriate newcomers. They surveyed 114 expatriates and 54 host country nationals living in five different countries in Asia. The link between perception of the out-group and helpfulness was not established and the researcher acknowledged the deficiencies of the research, such as not including a measure of social contact between expatriates and host-country nationals. Toh and Denisi (2003)

did however find evidence of a correlation between salience of nationality and the degree to which host country nationals and expatriates viewed each other as belonging to separate social groups. The current research aims to add to this line of enquiry by further exploring the role of host country nationals in expatriate adjustment from a self-categorization perspective. The new aspects of this study from Figure 1 are; (1) social contact will be analyzed as a predictor variable; (2) Turner's (1985) meta-contrast will be operationalized in an original measure as a mediating variable between social contact and expatriate adjustment (Figure 1).

Expatriate Adjustment

The current research is placed within the context of theoretical literature on general cross-cultural adjustment. Much of this literature is theoretical and centralizes the individual and their personal skills and strengths as predictors to successful adaptation. For example, researchers have described the process of cross-cultural adaptation in terms of a transition model or *frustration reaction syndrome* (Anderson, 1994). A person's expatriation experience is considered a reaction to differences in beliefs, communication, personal relationships, and physical appearance (Anderson, 1994). According to the transition reaction model, those who achieve adjustment are able to overcome and recover from challenges to their own cultural norms (Bennett, 1977, Church, 1982). Meta-contrast (Figure 1) may be one of these challenges.

If meta-contrast is high, a new-comer may perceive many differences between themselves and the host country national community. This perception of *foreignness* may foster insecurity and uncertainty in the expatriate, thereby inhibiting their ability to spontaneously and successfully adapt and integrate. In Figure 1, high meta-contrast

predicts a reduction in expatriate adjustment and conversely low meta-contrast predicts an increase in expatriate adjustment. Figure 1, shows that social contact is expected to influence expatriate adjustment through the mediating variable meta-contrast.

From Figure 1, expatriate adjustment comprises three measures socio-cultural adaptation, psychological health and satisfaction with life. As the term “expatriate adjustment” implies, it has been used to describe a process through which expatriates in general learn skills necessary to function within a new environment; not just expatriate workers (Huang, Chi & Lawler, 2005). Participants in this study include non-working expatriates (e.g., partners and spouses of those employed). Expatriate partners are an often over-looked sector of the expatriate population (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk, 2001; Kupka & Cathro, 2007) even though they represent over one-third of all expatriates (GMAC, 2009). Further, the failure of spouses or partners to adjust on an expatriate assignment has been a commonly found reason for assignment failure and early return (Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Kupka & Cathro, 2007; GMAC, 2009). It was therefore important to include the voice of this sector of the expatriate community.

Ward and colleagues (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Chang, 1997) have proposed a two-part model of cultural adjustment. The two parts are (1) “psychological adjustment” (in Figure 1, as “psychological health”); originating from a stress and coping framework which emphasizes the individual’s ability to cope with stress and adapt cognitively and behaviorally within their new environment (Torbiorn, 1982; Bennett, 1986, for example); and (2) “socio-cultural adjustment” (in Figure 1, as “socio-cultural adaptation”); which entails the ability to learn new culturally appropriate and adaptive behaviors which are necessary to success in the new environment (Ward and Chang, 1997). For example in

Malaysia pointing with a finger is considered rude, while pointing with a thumb acceptable. Without this knowledge and associated change in behavior the expatriate will not necessarily get what they want and the perceived impoliteness may inhibit the development of positive relationships with host country nationals. The current study adds a third indicator of adjustment, (3) “satisfaction with life” (Figure 1). Satisfaction with life was added as it can be assessed specific to a particular domain of life (Corrigan, 2000); in this case specific to expatriate satisfaction with an expatriate assignment. From personal experience of living in an expatriate community, dissatisfaction with life (rather than just work) was a common experience. Fechter (2007) also notes high levels of dissatisfaction amongst expatriates in her ethnographic study in Indonesia; common points of dissatisfaction included (1) level of involvement with the local community, “no local friends,” and (2) finding meaningful activity - especially for non-working expatriate partners (Fechter, 2007). For these reasons it was considered a useful additional construct to measure.

Empirical research on expatriation adjustment, as mentioned previously, has maintained a focus on the characteristics of the expatriate as a predictor of adjustment. Topics receiving research attention include expatriate selection (Stone, 1991; Anderson, 1994; Ones & Viswesveran, 1999), the effect of cross-cultural training on expatriate success (Zakaria, 2000; Morris & Robie, 2001; Selmer, 2006) and family adjustment (Fukuda & Chu, 1994; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Van der Zee, Ali & Salome, 2005). Researchers have been especially eager to uncover personality traits which are a reliable predictor of so-called expatriate success and or adjustment. Identified traits include open-mindedness (Arthur and Bennett, 1995), cultural empathy (Reuben, 1976), social initiative,

emotional stability, and flexibility (Hammer, Gudykunst and Wiseman, 1978). An exemplar study is by Huang, Chi and Lawler (2005). Their study of 86 US expatriates in Taiwan linked extroversion and agreeableness with adjustment. This approach to expatriation research does have drawbacks. Focusing on traits neglects the complexities of cultural, social, economic and political context in which the expatriate lives - limiting the value of the research (Ward et al, 2001). “Agreeableness” may be valued in Taiwan, but perhaps less so in parts of Western Europe where this trait may potentially hinder building successful business and personal relationships with host nationals. A further example is “extroversion” which may not assist expatriates to build successful relationships with host country nationals when expatriates are physically cloistered in expatriate communities. These examples highlight that the examination of personal disposition in isolation of context neglects the substrate; that is the social context in which the personality finds him or her-self in. In Figure 1, social contact is used as a measure of social context and is predicted to impact on expatriate adjustment. Is the expatriate cloistered (i.e., only interacts with fellow expatriates) or more integrated (i.e., has a high level of host national interaction), and if so does this impact on their psychological health, socio-cultural adjustment and satisfaction with life; Figure 1.

Summary: the current hypotheses

The current study aims to understand whether social contact is linked to meta-contrast. Does an expatriate who has higher levels of social contact with host country nationals perceive less or more difference between themselves and the host national than those who have less or no social contact? Further, does the magnitude of difference matter, or rather impact on adjustment? The impact of social contact expatriates have with

other expatriates will also be examined in terms of its links to meta-contrast and expatriate adjustment. The specific hypotheses are as follows, from Figure 1;

H₁: Meta-contrast will mediate between social contact with host country nationals and expatriate adjustment by either raising or lowering meta-contrast and thereby impacting negatively or positively impacting on expatriate adjustment.

H₂: Meta-contrast will mediate between social contact with fellow expatriates and expatriate adjustment, by raising meta-contrast and thereby impacting negatively on expatriate adjustment.

Chapter 2: Method

Participants

The participants were $N=93$ expatriates living in one Malaysian city of approximately 300,000 local residents. Expatriate participants represented 18 nationalities (Table 1). The majority of participants were female ($n=71$), aged between thirty and forty-nine ($n=78$, see Table 2) and married or partnered ($n=86$). Approximately half ($n=46$) were in paid employment with the remainder being partners or spouses of expatriated employees. Seventy-one percent ($n=64$) of all participants had children living with them. The majority of participants were living within designated expatriate housing areas ($n=84$). This includes an area referred to as “the camp”, where houses are leased from the government by a large multi-national company with whom the majority of these employees work; and a neighboring privately owned housing development where “overflow” employees and their families if present, are housed when “the camp” is full. Families can elect to stay in this overflow area, and it is often an area of choice for employees who are contracted to, rather than full time employees of the primary multi-national company (see, “setting” information, *p.* 24) and for those employed by other companies. Most participants had also been on at least one previous assignment ($n=67$, Table 3), and the majority had been on the current assignment for longer than one year, ($n=86$, Table 4). In summary the typical participant will be female, aged between 30 and 49, married, and have children living with them. They are likely to have been on at least one previous assignment, and to have been on the current assignment for longer than 1 year. There is an approximately 50% chance that they will be an employee of or

contracted to a multi-national company and therefore a remaining approximate 50% chance that they will be married or partnered to an expatriate employee.

Table 1

Nationalities Represented by Participants

Nationality of Expatriates	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Expatriates (%)
Australia	4	4.0
Belgium	1	1.0
China	1	1.0
France	2	2.0
Germany	5	5.9
Indonesia	1	1.0
Ireland	4	4.0
Italy	1	1.0
Japan	1	1.0
The Netherlands	19	18.8
New Zealand	8	7.9
Nigeria	2	2.0
Norway	1	1.0
Singapore	1	2.0
Switzerland	1	1.0
Thailand	1	1.0
United Kingdom	32	29.7
United States of America	7	7.9
Total	93	100

Table 2

Age of Participants

Age group	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Expatriates (%)
20-29	3	3.2
30-39	46	49.5
40-49	32	34.4
50+	12	12.9
Total	93	100

Table 3

Number of Previous Expatriate Assignments

Number	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Expatriates (%)
0	26	28
1	22	27.4
2	19	18.3
3	11	11.8
4+	15	17.2
Total	93	100

Table 4

Length of Time on Current Assignment

Length of time	<i>N</i>	Percentage of Expatriates (%)
0-6 months	2	2.2
6-12 months	5	5.4
1 – 2 years	13	12.9
2 – 4 years	57	61.3
4+ years	16	18.3
Total	93	100

Setting

The setting for this research is in one city in Malaysian Borneo, with a history of expatriation which extends beyond a colonial history. The structure of the community has been personally experienced as an expatriate on assignment in this community from 2002-2007, and it provides a rich source of expatriate participants to examine these hypotheses. In this community, the expatriate and the local are highly salient identities. The expatriates largely occupy different housing and social spaces, their children go to separate schools, and they most frequently socialize with fellow expatriates. The majority of contact expatriates have with host country nationals is at work or home, either as colleagues or as domestic help respectively. Although the expatriate community represents numerous

nationalities and the local community represents a number of distinct cultures; that *he* or *she* is an “expat” or a “local” is often a first used descriptor. Here, it is possible and even likely that being part of the group of expatriates is a very significant part of one’s identity and experience. Self-categorization theory, which examines group processes and their impact on one’s identity, is considered a robust and appropriate theory to examine these phenomena in this setting.

Measures

(1) Social Contact (Figure 1)

The measure for Social Contact (Figure 1) was developed for the unique requirements of this project to gauge social contact levels. The measure consisted of two sets of two questions firstly about opportunities to socially interact with host country nationals and secondly, about opportunities to socially interact with fellow expatriates. Item one of each set, pertains the frequency of opportunity to socially interact, and item 2, pertains to the expatriates use of those opportunities. For each question the following responses (with scoring) are available *no opportunity* or *no use of opportunity* (1), *yearly* (2), *monthly* (3), *weekly* (4) or, *daily* (5).

(2) Meta-Contrast (Figure 1)

Turner’s (1985) meta-contrast (Figure 1) concept was operationalized by a twenty-six item, researcher designed measure (Table 5). The measure was developed by (1) creating a large list of symbolic and physical socio-cultural indicators (i.e. specific values, beliefs, norms, aspects of appearance) based on a broad definition of culture (Damen, 1987; Banks, Banks, & McGee, 1989) ; and (2) reducing this list to items that had particular relevance to expatriates living in Malaysia based on my personal experiences as

an expatriate in this country, discussions with current expatriates, and from the literature on observations of expatriate experience (de Tessen, 1997; Fechter, 2007); for example, “sense of style/fashion,” “attitude towards gender equality,” and “value of education.”

Table 5

Socio-Cultural Items for Meta-Contrast Measure

Please think of a ‘typical’ (expatriate/host country national). How ‘different’ or ‘similar’ to you might this person be? Mark your ‘best-guess’ on the scale between ‘very different’ and ‘identical’ for each of the following items (scale 1 – 16; very different – identical)

Taste in music
Child raising practices
Taste in food
Financial goals
Value of education
Work ethic
Political views
Taste in movies
Ideas about love and romance
Enjoyment of books
Respect for the law
Views on smoking
View on gender equality
Behavior at a party
Sense of style/fashion
Dreams/aspirations
Concept of ‘health living’
Openness to new ways of doing things
Knowledge of technology
Level of education
Choice of holiday destination
Attitude towards nature/the environment
Choice of car
Hobbies/sports
Value of material possessions
Driving Habits

Participants were asked to compare themselves to a (1) “typical” fellow expatriate and (2) to a “typical” host country national on each of the remaining twenty-six items in terms of their similarity or difference. Participants then rated their response to each item on a 16-point scale from “extremely dissimilar” to “identical.” Optimally a sliding scale would have been used to rate each item to mimic comparative *distance* between the self and other. As this was not possible within the limitations of the available survey software (www.surveymonkey.com), a 16 point scale was used as it represented the maximum number of gradations possible.

(3) *Expatriate Adjustment (Figure 1)*

(a) *Psychological Health:* The Short Depression Happiness Scale (Joseph, Linley, Harwood, Lewis & McCollam, 2004) is a six item measure developed from an original 25 item Depression Happiness Scale (McGreal, & Joseph, 1993). It consists of six items, three of which are reverse scored. There are four responses for each available question, *never, rarely, sometimes, and, often*; making the possible range in total score from 0 to 18. The measure is relatively new, and has been used in a limited number of studies (Joseph et al, 2004; Cross, Edwards, Hounsone & Edwards-Jones, 2008). Reported psychometric properties include Cronbach Alphas ranging from 0.77 to 0.92; test-retest reliability ($r = 0.88, p < 0.001$ at two week interval between testing), and convergent and discriminant validity (Joseph et al, 2004). The Short Depression Happiness Scale (Joseph, et al., 2004) also correlates highly with the longer and more established Depression Happiness Scale (McGreal & Joseph, 1993), ($r = 0.91$ to $r = 0.94, p < 0.001$; Joseph et. al, 2004) and the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Rush, Shaw & Emery, 1979). Joseph et al.’s (2004)

study of 241 undergraduate respondents supported a single factor structure explaining 51% of the variance.

(b) *Socio-Cultural Adaptation*: Socio-cultural Adaptation (Figure 1) was gauged using Searle and Ward's (1990) Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale. This measure provides a means of assessing the socio-cultural domain of "cross-cultural adjustment." Items include skills such as "understanding local jokes and humor," "going shopping," and "dealing with bureaucracy." The measure uses a 5-point scale (*no difficulty, slight difficulty, moderate difficulty, great difficulty, and extreme difficulty*) to rate the difficulty respondent's experience, for each item. The present study used 24 items of a 29 item version of the scale (Ward and Kennedy, 1999). Items removed were those inappropriate to the current sample, for example, "coping with academic work."

Studies have shown the scale to exhibit internal consistency (e.g., Ward and Kennedy, 1999, report studies with α ranging from 0.84 – 0.91, Wang, 2000; $\alpha = 0.94$) and have significant correlations with measures of psychological health such as the Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (Zung, 1965). Previous analysis also suggests a two factor structure, the first relating to communication difficulties; and a second factor dealing with impersonal interactions such as dealing with bureaucracy, or unsatisfactory services (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

(c) *Satisfaction with Life*: Life Satisfaction (Figure 1) was gauged using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). This is a five-item measure in which participants are asked to make judgments regarding their current life satisfaction. The measure employs a 7-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree, agree, and strongly agree*).

For the purposes of this study three of the questions were modified in order to focus participants on their current life as an expatriate. “I am satisfied with life” was modified to “I am satisfied with my expatriate life,” for example.

The original scale has been extensively studied since 1985 and has established good psychometric properties (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Hultell & Gustavsson, 2008). Its internal consistency reliability coefficients range from $\alpha = 0.79 - 0.89$ (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Longitudinal invariance has been shown over a two week ($r=0.83$; Pavot & Diener, 1993), one month ($r=0.84$; Pavot and Diener, 1993) and two month period ($r=0.57$; Wu, Chen & Tsai, 2008). The Satisfaction with Life Scale has also demonstrated construct validity (Arrindel, Heesink & Feij, 1999; Atienza, Balaguer & Garcia-Merita, 2003), and convergent and discriminant validity (Pavot & Diener, 1993; Lucas, 1996; Sachs, 2003).

Procedure

A research proposal was written and sent for approval to the Economic Planning Unit of the Malaysian government. Malaysia does have governmental requirements regulating research within its borders, which under normal circumstances requires the granting of a Research Pass. The Economic Planning Unit however approved the research without the Pass requirement, on the basis that the researcher would not be visiting Malaysia for the purposes of conducting research, and that Malaysian citizens would not be participating.

The head of Human Resources at *Silvax* (pseudonym for multi-national company that employs the majority of expatriates in the vicinity) was contacted to seek approval to distribute requests for participation via their expatriate support service. Approval was

given on the basis that participants were informed that the research was independent and participation was voluntary.

The company expatriate support service of *Silvax* was contacted to request assistance to promote and distribute the participation requests. This service was chosen as the primary distribution point because it holds an email distribution list of most expatriates in the area (approximately 200 individuals and or families). One staff member of this service agreed to coordinate this process and a fee for this assistance was set and paid by the researcher.

A formal research proposal and ethics application were completed then submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee for final approval (approval number 08/037). Following minor changes and clarifications, approval was granted.

The draft survey was then developed for online access via an open-source web survey hosting company, surveymonkey (www.surveymonkey.com). Ten associates of the researcher (expatriates who had recently left Malaysia) were contacted to pilot the survey, and provide feedback and comment. Changes were suggested to assist with clarity, and these were incorporated into the final draft of the survey. For example, the meta-contrast rating questions were modified to emphasize that participants were being asked to provide their “best guess” rather than an answer based on knowledge and experience of the other. Feedback on the content was positive, and the content was considered relevant. No changes were made to the content of the survey.

An email requesting participation was sent to a research assistant in Malaysia to distribute to all expatriates via the expatriate support service email distribution list. The email (Appendix A) briefly outlined the origin and purpose of the research, and included

an ethically approved “voucher offer” to compensate for time spent on the survey. A web-link to the survey (Appendix B) was also included in the email, and participants were asked to follow the link if they wished to voluntarily participate. The first web-page of the web-link provided more detailed information about the researcher, and the research. It included statements on confidentiality and anonymity, the right to withdraw from the research, and consent (Appendix B). Participants were also advised to make contact with the researcher if they wished to view the final report, or if they wished to be contacted for a de-brief interview.

A total of seventy-two surveys were completed online within the first two week period. Three of these were considered unusable, as they were incomplete. A follow up email was then sent via the distribution list to remind potential participants about the research. Some personal requests were sent by email by the researcher, and the researcher’s assistant, to known expatriate contacts in the area. After two further weeks, a total of $N=93$ usable surveys were obtained. At this point, it was decided that it was unlikely that there would be further responses, and the survey was closed.

Raw data were entered and categorical data were coded and entered into SPSS (November, 2006; Graduate Version) for analysis.

Chapter 3: Results

Data reduction

Step 1 was to assess the questionnaire as a whole for item and wording quality. Items with a large number of missing values were removed (e.g., few people answered the item “religious activities” on the Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale, and this item was therefore removed). Also removed were items that were retrospectively considered ambiguous. This was particularly important for the Meta-Contrast Measure which has no previous validity or reliability data. Four items from this measure were removed because of issues with ambiguity or clarity including “value of material possessions” and “knowledge of technology.” These were considered by the researcher post data collection, to be too vague (e.g., does “knowledge of technology” mean use of mobile phones or a knowledge of computer functioning?).

(1) Social Contact (Figure 1)

The Social Contact Measure consisted of two facets, social contact with host country nationals (two items) and social contact with fellow expatriates (two items). These items asked participants to rate their (1) “opportunity” and (2) “use of opportunity” to socially interact with firstly host country nationals, and secondly expatriates. The following scale (with scoring) was used to rate each of the four items in terms of frequency, *no contact* (1), *yearly* (2), *monthly* (3), *weekly* (4), and *daily* (5). This is an ordinal scale. Using Spearman’s rho for ordinal data, there was a significant and positive correlation between (1) ‘opportunity’ and (2) ‘use’ items for social contact with host country nationals ($r_s = .767, N = 93, p < .0005$, two-tailed), and also for social contact with expatriates ($r_s = .790, N = 93, p < .0005$, two-tailed). On the strength of these significant

ordinal correlations, “opportunity” and “use” scores were added together and averaged (divided by 2) to create a single mean ordinal contact score per-participant, for social contact with host country nationals (Social Contact: Host National) and a single separate mean contact score for social contact with fellow expatriates (Social Contact: Expatriate). The mean social contact scores were $M = 2.59$ ($SD = 1.29$, range 1-5) for Social Contact: Host National and $M = 4.40$ ($SD = 0.84$, range 1-5) for Social Contact: Expatriate. A break-down of the descriptive statistics for the Social Contact Measure are presented in Appendix C. Of significance, 45% ($n = 42$) of participants reported no social contact with host country nationals, compared with 51% ($n = 47$) who reported daily social contact with fellow expatriates.

Due to a concern that expatriate employees and their partners may need to be treated as separate participant groups because of different patterns an independent t-test was conducted to see if social contact scores for these two groups were significantly different. Results indicated that there was no difference in levels of Social Contact: Host Country National between employed and not employed groups ($t = -0.511$, $DF = 91$, $p = .661$). Levels of Social Contact: Expatriate were marginally different ($t = -2.272$, $DF = 91$, $p = .027$) with non-employed partners having slightly higher levels of social contact with fellow expatriates than working expatriates. The means were $M = 4.21$ and $M = 4.59$ for working expatriates and non-employed expatriate partners respectively. As differences were minimal it was considered acceptable to treat employed expatriates and non-employed partners as one participant population.

(2) *Meta Contrast (Figure 1)*

Before conducting any data-reduction on the purpose-built measure of meta-contrast, it was deemed necessary to check if the construct itself showed validity. In this case, validity required that there *was* a meta-contrast effect to begin with (i.e., significant perceived differences between local counterparts versus fellow expatriates, compared to self expatriate participant). Hence the items themselves were pre-checked for their capacity to differentiate between perceptions of fellow expatriates versus host national counterparts.

Twenty-two items of the original 26 items were retained (minus 4 which were removed because of ambiguity issues –Step 1, see above). The measures consisted of each participant’s perception of cultural difference between their self and (1) host national counterparts (22 items) and (2) fellow expatriates (22 items). There were thus 44 measurement points (Table 6). The scale range is from 1 to 16 (see method) with 1 being “very different” to self and 16 being “almost identical.” Mean scores per item are also presented in Table 6. As expected from Table 6, for each item pair, the score is numerically lower (more difference) for host country nationals ($M = 4.1$, $SD = 3.82$) than for fellow expatriate counterparts ($M = 9.1$, $SD = 4.83$). Hence participants may have consistently perceived greater difference between themselves and host country nationals, than between themselves and fellow expatriates.

In order to test the statistical significance of the differences in Table 6, a Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with repeated measures over the columns in Table 6 was conducted at the item level raw data. Homogeneity of variance-covariance and

multivariate normality assumptions were met (Dancy & Ready, 2002). Examination of the correlation coefficients (Appendix D) between the twenty-two items showed that

Table 6

Repeated Measures Univariate and Multivariate Analysis of Variance Meta-Contrast Item Statistics

Univariate Item Please think of a 'typical' (expatriate/host country national) How 'different' or 'similar' to you might this person be? Mark your 'best-guess' on the scale between 'very different' and 'identical' for each of the following items (scale 1 – 16; very different – identical)		Mean score for comparisons with Host Country Nationals	Mean score for comparisons with fellow Expatriates	F	Sig	Partial Eta ²
MULTIVARIATE Analysis of Variance		4.1	9.1	15.13	0.000	0.83
1	Taste in Music	3.5	7.9	125.0	0.000	0.59
2	Child raising practices	4.0	7.7	63.6	0.000	0.42
3	Financial goals	5.9	9.2	48.7	0.000	0.36
4	Value of Education	7.4	11.0	45.1	0.000	0.34
5	Work Ethic	6.2	9.9	52.0	0.000	0.37
6	Political view	4.4	7.6	55.5	0.000	0.39
7	Taste in movies	4.5	8.0	110.4	0.000	0.56
8	Ideas about love and romance	5.9	8.7	35.2	0.000	0.29
9	Enjoyment of books	6.0	9.4	55.1	0.000	0.39
10	Respect for the law	7.5	11.0	54.9	0.000	0.38
11	Views on gender equality	4.8	9.7	69.0	0.000	0.44
12	Behavior at a party	5.3	7.9	27.6	0.000	0.24
13	Sense of style/fashion	4.2	8.0	68.5	0.000	0.44
14	Dreams/aspirations	6.4	7.7	6.4	0.013	0.07
15	Concept of healthy living	4.9	9.12	82.3	0.000	0.48
16	Openness to new ways	5.4	8.8	49.7	0.000	0.36
17	Level of education	4.9	11.0	172.0	0.000	0.66
18	Choice of holiday destination	3.5	10.2	203.6	0.000	0.70
29	Attitude towards nature/the environment	3.8	9.9	181.2	0.000	0.67
20	Choice of car	4.7	8.7	27.0	0.000	0.39
21	Hobbies/Sports	4.9	9.3	97.5	0.000	0.53
22	Driving Habits	2.9	9.8	162.9	0.000	0.65

Notes: Scale ranges from (1 – very different) to (16 – almost identical). Probabilities are not corrected for

Type I error from multiple tests. Critical probability using Bonferroni's Correction = .05/22 = .002

multi-collinearity was not an issue: Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggest that criterion variables in a MANOVA should not be correlated with each other > 0.90 . A repeated-measures MANOVA was therefore run in which there was one within-participants factor of comparison group (i.e., how expatriate respondents compared host country nationals to themselves, versus how they compared fellow expatriates to themselves). The dependent variables were the 22 pairs of repeated measure socio-cultural indicators presented in Table 6.

The MANOVA revealed that there was a multivariate effect for the variables in Table 6, between local and expatriate groups as social comparison reference points. The difference between the two group conditions was not attributable to sampling error ($F(16,77) = 15.13, p < 0.000$). A Bonferroni Correction was applied to correct for possible Type I error (i.e., by dividing $p < 0.05$ by the number of items – ‘22,’ giving an acceptable level of significance of $p < 0.002$). From Table 6, using this Bonferroni corrected criteria for alpha, all item pairs differed significantly except “dreams/aspirations,” which nevertheless has an unadjusted probability of 0.013. A Bonferroni procedure is relatively conservative, however. Hence the data provide a meaningful foundation for potential meta-contrast.

General protocol for data reduction

All measures with more than two items were reduced to a smaller number of factors for reliability and validity purposes, and to improve statistical power.

Following Step 1 (see above for assessment for quality) the measures were next assessed for factorability. Each item needed to correlate with at least one other item (within the measure) above .3 to be included in any subsequent data reduction (Appendix

D; Brace, Kemp & Sneglar, 2006). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was checked for each measure to assess whether it was over the recommended cut-off of $KMO > .6$ (Dancey & Reidy, 2002; Brace et al., 2006). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was also run for statistical significance. Communalities for items (within each measure) were observed. These needed to reach a recommended average of .6 (for each measure) in order to support factor analysis (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum & Strahan, 1999). Items with communalities below .3 were removed (Brace et al., 2006).

An Exploratory technique (Principal Components Analysis) was used to extract the factors. This technique was chosen over Confirmatory Analysis because (a) the measures are new (i.e., the Meta-Contrast measure), have not been tested in this particular culturally diverse setting (Grimm & Yarnold, 2001), or both (i.e., the Short Depression Happiness Scale, Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale, and Satisfaction with Life Scale). Also (b) because Confirmatory Factor Analysis requires a larger sample size than this study has available to produce reliable generation of factor score values (DeCoster 1998, p. 6). DeCoster (1998) suggests that because the statistics produced are inferential, a minimum of 200 participants is needed for Confirmatory Factor Analysis to produce reliable factor scores.

Items that failed to load significantly ($> .4$) on any one factor were dropped from analysis (Garson, 2009). Oblique rotation was used to accommodate the possibility that factors may be correlated (Velicer & Jackson, 1990). Parallel Analysis (Horn, 1965; Montanelli & Humphreys, 1976, Hayton, Allen & Scarpello, 2004) using Monte Carlo Principal Components Analysis for Parallel Analysis freeware (Watkins, 2000) was used to determine the appropriate number of factors to select. This process is performed after the

initial Exploratory Factor Analysis. Eigenvalues are matched and compared with those generated from random sub-sample data to determine the significance of the actual data contribution beyond chance findings. Finally each factor was then assessed for theoretical interpretation by observing thematic connections between items and noting which items loaded strongly on each factor. SPSS (November, 2009) was used to save factor scores, on which all tests of inference were conducted (below).

(2) Meta-Contrast continued:

In reducing the Meta-Contrast Measure data, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.807; $\chi^2(136) = 806.02, p < 0.0005$. Using Exploratory Factor Analysis (Step 1, of general protocol), a total of eight items were dropped because of a failure to load significantly on any factor and or unacceptable communalities (e.g., value of education, choice of car, concept of healthy living). Parallel Analysis showed support for a two factor structure as the eigenvalues of these factors were higher than those produced by random sub-samples. The two factor solution is presented in Table 7. From Table 7, each factor presented a significant contribution to explained variance with minimal overlap between factors. Three items above 0.4 cross-loaded, these were “enjoyment of books,” “financial goals” and “work ethic.” The higher loading of each of these pairs did match the interpretation of the factor to which it loaded onto highest and was therefore retained in this factor. Variance explained was 53.54%. In Table 7 the factors have been tentatively interpreted as a Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural factor and a Meta-Contrast: Psychological factor. From Table 7, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.864$ for factor one, and $\alpha = 0.845$ for factor two.

Table 7

Meta-Contrast Ratio (the perceived difference between myself and a “typical host country national” over the perceived difference between myself and a “typical expatriate” on the following items): Factor Structure and Loadings.

Item: Please think of a ‘typical’ (expatriate/host country national) How ‘different’ or ‘similar’ to you might this person be? Mark your ‘best-guess’ on the scale between ‘very different’ and ‘identical’ for each of the following (scale 1 – 16; very different – identical)	Socio-Cultural difference	Psychological difference	Communality
Taste in music	0.762	-	.801
Ideas about love and romance	0.756	-	.614
Sense of style fashion	0.756	-	.707
Hobbies/sports	0.725	-	.636
Choice of holiday destination	0.724	-	.482
Behavior at a party	0.712	-	.546
Driving habits	0.532	-	.697
Attitude towards nature/the environment	0.526	-	.617
Respect for the law	0.510	-	.635
Enjoyment of books	0.509	0.430	.643
Openness to new ways of doing things	-	0.819	.697
Political view	-	0.719	.633
Financial goals	0.417	0.717	.631
Level of education	-	0.637	.791
Views on gender equality	-	0.637	.749
Work Ethic	0.408	0.579	.586
Eigenvalue	6.780	1.787	
Percentage Variance	42.38	11.17	
Cronbach’s α	0.864	0.845	

*loadings <0.4 suppressed (as suggested by Pett, Lackey & Sullivan, 2003, p. 169)

(3) Expatriate Adjustment (Figure 1)

(a) *Psychological Health*: Frequency and descriptive data for this measure are presented in Appendix E. Data fell within normative data ranges for adult non-clinical

samples available (Joseph et al., 2004). The mean score for this sample was $M = 13.08$ ($SD = 2.38$) compared with Joseph et al.'s (2004) sample of $N = 241$ healthy adults, of $M = 12.13$ ($SD = 3.37$).

In reducing the Short Depression Happiness Scale the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.799; Bartlett's Test was significant $p < 0.0005$. Table 8 shows that all items loaded strongly on one factor, therefore a single factor structure was supported (explained variance = 49.64%). From Table 8, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.878$, meaning that the single factor measure has a satisfactory level of internal consistency (Brace et al., 2006).

Table 8

Short Depression Happiness Scale: Factor Structure and Loadings.

Items: Please read each one and click the point on the scale which best describes how frequently you felt that way in the past seven days, including today (4 point scale; never, rarely, sometimes, often).	Psychological Health	Communality
I felt that life was enjoyable	0.770	.394
I felt pleased with the way I am	0.736	.497
I felt that life was meaningless*	0.734	.415
I felt happy	0.705	.542
I felt cheerless*	0.644	.593
I felt satisfied with my life	0.628	.534
Eigenvalue	2.978	
Percentage Variance	49.64	
Cronbachs Alpha	0.8780	

* Reverse scored

(b) *Socio-Cultural Adaptation*: Frequency and descriptive data for this measure are presented in Appendix G. Data fell within normative data ranges of adult sojourner samples available (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). In a review, Ward and Kennedy (1999)

found a per item score range of 1.1 – 2.1¹ (*SD* 0.4 – 0.6) for comparable adult samples.

The mean per item score for this sample was 2.0 (*SD* = 0.36).

Table 9

Socio-Cultural Adaptation Scale: Factor Structure and Loadings

Items: Please indicate how much difficulty you experience in Malaysia in each of these areas, (scale 5-point, no difficulty, slight difficulty, moderate difficulty, great difficulty, extreme difficulty).	Functional/Practical	Communication/Relational	Communalities
Understanding the value system	0.815	-	.801
Taking a Malaysian perspective	0.795	-	.614
Making yourself understood	0.739	-	.578
Dealing with people in authority	0.718	-	.790
Dealing with unsatisfactory	0.614		.643
Communication with people of	0.614	-	.691
Dealing with bureaucracy	0.543	-	.748
Dealing with someone unpleasant	0.501		.747
Going to social gatherings	-	0.761	.601
Family relationships	-	0.670	.597
Making friends	-	0.628	.765
Relating to members of opposite	-	0.620	.674
The pace of life	-	0.619	.587
Finding your way around	-	0.560	.690
Seeing two sides of intercultural	-	0.552	.587
Dealing with people staring	-	0.482	.524
Understanding local jokes /humor	-	0.440	.672
Eigenvalue	7.044	2.242	
Percentage Variance	37.074	11.80	
Cronbachs Alpha	0.864	0.810	

*loadings <0.4 suppressed (as suggested by Pett, Lackey & Sullivan, 2003, p. 169)

¹ Adjusted from Ward and Kennedy's (1999) data which used a 0 – 4 scale to match current data with scale of 0 – 5.

For this measure, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.829 and Bartlett's Test was significant $p < 0.0005$. Following Exploratory Factor Analysis, six items "accommodation," "finding food," "dealing with rules and regulations," "using the transport system," "going shopping" and "understanding the Malaysian political system," yielded unacceptable communalities (range 0.049 – 0.165) and failed to load on either factor above 0.4. For these reasons, these items were dropped from further analysis. A two-factor solution emerged which is presented in Table 9. From Table 9, there is little factor overlap and all loadings are significant. Factor 1 could be described as "functional or practical" (Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical) aspects of cross cultural experience, and Factor 2 as "communication and relational" (Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Communication/Relational). Cronbach's α for these two factors = 0.864 and 0.810 respectively which suggests an adequate level of internal consistency for each factor. Variance explained = 48.9%.

(c) *Satisfaction with Life*: Frequency data for the Satisfaction with Life Scale are presented in Appendix I. Participants were on average less satisfied with their lives than comparative normative samples. The mean for the current sample was $M = 20.5$ ($SD = 6.1$), compared with normative adult samples (from a review by Pavot & Diener, 1993; with combined $N = 607$) with means ranging from 23.6 – 27.9 (SD range 5.7 – 6.9).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.821; Bartlett's Test significant $p < 0.0005$. Factor analysis of the Satisfaction with Life Scale produced one factor, and explained 68% of the variance, Table 10. Cronbachs' α for this sample was 0.869, which denotes a satisfactory level of internal reliability.

Table 10

Satisfaction with Life Scale: Factor Structure and Loadings

Items: Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below indicate your level of agreement with each item (7-point scale, strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree, agree).	Satisfaction with life	Communalities
Satisfied with expatriate experience	0.877	.728
Gotten the important things from this assignment	0.862	.641
Life is ideal	0.853	.769
The conditions of my life are excellent	0.801	.743
I wouldn't change anything	0.704	.496
Eigenvalue	3.377	
Percentage Variance	67.53	
Cronbachs Alpha	0.869	

A Factor Analysis was then performed on all expatriate adjustment variables to assess for common measure variance. Common method variance refers to the amount of spurious covariance shared among variables because of the common method used in collecting data (Cote & Buckley, 1987). Low power prevented all measures (predictor, mediator and outcome) being included in this analysis. Outcome measures were prioritized to assess for their independence. The anticipated four factors emerged, (i) Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Communication/Relational, (ii) Psychological Health, (iii) Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical, and (vi) Satisfaction with Life (Table 11). This analysis showed that the variables were likely to be measuring four independent factors. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.749; Bartlett's Test significant $p < 0.0005$. The cumulative variance explained by the four factors was 54.6%

Table 11

Expatriate Adjustment: Factor Structure and Loadings

Expatriate Adjustment Items:	Socio-Cultural	Psychological	Socio-Cultural	Satisfaction	
	Adaptation: Communication/	Health	Adaptation: Functional/Practical	with Life	Communality
Understanding the value	.759	-	-	-	.694
Dealing with people in	.725	-	-	-	.721
Taking a Malaysian	.720	-	-	-	.619
Communication with	.719	-	.413	-	.702
Making yourself	.699	-	-	-	.570
Dealing with	.699	-	-	-	.668
Dealing with bureaucracy	.634	-	-	-	.757
Dealing with someone	.613	-	-	-	.734
I felt pleased with the way	-	.745	-	-	.727
I felt that life was	-	.738	-	.558	.624
I felt happy	-	.679	-	-	.579
I felt satisfied with my	-	.662	-	-	.683
I felt that life was	-	.652	-	-	.788
I felt cheerless	-	.604	-	-	.624
Going to social gatherings	-	-	.656	-	.602
Family relationships	-	-	.685	-	.524
Making friends	-	-	.519	-	.611
Relating to members of	.470	-	.727	-	.695
The pace of life	.431	-	.715	-	.639
Finding your way around	.426	-	.677	-	.630
Seeing two sides of	.443	-	.672	-	.580
Dealing with people	.475	-	.504	-	.734
Understanding local jokes	.427	-	.500	-	.733
Satisfied with expatriate	-	-	-	.900	.832
Gotten the important	--	-	-	.878	.803
Life is ideal	-	-	-	.834	.768
The conditions of my life	-	-	-	.759	.679
I wouldn't change	-	-	-	.679	.801
Eigenvalue	7.544	3.719	2.224	1.812	
Percentage Variance	26.94	13.28	7.94	6.47	
Cronbach's α	0.810	0.878	0.864	0.869	

*loadings <0.4 suppressed (as suggested by Pett, Lackey & Sullivan, 2003, p. 169)

Hypothesis Testing

Baron and Kenny's (1986) method of mediation analysis was used to test both hypotheses. This methodology assesses the relationships between independent and dependent variables, before considering the impact of a mediating variable (over and above that of the independent variable) on the dependent variable (Figure 2). The basic rationale is configured into Figure 1's variables using Figure 2.

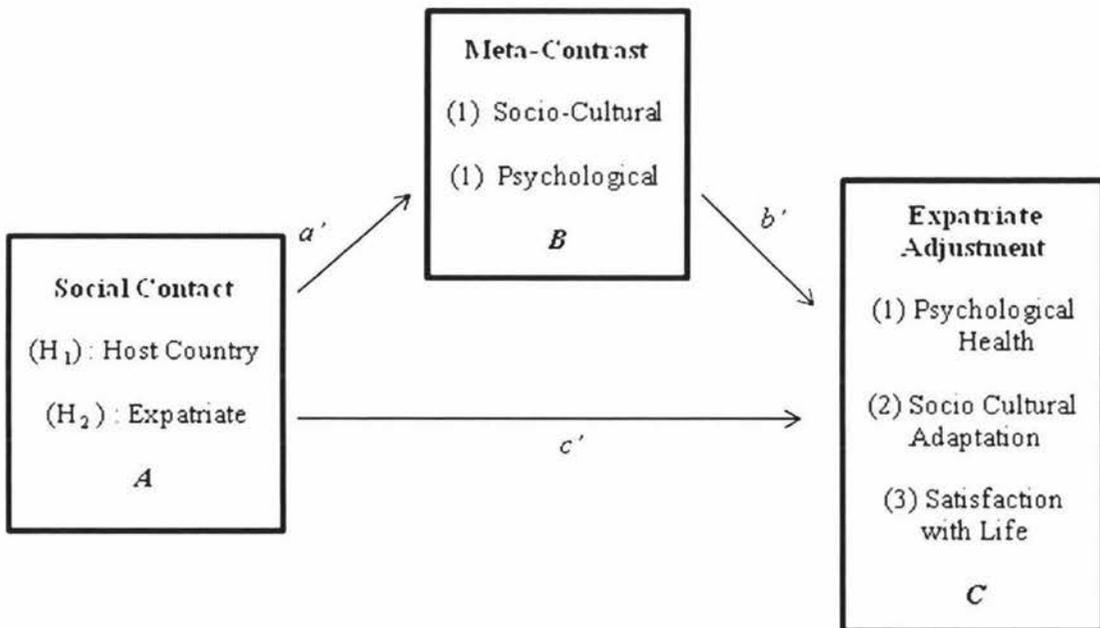


Figure 2. Basic Model for Baron and Kenny (1986) Analysis.

The basic pre-test for proceeding with regression analysis is correlation. Table 12 contains the correlations between dependent, mediating, independent, and demographic variables. Before proceeding with any mediation analysis, there must be something to *be* mediated, that is a significant correlation between (A) Social Contact and (C) Expatriate Adjustment, denoted by c' in Figure 2 (Baron and Kenny, 1986). From Figure 2, mediation can only happen if c' is statistically significant. There must

also be a significant correlation between *A* and *B*, in this case between Social Contact and Meta-Contrast.

Table 12

Correlation Analysis of Primary and Demographic Variables

	Mediators		Criterion Variables – Expatriate Adjustment			
	Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural	Meta-Contrast: Psychological	(1) Psychological Health	(2) Socio-cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical	(2) Socio-cultural Adaptation: Communication/ Relational	(3) Satisfaction with Life
Dependent, Mediator and Independent Variables						

Social Contact: Host Country						
Social Contact: Expatriate			.232*	.278**	.	
Meta-contrast: Socio-Cultural	-	-		-.483**		
Meta-contrast: Socio-Political	-	-	-.205*	-.350**		-.221*
Demographic Variables						

Gender						
Age					.224*	
Marital Status						
Employment Status						
Number of Previous Assignments				.262*		.265*
Time on Assignment						

*correlation meets un-corrected significance levels of $p < 0.05$ **correlation meets Bonferroni Corrected significance levels ($0.05/20$) $p < 0.003$

Note: Social Contact and Demographic correlations use Spearman's Non-Parametric correlation coefficient. All other correlations use Pearson's parametric test statistic to infer any correlation between the variables in Figure 1 and Table 10.

Hypothesis one: Could meta-contrast mediate between social contact with host country nationals and expatriate adjustment (Figure 2)?

From Table 12, Social Contact: Host Country did not correlate with any adjustment variable. Therefore there can be no mediation between social contact with host country nationals and expatriate adjustment by meta-contrast (c' in Figure 2). On this evidence Hypothesis one is rejected.

Hypothesis two – Could meta-contrast mediate between social contact with expatriates and expatriate adjustment (Figure 2)?

From Table 12, Social Contact: Expatriate did correlate positively with (1) Psychological Health ($r_s = .232, N = 93, p = .025$, two-tailed) and (2) Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical, ($r_s = .278, N = 93, p = .002$, two-tailed) but not with (3) Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Communication/Relational, or (4) Satisfaction with Life. When a Bonferroni correction against Type I Error was applied ($\alpha/20$, i.e., threshold of $.05/20 = p < .003$), only (2) Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical remained significant. However Bonferroni is a conservative procedure. Hence it can be concluded that social contact with expatriates may potentially link to psychological health and socio-cultural adaptation, through meta-contrast.

The next step was to assess the correlation between Social Contact: Expatriate and Meta-Contrast (b' in Figure 2, Baron & Kenny, 1986). Table 12 shows that Social Contact: Expatriate did not correlate significantly with Meta-Contrast (Figure 1) and therefore did not warrant further statistical analysis. On this evidence, Meta-Contrast cannot mediate between Social Contact: Expatriate and any expatriate adjustment factor (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Hypothesis two is therefore rejected.

Post-Hoc Analyses:*Are there any direct effects on Expatriate Adjustment?*

Analyses to assess for any direct effects on expatriate adjustment were performed. From Table 12, Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical was predicted statistically by several variables: These are (1) Social Contact: Expatriate ($r_s = .278, N = 93, p = .002$, two-tailed), (2) Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural ($r = -.483, N = 93, p < 0.000$, two-tailed), (3) Meta-Contrast: Psychological ($r = -.350, N = 93, p = 0.001$, two-tailed) and (4) number of previous assignments ($r = .262, N = 93, p = 0.01$, two-tailed). Number of previous assignments, did not meet Bonferroni correction criteria for Type I error, but because of the conservatism of this criteria was retained for the next stage of analysis. At this point we decided to perform Regression Analysis to assess the relative contributions of each of these three variables to Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical. Multiple Regression Analysis with hierarchical entry was selected because the criterion variable (Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical) was continuous, and in line with Multiple Regression Analysis guidelines “predictor variables can be measured on a ratio, interval or ordinal scale, with nominal variables being legitimate only if they are dichotomous” (Brace et al., 2006, p.230). Hierarchical entry was used to assess the relative contribution of each variable as well as to ensure that the smallest number of variables contributing significantly to the model, were retained (Grimm & Yarnold, 2001). Variables were entered according to their level of correlation (Table 12), highest to lowest.

The criterion variable for the following Multiple Regression Analysis: was Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical. The predictor variables were Social

Contact: Expatriate, Meta Contrast: Socio-Cultural, Meta-Contrast: Psychological, and number of previous assignments. The variables were not inter-correlated (Table 12).

Table 13

Regression Analysis of Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical on Meta Contrast: Socio-Cultural, Meta Contrast: Psychological, Social Contact: Expatriate and Number of Previous Assignments.

Variables	B	SE B	β	ΔR^2	<i>p</i>	F
Meta Contrast: Socio-Cultural	-.479	.082	-.481	.233	.000	27.38
Meta Contrast: Socio-Political	-.327	.082	-.329	.123	.000	24.65
Social Contact: Expatriate	.073	.028	.219	.048	.010	19.90
Number of Previous Assignments (excluded)	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 13, shows the predictor variables that contributed to the model or prediction of Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical. Together Social Contact: Expatriate, Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural, and Meta-Contrast: Psychological accounted for 38.4% of the variance of Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical (*adj. R*² = 0.384, *F*_{1,88} = 8.16, *p* < .000). Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural contributed the most, explaining 23% of the variance (*adj. R*² = 0.123, *F*_{1,90} = 27.38, *p* < .000), followed by Meta-Contrast: Psychological which explained 12% (*adj. R*² = 0.123, *F*_{1,89} = 24.65, *p* < .000). Social Contact: Expatriate explained 4.8% of the variance of Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical (*adj. R*² = 0.048, *F*_{1,88} = 719.90, *p* = .010). Hence the most important predictor of Socio-Cultural Adaptation was Meta-Contrast of socio-cultural indicators (Figure 3).

Are there any direct effects of social contact on meta-contrast?

From Table 12, there were no significant correlations between social contact variables and meta-contrast variables therefore no direct effects can be identified (Figure 3).

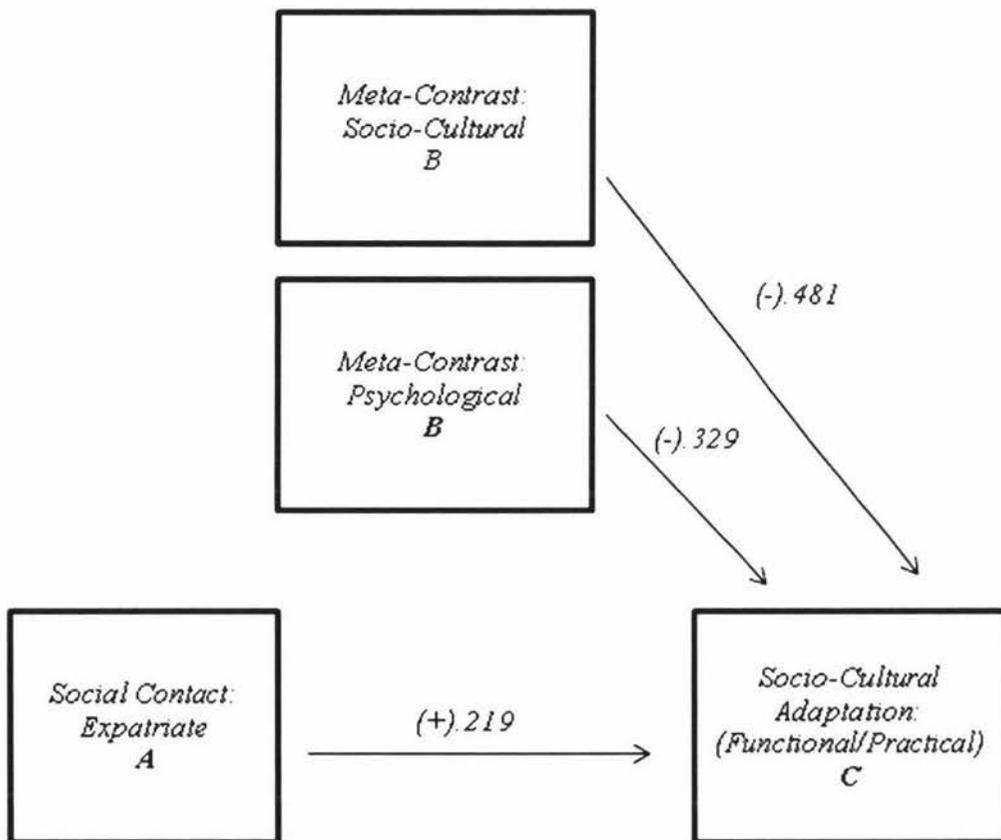


Figure 3. Direct Effects on Expatriate Adjustment: direction of effect and β values shown.

Figure 3, shows the surviving links from Figure 1 and associations (A-B-C) from Figure 2. As is shown there are no mediation effects, only direct effects. Socio-Cultural Adaptation: Functional/Practical was predicted by (1) Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural, (2) Meta-Contrast: Psychological and (3) Social Contact: Expatriate.

Qualitative Data

Twenty-one of the $N=93$ participants, added comment in a comment box provided at the end of the on-line survey.

Content was broken down into statements and then ordered a priori with respect to the elements of the model (Figure 1); social contact, meta-contrast and expatriate adjustment. The data was then analyzed to draw out relevant themes (Table 14).

(1) Social Contact (Figure 1)

From Table 14, several participants acknowledged barriers to contact with host country nationals, indicating that contact or opportunities to have social contact were problematic (1-7). Reasons for this difficulty were not given.

The concept of the expatriate bubble was evident (Table, 14; 7-10). Typical 'expat' behavior was described as insular (8-9) – implying that some expatriates only ventured into the host community “when necessary” (9).

(2) Meta-Contrast (Figure 1)

Perceptions of difference with “the local” community were evidenced (Table 14; 11-16). All statements were negative and pertained to unacceptable behavior (11), poor driving skills (12), slow pace of life (13), lack of environmental awareness (14-15) and ‘poor service standards’ (16). These statements show a distancing between the self and the other and provide evidence of meta-contrast. They also show that despite consisting of several ethnic groups “the local” is a common out-group reference.

Comments showed evidence that participants identified with their in-group to varying degrees. There was evidence that some expatriates did not wish to identify with the “typical expat” (Table 14; 17-20) and rhetorically distanced themselves from this

description. Other expatriates were described as “narrower in outlook” (17), “inconsiderate” (18-19) and “shallow” (20). One participant disputed the concept of the “typical expat” viewing diversity within his or her in-group (21) while another defined themselves as the “typical expat” (22).

(3) Expatriate Adjustment (Figure 1)

Several expatriate participants (Table 14; 23-32) described what they believe has aided their adjustment to expatriate life. Three attributed gains in adjustment with involvement with host communities (23-25), one with finding meaningful activity (26), two described learning new skills (27-28), and four attributed adjustment to the passage of time (29-32).

Table 14

*Qualitative Data: Social Contact, Meta-Contrast and Expatriate Adjustment:**Content Analysis of 21 "Comment Box" Comments*

Model Element	Theme	Respondents	Comments
Social Contact:	<i>Barriers to Social Contact with Host Country Nationals:</i>	1	I feel I come over very negative in my social contact with Malaysians.
		2	It is difficult to meet (local) people socially outside of work
		3	Most contact at the moment is with services I use e.g., garage, repair men, my amah etc.
		4	However, it is hard to make friends amongst the local community as there seems to be barriers.
		5	I felt that there is a cultural barrier.
		6	I realized I have no contact with local members of opposite sex (apart from business).
		7	Living "on camp" separates the average expat from these aspects.
	<i>The Expatriate Bubble – Isolation from Host Communities:</i>	8	Most expats live in the "Bubble" - offices & coffee shop, "camp", supermarket & market.
		9	Some families living on camp seem to only leave the camp environs when necessary and not as a matter of course. This is not a bad thing, however limits their experiences with local people.
		10	All in all, I am still happy living here, especially amongst my small community of expat friends, and I know that we will keep contact with most of them over the coming years.
Meta-Contrast: Perceptions of Similarity and Difference	<i>The 'not as advanced as us' attitude</i>	11	...the difficulty with this (people staring) and especially when people openly take photos of them with their mobile phones. I do not let the girls go around a shopping centre by themselves for this reason.
		12	..their ('locals') driving is however, pretty generally appalling
		13	Sometimes the (local) pace of life is too slow and can be frustrating.
		14	The most disappointing aspect about (the town) is the lack of environmental awareness of the average local population.
		15	(The) town can be considered a bit of a "dump" with open drain systems and poor sewage treatment facilities.
		16	the service provided by the locals is very much different from American but Americans tips their servants

<i>Own group identification (or non-identification)</i>	17	We do not live in camp - therefore I believe that I have a broader outlook than maybe some other expat ladies.
	18	Americans are so different in how we act in public outside the USA compared to other EXPATS (sic) from other countries.
	19	Other EXPATS (sic) treatment of the locals is so un-American.
	20	What I find difficult is to become friends with other expatriates is that they seem quite shallow. They will call you when they need you, but not when they might think you need them.
	21	I think the typical expat does not exist. All my (lady) friends are different.
	22	I also consider myself to be a fairly typical expatriate and therefore have a strong affinity to the "typical expatriate".

Adjustment:	<i>Involvement with the Host National Community:</i>	23	I do quite a bit of volunteer work at a local school and my experiences have all been wonderful, the staff and children are lovely, friendly people.
		24	I also fund-raise for local charities and have tried to find out where help is needed. I can try to make a difference and put something back into the community I am living in.
		25	6 months after arriving, I got a job with a local company. My experience is rather positive only because of this aspect. I would not be able to live here without this in my life.

	<i>Finding meaningful activity:</i>	26	For me the most important factor in this change of attitude has been finding a meaningful course of study for myself.
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	<i>Learning Skills:</i>	27	I believe that because we live in some else's country we must do our best to adapt to their way of life - 'When in Rome' and accept the differences as they accept us - with a very warm welcome.
		28	Our life here is not that bad. We have learnt a lot about our hosting country and we were able to substitute a lot of our daily needs and we have adjusted to our expat lifestyle very much.

	<i>Time:</i>	29	How different my answers to these questions would have been just 6-12 months ago in this posting. Being over the mid-point seems to make a difference to me.
		30	As with anything new, it takes time to get adjusted and settled, but just because you know this it doesn't always mean that it's easy.
		31	If I had done this survey this time last year, my feelings about life were much more negative.

Chapter 4: Discussion

Summary of Findings

The results do not support either mediation hypothesis (H_1 or H_2). The operationalization of Turner's (1987) concept of meta-contrast, did not mediate between social contact (expatriate or host country national) and expatriate adjustment (socio-cultural adaptation, psychological health or satisfaction with life). A major break in the model was that the link between social contact and meta-contrast could not be established (Figure 2; Baron and Kenny, 1986).

Possible influences on the functional and practical aspects of socio-cultural adaptation were found. When the "typical expatriate" and the "typical host country national" were perceived more similarly with respect to self (lower meta-contrast) expatriates were more likely to show a greater level of adaptation to the practical and functional aspects of their expatriate life.

There was also evidence of a positive relationship between social contact with fellow expatriates and the functional and practical aspects of socio-cultural adaptation (Table 13). This result is perhaps expected as this outcome variable pertains to the practical (rather than psychological or relational) aspects of adjustment. Fellow expatriates are likely to have been the primary source of practical information and help for the expatriate new-comer (e.g., where expatriates shop, eat, holiday) and it is therefore reasonable that this contact bears a positive effect on this type of adjustment.

No other links between predictor (Social Contact: Host National and Social Contact: Expatriate), mediator (Meta-Contrast: Socio-Cultural and Meta Contrast: Psychological), and the outcome variables (Socio-Cultural Adjustment:

Communication/Relational, Psychological Health and Satisfaction with Life) were established. Possible and probable reasons for the inability of finding statistically significant links will be discussed in the section of research limitations. Anecdotal evidence highlighted the possibility that links between social contact and meta-contrast may still exist. *“We do not live in camp - therefore I believe that I have a broader outlook than maybe some other expat ladies”* (Table 14; 17).

There was no correlation between employment status and any of the main variables (Table 12) indicating that expatriate employees as well as their not employed expatriate partners had indistinguishable levels of social contact, meta-contrast and expatriate adjustment. Neither were levels of these predictor, mediator or outcome variables distinguished by gender differences.

Aside from the linkages (Figure 2), the elements of the model did present findings that are of interest. Participants in general reported no or very little social contact with host country nationals. In contrast participants had very high levels of social contact with fellow expatriates.

Host country nationals were perceived as very different to self (expatriate participant) across all socio-cultural and psychological items presented. Fellow expatriates were perceived as very similar to self across the same items. Host country nationals were commonly referred to collectively as “locals” despite ethnic and cultural variation within this community (Chinese, Malay, Iban, Kelabit, for example; Table 14).

In terms of adjustment, participants were generally within healthy adult normative ranges for both psychological health (Joseph, 2004) and socio-cultural

adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Participants were on average less satisfied with their lives than comparative normative samples (Blais et al., 1989; Pavot & Deiner, 1993).

Theoretical implications

Meta-Contrast

Central to the original model (Figure 1) is the concept of meta-contrast and self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985). Findings from the measure designed to operationalize meta-contrast provides potential support for Turner's (1985) concept. Participants perceived their in-group (fellow expatriates) to be far more similar to self than the out-group (host country nationals) – the ratio created by these ratings being consistently greater than 1. The distances between these groups were statistically and theoretically significant and showed that the groups were viewed as distinct entities; further that the out-group was viewed as distinctly different to self. The findings suggest that these expatriates may be, as self-categorization theory (Turner, 1987) suggests, exaggerating similarities between in-group members whilst exaggerating differences between themselves and the out-group; creating a heightened meta-contrast ratio. Thus the probability that expatriates are categorizing themselves as, or closely aligned with, the “typical expat” whilst using the category of “local” for social comparison - actively distancing themselves from this group (e.g., ‘the locals are terrible drivers’). The extremity of the perceived differences does suggest that these expatriates have possibly distorted or inaccurate perceptions; particularly their perceptions of host country nationals with whom they have minimal levels of social contact. Both of these groups (expatriate and host country national) encompass diverse

cultures within; so why does for example, the Dutch expatriate perceive the Spanish neighbor as very similar to self, but the Iban Clinic nurse as very different?

It is possible that perceived similarities with in-group (expatriate) members may represent a real rather than an exaggerated level of similarity. Schneider (1983) proposed what he termed the *attraction-selection-attrition hypothesis*. This suggests that over time organizations operate to attract, select, and retain an increasingly homogeneous group of employees - those not fitting the organizational culture are either not employed by, or if so, do not last long in the organization. Hence, individuals within companies, as well as their partners, spouses, and families, commonly share similarities in background, characteristic, and orientation (Bretz, Ash & Dreher, 1989). The expatriate participants in this study may represent a number of cultures and ethnicities, but share commonalities of being attracted to a similar career, share similarities in educational attainment, and socio-economic status. Further, studies have shown that similarities in socio-economic status above other characteristics, increases attraction between individuals (Byrne, Clore and Worchel, 1966). This may suggest the possibility that similarity in socio-economic status might be a powerful bind holding expatriates together despite diverse cultural backgrounds. In relation to meta-contrast (Figure 1) this means that extreme similarity ratings with fellow expatriates may reflect real rather than exaggerated levels of similarity.

Major cross-cultural research projects such as Hofstede's (1998) IBM study of 60,000 employees across fifty countries and the more recent GLOBE project (House, Javidan, Hanges and Dorfman, 2002) which surveyed 17,300 middle managers from 62 countries does show evidence of real rather than perceived similarities and differences

between cultures. For example, the GLOBE project (House et. al., 2002) a priori divided the survey population into cultural clusters. Eighty-seven percent of participants in this current research are represented by House et al.'s (2002) "Anglo" and "Germanic" clusters. These clusters, for example, rate almost identically across a survey assessing six organizational leadership styles whereas significant differences were found between these clusters and the "South East Asian" cluster (of which Malaysians are a part) on two of the six styles. Again, this may suggest that the Meta-Contrast Measure in this study may be assessing real rather than perceived and exaggerated difference. Although alternatively viewed, that four out of six leadership scales did not find significant difference between these three cultural clusters suggests a great deal of similarity - that meta-contrast levels found in this study may indeed represent an exaggerated perception of difference.

One of the major concerns about over-interpreting the results as evidence of meta-contrast is that differences between the communities may relate largely to real differences in socio-economic status. Hofstede (2001) is particularly cautionary in this respect and advocates that differences that can be accounted for by economic factors should not be explained by cultural factors. The Meta-Contrast Measure developed for this study may not have been sensitive enough to eliminate this possibility. One obvious example was the item "choice of holiday destination." Participants may have rated this item as similar or different to them-selves based on what they thought their chosen "typical" group member could realistically afford rather than what they, given no financial constraints would choose.

A further issue concerns the assumption made in this study that expatriate participants were perceiving in-groups and out-groups as homogenous (i.e., that the typical “expat” or “local” represents the group in general). It is possible however that some, or many participants were aware of a great deal heterogeneity within each group. If so they may have felt uncomfortable in, or unable to, identify a “typical” group member. Previous research provides some evidence that out-group members are commonly viewed as being “all alike.” The *out-group homogeneity bias*, for example (Quattrone & Jones, 1980) is a robustly evidenced effect that suggests out-group members are commonly viewed as more similar to each other. This has been found to be the case even between groups that interact frequently such as “men” and “women” (Quattrone, 1986). Anecdotally, it is a common difficulty for expatriates, particularly in the early stages of their assignment, to distinguish between host national ethnic groups. As previously discussed’ Chinese, Malays, Iban, and Kelabit are commonly referred to by expatriates as if belonging to a single group of “locals.” With this in mind the meta-contrast ratings of similarity and difference with typical host country nationals may be generalized to represent perceptions of similarity or difference with the entire group.

From a cautious standpoint that the participant’s ratings of meta-contrast may not transfer from ratings of typical members to ratings of entire categories then theoretically what has the Meta-Contrast Measure found? Proto-type theory, developed by Rosch (1975) may provide an alternative and more specified framework through which to view these findings. Prototype theory is a largely complimentary precursor to self-categorization theory (Turner, 1985) in that prototype theory (Rosch, 1975) also suggests that people create categories to order and understand their worlds. For both

theories, creating categories is thought to enable people to make assumptions and form expectations about how objects and others will behave. Prototype theory however emphasizes that members of categories are graded from the highly typical (or prototypical) to the less typical and marginal members. A classic example is of a chair being rated as a more typical member of the category of “furniture” than a bookcase (Rosch, 1975). Rosch (1975) may argue, for example, that one expatriate may be rated as a better representative of the category of “expat” than another – as with the category of host country national. The Meta-Contrast Measure asked participants to rate their similarity to a typical (which could be read as prototypical) member of each category, not the category itself. This suggests that the participant’s perception of large differences between themselves and host country nationals may not necessarily correspond to *we are very different to them* (emphasizing the group differences, as in self-categorization theory) but rather *I am very different to the “typical” (prototypical) local*. This leaves the possibility that “I” have may have more in common with other “less typical” locals. In the later example, the expatriate is thinking as an individual comparing and contrasting themselves to another individual, not as a group member comparing and contrasting them-selves with another group. This allows for the awareness of significant heterogeneity within the out-group and the possibility that there may be significant overlap in similarity between less typical members of each group.

Prototypes are however, arguably the only visible - and for that reason possibly the best - representation of the categories to which they belong. That participants were able to select typical group members for comparisons and that these comparisons

(between fellow expatriate and host country national) were rated as significantly different could be conferred to suggest that the groups, in general, were also perceived as significantly different. The relationship of the prototype to the group is assumed in this research, making the Meta-Contrast Measure an indirect, and as discussed, a possibly flawed means of operationalizing Turner's (1987) original concept; but one that did show that there were significant and consistent perceptions of difference - that I would argue are larger than reality.

Social Contact

This study set out to assess whether social contact with members of an out-group (host country national) would alter perceptions of difference between the groups (lower meta-contrast) and positively affect expatriate adjustment, and in an indirect manner assess the merits of Stephens' (1987) contact hypothesis. Contact hypothesis (Stephens, 1987) states succinctly, that contact induces an appreciation of similarity between groups and an increase in liking and - as has been hypothesized in Figure 1 - an increase in expatriate adjustment. The alternative possibility that contact may induce an appreciation of dissimilarity and an increase in disliking (and maladjustment) was also considered (Norton, Frost and Ariely, 2007). Unfortunately, and as will be discussed when looking at the research limitations these hypotheses are not furthered by this research. Either case may still be true.

The raw data do however provide quantitative support for the "expatriate bubble" phenomenon (Fechter, 2007). Nearly half of the expatriates surveyed had no social contact with members of the host national community. These findings support those of Fechter's (2007) study of expatriates in Indonesia. From her experiences,

Fechter (2007) surmised that expatriates isolated themselves from host communities in order to protect themselves from the unfamiliar. Certainly the high levels of “no social contact” indicate that expatriates may be creating barriers between themselves and the local community in a defensive manner. Confounding these issues, expatriates may be struggling to overcome the barriers that are already in place due to the organization of expatriate life (geographical and social) which reflects a colonial past (i.e., with separate housing, schooling and social areas). Qualitative evidence suggests a general awareness that these inter-group barriers do exist (Table 14).

Reasons for these barriers can only be conjectured from the data collected but data does show that being located in a foreign culture does not equate to experiencing that culture, or having meaningful contact with the local community. Rather life for the expatriate can be lived in social isolation from the host culture in which they reside. Social needs are largely being met from within the expatriate community itself. Again qualitative evidence supports an awareness of this isolation within the expatriate community. *“Most expats live in the ‘Bubble’ – offices & coffee shop, ‘camp,’ supermarket & market”* (Table 14; 8).

Sherif and Sherif (1969) have postulated that being a member of a more dominant or powerful group reduced the readiness for social contact with other groups. Several studies have compared readiness between dominant and minority groups and have further supported this hypothesis (Schwarzwald & Amir, 1984; Muir & Muir, 1988; Dyer, Vedlitz, & Worchel, 1989). These findings are generally attributed to differences in motivations, with dominant groups being more motivated to protect their group status and therefore less motivated to make contact. In relation to Figure 1,

expatriates are in general economically dominant and resource rich and therefore less motivated for social contact.

Another possibility is that the isolation of expatriate communities is in part, historically and socially constructed. Historically, expatriates have had little social contact with host country nationals and therefore the organization of life (i.e., separate housing and schooling etc.) creates an expatriate enclave that is in a sense, self-reinforcing and self-perpetuating. New-comers arriving and searching for reference points typically look to fellow expatriates who model an expatriate way of life. Not fitting-in requires thought and effort to behave differently or perhaps for some giving up and going home (resonating with the attraction- similarity- attrition hypothesis mentioned earlier; Sneider, 1983). Achieving high levels of social contact and integration with host communities is, in this sense, difficult and requires barriers created by the community itself to be overcome.

The very low levels of social contact with host country nationals suggests that the perceptions of difference (seen in the meta-contrast ratings) and the ideas and stereotypes that expatriates have of host nationals are not gained from personal experience but are the passed-on attitudes and beliefs of the expatriate community. Without meaningful contact exaggerated socially and historically constructed stereotypes and false beliefs remain unchallenged. The lack of social contact therefore may *heighten* the barriers between the groups.

Given the research suggesting that host country nationals do have a role to play in expatriate adjustment (Selltitz and Cook, 1962; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Osland, 1995; Selmer, 1999; Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Toh and Denisi, 2007) the current

research scenario reveals a lost opportunity for the potential benefit of social contact. Without social contact with host communities, expatriates may miss an opportunity for cultural learning which could reduce anxiety regarding the other (Black and Mendenhall, 1990), counter faulty stereotype and prejudice (Stephans, 1987), and develop friendships and relationships which could draw the communities closer and ultimately give the potential for a more satisfying and successful experience (Furnham and Bochner, 1986; Osland, 1995). In relation to Figure 1, social contact with host nationals may reduce a possibly exaggerated perception of difference that expatriates have between themselves and the host community.

Expatriate Adjustment

Despite the lack of social contact with host country nationals, participant's rated their level of socio-cultural adjustment within the norms of adult sojourning samples (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Similarly, psychological health levels fell within the range of adult normative data available (Joseph et al., 2004). Although social contact with host country nationals may improve adjustment and psychological health; not having social contact seems not to have had a detrimental effect in this participant sample.

Satisfaction with life was below normative levels (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Expatriates rated lower levels of satisfaction with their current life situation than non-clinical adult samples. The majority of participants fell within the range of "slightly dissatisfied" to "slightly satisfied" (Pavot & Diener, 1993). This aligns with the findings of Fechter's (2007) study of expatriates in Indonesia where low levels of satisfaction were related particularly to (i) lack of meaningful activity and (ii) lack of involvement with host national communities. It is possible, given the social contact

figures, that some dissatisfaction may indeed relate to the participants lack of involvement with the host community.

Alternatively lower levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction may be common to the type of person drawn to the expatriation experience. According to Haybron (2005) life satisfaction is a subjective and arbitrary attitude towards one's life and the direction it is going. It is possible that expatriates and those with associated professional careers may be prone to dissatisfaction or having an underlying belief that life could and should be better. Dissatisfaction in this sense can be positively framed as a motivation for ongoing improvement.

That Satisfaction with Life was rated as distinctly lower than Psychological Health does support a distinction between these variables. Haybron (2005) argues that life satisfaction is independent of happiness and well being, with the example that it is possible to be unhappy yet satisfied and vice versa.

Limitations and recommendations

Several issues with the design and execution of the study are probable contributors to an inability to support or refute the hypothesized model (Figure 1).

Meta-Contrast: Of particular concern were issues previously raised under “theoretical implications” regarding whether the measure of meta-contrast was able to measure Turner’s (1985) conceptualization (i.e., whether it had validity in this respect). Specific concerns with this measure relate to the (i) assumption of group homogeneity; or whether comparison ratings with “typical members” of each group represented ratings of the group in its entirety; (ii) the difficulty of the task itself – could participants readily choose “typical” members of each group or category for comparison ratings –

made more challenging if a great deal of within-group variation was perceived; (iii) the potential confound of real difference (such as socio-economic) rather than stereotypical or exaggerated difference between in-group and out-group member ratings; (vi) the potentially unwieldy nature of the measure itself, with 26 items per group rating, participants could have experienced survey fatigue and the data, response bias. Further the scale (16 point) may have been too visually and conceptually challenging for participants; and more generally (v) the newness of the measure with the associated lack of previous normative data and reliability evidence required needed to support the findings.

Based on these concerns I would recommend that the design and execution of the Meta-Contrast Measure be revisited. I would suggest that the question asked is more specific and has more clarity for the participant. It may be better for example, that the “typical host country national” chosen is one who has a similar professional standing or equivalent level of education to the participant to eliminate some of the bias due to socio-economic difference. It may also be better that the “typical fellow expatriate” chosen is not one of the same nationality or a close friend, which may over-exaggerate similarity ratings. The type of items could also be revisited to eliminate those which rely heavily on socio-economic status. The number of items should also be pared down to those which were found to be more reliable. A sliding scale rather than a 16 point scale would also make completion of the measure visually and conceptually easier.

Another further criticism is that the data from the Meta-Contrast Measure was not dealt with in the most parsimonious way, as in, why create a ratio rather than using

perception of difference scores to fellow expatriates, and host country nationals separately? In response, Turner's (1985) concept of meta-contrast is described as a ratio of difference between in-group and out-group – this idea captures the perceived “relative distance” between groups. In order to do this statistically, the perception of similarity-difference with expatriate score, was placed over the perception of similarity-difference with host country national score to produce a ratio for each participant. As described in the method, creating the ratio adds a unique dimension to the scale. By using a ratio, a means of measuring the perceived distance between groups is created. This could not have been achieved by using the “difference from self to typical member” of each group separately. Hence from the findings described earlier we can say that participants who perceived less distance between their own group and the out-group were more likely to be better adjusted to the practical and functional aspects of expatriate life.

To further answer these criticisms the regression analysis from Table 13 was repeated with separate variables (i.e., Distance from self to fellow expatriate: Socio-Cultural, Distance from self to Host Country National: Socio-Cultural, Distance from self to fellow expatriate: Psychological and Distance from Self to Host Country National: Psychological) rather than combined ratios and regressed onto Socio-Cultural adaptation. When treated as separate variables, less overall variance was explained, 24% ($F_{1,87} = 14.86, p < .000$) compared with 34% ($F_{1,89} = 24.68, p < .000$) when the data were treated as a ratio. This again suggests that it is the perception of *relative distance* between groups that may be more significant than whether in-groups and out-groups are independently considered as more similar or more different to self. The ratio

is therefore argued as an appropriate and parsimonious means of assessing distance between perceptions on identical items.

Social Contact: The social contact measure was a two-item measure which a priori had a high probability of being unreliable (Wilkinson, 1999). Reliability statistics on the data proved this to be so (Cronbach's alpha for Social Contact: Host National was .460 and Cronbach's alpha for Social Contact: Expatriate was .412). Retrospectively this was a major limitation of the study and one which could have been foreseen and resolved at the design phase with the inclusion of a more reliable measure of social contact.

Confounding the problem with the integrity of the Social Contact Measure, was the unevenly distributed range of data collected for both *social contact with host country nationals* and *social contact with fellow expatriates*. Data from the former bottomed-out with 45% of participants having no social contact with host country nationals, whilst the data for the later topped-out with 51% of participants having daily contact with fellow expatriates.

The skew of each data set towards opposite extremes meant that finding a correlation or linear relationship between social contact and mediating, or outcome variables (Figure 2), even if one existed, very unlikely. This issue was exacerbated by participant numbers being on the margins of acceptability (Brace, Kemp and Sneglar, 2006 suggest a minimum of 100 cases for correlation analysis). In other words, the combination of data which bottomed/topped-out and low participant numbers meant that statistical power was severely compromised and there was a considerable chance of a Type II error.

Obvious recommendations for future research are the inclusion of a more reliable measure of social contact and an increase in participant numbers.

Expatriate Adjustment: Fewer limitations were evident with the measures and data relating to expatriate adjustment. All measures were established with prior reliability and normative data available. Difficulties with predicting adjustment relate primarily with the statistical difficulties experienced because of low participant numbers (per variable count) discussed above and resultant loss of power for statistical analyses.

Practical Implications and Conclusions

A main research finding is that expatriate employees and partners do not have or use opportunities to potentially benefit from social contact with host national communities. This is not revolutionary, expatriates themselves are aware of this, but the statistics do highlight the depth of the issue. The levels of social contact with host nationals were so low in fact, that finding positive benefits of any social contact with host nationals, even if they existed, was a statistical improbability. Expatriates in this community are in general socially cloistered from the host communities in which they live and are missing out on potential opportunities to learn from and create understanding between the cultures and possibly aid adjustment.

Employers should perhaps be more interventionist in encouraging expatriates to integrate from their point of arrival. The expatriates in this study were met and orientated by fellow expatriates, which may be reassuring to the expatriate initially, but detrimental to adjustment and cultural integration in the longer term. One option would be for employers to create positive incentives for host national families to meet and orientate expatriates to the host environment. In this way an immediate link with the

host community would be formed and the possibility of exposure to residing expatriate judgments and stereotypes, as a first experience, would be avoided. This also opens the opportunity for an ongoing friendship with at least one host national family.

As mentioned previously, the structure of the environment in which these expatriates live resembles a colonial structure where housing, schooling and club are geographically separate from those of the local community. As open market housing standards in developing countries are improving the continuation of providing cloistered communities can be questioned. Funding more open market housing may also provide further opportunity to integrate. Similarly schools could be funded to operate within or alongside existing host community schools so that resources could be shared and friendships have the opportunity to develop between expatriate and host national parents and children.

I would argue that “camp style” expatriate communities are outmoded and in most cases unnecessary. Developing countries have developed and fishing villages have turned into cities and it is possibly the time for a reflexive re-think of the needs and best interests of the expatriate and the host communities in which they live. Expatriates in large cities and in many countries around the world are increasingly living in more integrated ways, accessing open-market housing, schooling, and leisure resources. A suggestion for future research would be to compare Meta-Contrast data from this sample with expatriates living in more open and integrated communities.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participation Request Email

Participant Request

DEAR EXPATRIATE LIVING IN _____, MALAYSIA:

I would like to invite you to participate in a Research project focusing on aspects of your current expatriate life. Involvement involves completion of a simple survey which would take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

What is the research about?

The psychological issues associated with cross-cultural experience are something which I am interested in and, as an expatriate, have personal experience of. I know you will be well aware of the demands of moving country, culture and the process of 'finding your feet' in unfamiliar surroundings. Statistically the expatriate assignment failure rates rests at approximately 20%, twice the domestic turnover rate, and is associated with high psychological cost to the expatriate and high economic cost to the company. This research aims to increase understanding of the expatriate experience and contribute to discussions of how the experience could be more satisfying.

Further details of the research and a link to the survey itself can be found at the following web address:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=viFc8vz6PKUP5OZLSKm0Hg_3d_3d

Responses to the survey are completely anonymous and cannot be linked to individuals.

If you decide to take part, then please accept as a token of appreciation a 10RM voucher for either, _____ OR _____

To receive the voucher, complete the survey then email _____ before the 29/11/2008 with your choice and she will arrange delivery on my behalf.

PLEASE DO NOT FORWARD THIS EMAIL, it is only intended for those expatriates emailed directly.

Kindest Regards,
Rachel Hooks
Massey University
AUCKLAND
NEW ZEALAND

Appendix B

*Online Survey***Information Sheet**

Who is doing this research?

My name is Rachel Hooks and I am currently conducting my Masters research through the School of Psychology at Massey University. My supervisor is Dr. Stuart Carr, a Professor in the School of Psychology.

What is this research about?

The psychological issues associated with cross-cultural experience, is something which I am interested in and, as an expatriate, have personal experience of. I know you will be well aware of the demands of moving country, culture and the process of 'finding your feet' in unfamiliar surroundings.

The global expatriate assignment failure rate (in terms of early exit) rests at a conservative estimate of 20%. This is twice the domestic turnover rate, and is associated with high psychological cost to expatriate and economic cost to their company. This research aims to increase understanding of the expatriate experience and contribute to discussions of how it could be more satisfying and successful. With this in mind I'd like to invite you to participate in this research.

Who can take part in the research?

Any expatriate resident living in Malaysia. Unfortunately the questionnaire is only available in English, so a reasonable level of comprehension is essential.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to complete the short questionnaire (linked below). This will cover aspects of expatriate life, particularly focusing on your social relationships and issues of adapting to a new cultural environment. If you are interested in taking part please click the "next" button at the bottom of this page. The questionnaire should take 15-20 minutes to complete. Please note: completion and submission of the questionnaire implies your consent to participating in the research.

What are my rights as a participant?

If you decide to take part you can skip or omit questions whenever you want to, and you can withdraw from the study at any time. No one who knows you will ever see your answers and no-one including the researcher will be able to link your name to your answers.

How can I find out about the results?

If you would like to be informed of the findings of this research then please email me at rachel.a.hooks@gmail.com (with "results please" in the subject heading) and I can distribute these once available.

What do I do now?

If you would like to help out then please follow the link below. If you'd like to know more before deciding then please email me at xxx and I will be happy to call or email you back. If the process of filling out the questionnaire raises issues for you that you would like to discuss further please feel free to contact me or my supervisor Dr. Stuart Carr (s.c.carr@massey.ac.nz). For information regarding local support/counselling services please contact xxx on xxx. Otherwise, thank you for your time, it is sincerely appreciated. Kindest regards, Rachel Hooks.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application 08/037). If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Denise Wilson, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone +64 9 414 0800 x9070, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

1. Demographic Information

Thank you for agreeing to participate. Before starting, I would like to know some basic information about you in order to assess the possibility that these details may affect your experience. Again, **complete anonymity and confidentiality is assured** in this process.

1. **Gender**
Female
Male
2. **Age**
20-29
30-39
40-49
50+
3. **Marital Status**
Single
Married/Partnered
4. **Children living with you**
Yes
No
5. **Currently living**
'off camp' – City
'on camp'
6. **In paid employment**
Yes
No
7. **Number of previous expatriate assignments**
0
1
2
3
4+
8. **Length of time on this assignment**
0-6mths
6-12mths
12-24mths
24mths-4yrs
4yrs+
9. **Home country**

2. Meta Contrast

In the following sections I will be asking questions about your relationships with fellow expatriates and host country nationals, as well as about yourself. I would like to find out how connected you are to your local environment as well as how happy and satisfied you feel with your experience.

Please answer each question with the response that BEST FITS with your experience.

Section A: Please think of a ‘typical’ How ‘different’ or ‘similar’ to you might this person be? Mark your ‘best-guess’ on the scale between ‘very different’ and ‘identical’ for each of the following (scale 1 – 16; very different – identical)

Taste in music
 Child raising practices
 Taste in food
 Financial goals
 Value of education
 Work ethic
 Political views
 Taste in movies
 Ideas about love and romance
 Enjoyment of books
 Respect for the law
 Views on smoking
 View on gender equality
 Behaviour at a party
 Sense of style/fashion
 Dreams/aspirations
 Concept of ‘health living’
 Openness to new ways of doing things
 Knowledge of technology
 Level of education
 Choice of holiday destination
 Attitude towards nature/the environment
 Choice of car
 Hobbies/sports
 Value of material possessions
 Driving Habits

Section B: Please think of a ‘host country national’ (Malaysian citizen) expatriate.

How ‘different’ or ‘similar’ to you might this person be? Mark your ‘best-guess’ on the scale between ‘very different’ and ‘identical’ for each of the following (scale 1 – 16; very different – identical)

Taste in music
 Child raising practices
 Taste in food
 Financial goal

2. Meta Contrast: continued

Value of education
 Work ethic
 Political views
 Taste in movies
 Ideas about love and romance
 Enjoyment of books
 Respect for the law
 Views on smoking
 View on gender equality
 Behaviour at a party
 Sense of style/fashion
 Dreams/aspirations
 Concept of 'health living'
 Openness to new ways of doing things
 Knowledge of technology
 Level of education
 Choice of holiday destination
 Attitude towards nature/the environment
 Choice of car
 Hobbies/sports
 Value of material possessions
 Driving Habits

3. Psychological Health

A number of statements that people have made to describe how they feel are given below. Please read each one and click the point on the scale which best describes how frequently you felt that way in the past seven days, including today (4 point scale; never, rarely, sometimes, often).

1. I felt dissatisfied with my life
2. I felt happy
3. I felt cheerless
4. I felt pleased with the way I am
5. I felt that life was enjoyable
6. I felt that life was meaningless

4. Social Interaction

Section A:

Do you have opportunities to interact with host country nationals on a social (not work/business related) basis?

Yes

No

If yes, how often do these opportunities occur?

4. Social Interaction: Continued

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly

Do you utilise opportunities to interact with host country nationals on a social (not work/business related) basis?

Yes
No

If yes, how often do you utilise these opportunities?

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly

Since beginning this assignment have you developed any friendships/relationships with host country nationals that you would consider potentially lasting beyond the end of this assignment?

Yes
No

If so, how many?

1-2
3-4
5-10
10+

Section B:

Do you have opportunities to interact with fellow expatriates on a social (not work/business related) basis?

Yes
No

If yes, how often do these opportunities occur?

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly

Do you utilise opportunities to interact with fellow expatriates on a social (not work/business related) basis?

Yes
No

If yes, how often do you utilise these opportunities?

Daily
Weekly
Monthly
Yearly

4. Social Interaction: Continued

Since beginning this assignment have you developed any friendships/relationships with expatriates that you would consider potentially lasting beyond the end of this assignment?

Yes

No

If so, how many?

1-2

3-4

5-10

10+

5. Socio-Cultural Adaptation

Please indicate how much difficulty you experience in Malaysia in each of these areas, (scale 5-point, no difficulty, slight difficulty, moderate difficulty, great difficulty, extreme difficulty).

Making friends

Finding food that you enjoy

Following rules and regulations

Dealing with people in authority

Taking a Malaysian perspective

Using the transport system

Dealing with bureaucracy

Understanding the Malaysian value system

Making yourself understood

Seeing things from a Malaysian's point of view

Going shopping

Dealing with someone who is unpleasant

Understanding local jokes and humour

Accommodation

Going to social gatherings

Dealing with people staring at you

Communicating with a different ethnic group

Understanding ethnic or cultural differences

Dealing with unsatisfactory services

Worshipping (if applicable)

Relating to members of the opposite sex

Finding your way around

Understanding the Malaysian political system

Family relationships

The pace of life

Being able to see two sides of an inter-cultural issue

6. Satisfaction with Life Scale

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below indicate your level of agreement with each item (7-point scale, strongly disagree, disagree, slightly disagree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly agree, agree, strongly agree).

In most ways my life is close to ideal

The conditions of my life are excellent

I am satisfied with my life

So far I have gotten the important things I want from my life

If starting my life again, I would change almost nothing

7. Closing comments

Please feel free to make written comment on any aspect of this survey.

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix C

Frequency Data for “Opportunity” and “Use of Opportunity” for Social Contact with Host Country Nationals and Expatriates

How often do you (have/utilize) opportunities to interact with host country (nationals/expatriates) on a social (not work/business related) basis?

(Score) Frequency	Host Country National		Expatriate	
	Have opportunity	Use opportunity	Have opportunity	Use opportunity
(5) Daily	11	4	63	47
(4) Weekly	24	21	20	33
(3) Monthly	23	20	7	8
(2) Yearly	9	6	2	2
(1) Never	26	42	1	3
Total	93	93	93	93
Average	2.83	2.34	4.52	4.27
Standard Dev.	1.39	1.36	0.82	0.94

Appendix E

Frequency and Descriptive Statistics for Short Depression Happiness Scale

Please read each one and click the point on the scale which best describes how frequently you felt that way in the past seven days, including today (4 point scale; never, rarely, sometimes, often).

(Score) Rating	I felt satisfied with my life	I felt happy	I felt cheerful*	I felt pleased with the way I am	I felt that life was enjoyable	I felt that life was meaningful*
(0) Never	7	0	4	0	0	1
(1) Rarely	37	2	28	5	4	11
(2) Sometimes	31	60	47	38	22	20
(3) Often	18	61	14	50	67	61
Missing values	8	8	8	8	8	8
Total	93	93	93	93	93	93
Average Score	1.65	2.64	1.76	2.48	2.68	2.51
Standard Dev.	0.88	0.53	0.76	0.60	0.55	0.74

*denotes reversed from the original (i.e., I felt cheerless becomes, I felt cheerful)

Appendix F

Correlation Matrix for the Short Depression Happiness Items

	Satisfaction	Happiness	Cheerfulness	Contentment	Enjoyment	Meaningfulness
Satisfaction	1	.326**	.280**	.308**	.297**	.514**
Happiness		1	.298**	.530**	.484**	.319**
Cheerfulness			1	.302**	.437**	.449**
Contentment				1	.538**	.382**
Enjoyment					1	.433**
Meaningfulness						1

*correlation meets un-corrected significance levels of $p < 0.05$ **correlation meets un-corrected significance levels

of $p < 0.005$

Appendix G

Frequency Data and Descriptive Statistics for Socio-Cultural Adaptation Measure

Please indicate how much difficulty you experience in Malaysia in each of these areas, (scale 5-point, no difficulty, slight difficulty, moderate difficulty, great difficulty, extreme difficulty).

Items	(1) No difficulty	(2) Slight difficulty	(3) Moderate difficulty	(4) Great difficulty	(5) Extreme difficulty	Total	Average Score	Standard Dev.
making friends	36	33	18	4	1	92	1.88	0.91
dealing with people in authority	29	34	21	6	3	93	2.11	1.03
taking a Malaysian perspective	27	37	15	13	1	93	2.16	1.02
dealing with bureaucracy	7	33	33	17	3	93	2.72	0.95
understanding the value system	14	33	35	8	1	91	2.43	0.90
making yourself understood	13	48	22	8	0	91	2.28	0.81
dealing with someone	20	31	25	10	2	88	2.38	1.04
unpleasant understanding local jokes and humor	22	34	20	8	5	89	2.33	1.11
going to social gatherings	58	22	5	3	0	88	1.48	0.76
dealing with people staring	36	38	9	4	1	88	1.82	0.87
Comm. with people of other ethnicities	27	41	14	3	2	87	1.96	0.89
dealing with unsatisfactory services	11	34	29	10	6	90	2.63	1.05
relating to members of the opposite sex	45	36	7	1	1	90	1.62	0.76
finding your way around	44	37	5	3	1	90	1.68	0.82
family relationships	42	30	14	1	4	91	1.84	1.01
the pace of life	45	29	10	6	1	91	1.77	0.96
seeing two sides of an	36	42	7	4	1	90	1.81	0.85

Appendix I

Frequency Data and Descriptive Statistics for Satisfaction with Life Scale

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the scale below indicate your level of agreement with each item

(Score) Rating	My life is close to ideal	The conditions of my life are excellent	I am satisfied with my life	I have gotten the important things from this experience	If I started again I would change nothing
(1) Strongly agree	5	15	17	15	7
(2) Agree	36	39	48	41	31
(3) Slightly Agree	18	22	15	16	17
(4) Neither Agree nor disagree	7	6	2	9	3
(5) Slightly disagree	15	7	7	7	15
(6) Disagree	8	4	3	3	17
(7) Strongly Disagree	3	0	1	1	3
Total	92	93	93	92	93
Average Score	3.29	2.68	2.43	2.60	3.55
Standard Dev.	1.60	1.36	1.31	1.35	1.80

**Note: Rating scale reverse scored from original (Diener et. al., 1985)*

Appendix J

Correlation Matrix for Satisfaction with Life Scale Items

	Life is ideal	The conditions of my life are excellent	I am satisfied with my experience	I have gotten the important things from this experience	I wouldn't change anything
Life is ideal	1	.713**	.639**	.652**	.475**
The conditions of my life are excellent		1	.614**	.526**	.430**
I am satisfied with my experience			1	.789**	.522**
I have gotten the important things from this experience				1	.540**
I wouldn't change anything					1

*correlation meets un-corrected significance levels of $p < 0.05$ **correlation meets un-corrected significance levels of $p < 0.005$