GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

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Abstract

Purpose

Women are still underrepresented in expatriate assignments. This study investigates whether there are any gender differences in expatriate adjustment that could help account for the low share of female expatriates.

Methodology/Approach

The study replicates the analysis of Selmer & Leung’s (2003) exploratory research. It confirms their findings and adds further detail to the understanding of gender differences in expatriate adjustment. The study is based on a cross-sectional survey, mainly of employed members in British and American women’s clubs in Frankfurt and Madrid and their partners.

Findings

Women tend to be better adapted than men overall. They are ahead especially in important areas such as the building and maintaining of relationships.

Research limitations/implications

The sample size entering into final analysis is on the small side. Single-method variance and cross-sectional sampling may impair results. On the positive side, results are comparable to prior research, but add additional detail on different facets of adjustment. The study provides further evidence that companies err, if they refuse to send women on assignments abroad.

Originality/value of paper.

The paper adds detail to the difference in adjustment among female and male expatriate employees. It provides an instrument that can be used in the further study of these differences.

Keywords

Expatriates, cross-cultural adaptation, adjustment, gender differences, research paper
GENDER DIFFERENCES IN EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Introduction

The economic emergence of women has been a long-term project. It started about two centuries ago and has accelerated in the last one hundred years (Bergmann, 1986). The record has been patchy, though. Women are still segregated into certain types of jobs, often lower earning, less powerful and less prestigious. The index of occupational segregation by gender declined in the U.S. from the 1970s up to the mid-1990s. In 1995, it was 53.5, meaning that more than half of employed women would have to change jobs to remove all occupational segregation (Wootton, 1997). Comparative studies show that most European countries have higher occupational gender segregation than the United States (Bridges, 2003; Evans, 2002). While women are making some progress in managerial work, it remains restricted largely to lower and middle ranks (Goodman, Fields, & Blum, 2003; Morrison, White, & Van Velsor, 1987).

Of particular interest here, women are excluded from international assignments to an extent that relegates them sometimes to token status (Adler, 1984a; Caligiuri & Cascio, 1998; Caligiuri, Joshi, & Lazarova, 1999). GMAC’s (2006) relocation trends survey mentions a historical average of 14 percent women in expatriate assignments, although the latest figure was 23 percent. Yet, for a long time women have been just as likely as men to desire a foreign posting (Adler, 1984b). The reason for their under-representation often stems from prejudice against women by the decision makers back home (Adler, 1984b; Linehan, Scullion, & Walsh, 2001) exerted through informal selection methods (Harris, 2002; Harris & Brewster, 1999). A number of studies have established that foreign women in many locations around the world have just as much chance to be successful as men (Caligiuri et al., 1999; Caligiuri & Tung, 1999; Linehan & Scullion, 2001; 1996b; 2001; Taylor & Napier, 1996a; Westwood & Leung, 1994).

There is a growing literature investigating the differences in patterns of adjustment to their new environment between female and male expatriates and the different variables influencing their adjustment outcomes (Caligiuri et al., 1999; Harvey, 1997; Selmer et al., 2003). Studies of female and male expatriates are one of the newest additions to the stock of research on sex- and gender-related differences. This paper confirms prior research on gender differences in cross-cultural adjustment (Selmer et al., 2003) and adds important detail on the nature of these differences. Before going further into specifics, it is important to be clear about the kind of differences discussed.

Differences between women and men
The disciplines of anthropology, psychology, sociology and neuroscience are amongst many that have investigated female/male differences and have tried to define them and to explain their origin. Extreme positions of differences exclusively rooted in nature or in nurture have largely yielded to moderated positions. A distinction between sex as biological and gender as psychosocial constructs is standard (Ely, 1995; Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1990). Yet, this dimorphism of female and male is not uncontested.

Borneman (1979) lists nine different factors that define the "sexual status" of a human being. Some are biological such as DNA, hormonal make-up, and genitalia. Others are social such as upbringing and assigned roles. In Ely's words, gender is "an ongoing social construction, the meaning, significance, and consequences of which vary for individuals across settings" (Ely, 1995: 590). The continuously-constructed character and varying significance of gender is particularly important in cross-cultural interactions. Adler (1987) found that expatriate women are seen primarily as foreigners rather than as women in several Asian countries. Their sex or gender is of lesser significance.

Anthropologists and sociologists naturally favor a cultural explanation of gender differences. Mead (1963 (1935)) studied three tribes in New Guinea and found one stereotypically male, one stereotypically female and one with reversed attitudes compared to Western cultures. She concludes that, concerning behaviors normally associated with women such as responsiveness or "willingness to cherish children, … we no longer have any basis for regarding such aspects of behavior as sex-linked." (Mead, 1963: 259). Feminists strongly suggest that gender differences arise because of differences in the rearing of male and female children (Janssen-Jurreit, 1979; Menschik, 1979). The cultural transmission of behavioral norms is not restricted to humans. Primatologists report research establishing that norms about aggressive behavior in baboons, where males are naturally more aggressive, are culturally moderated (Sapolsky & Share, 2004).

Cross-cultural psychologists find there is good support for the hypothesis that sex-differences are universal (Segall et al., 1990). Yet, they also find that at least in subsistence-level societies the magnitude of such differences depends on social and economic factors. Hunter-gatherer societies give women more freedom, while agriculturally-focused groups restrict them to a larger extent. More specifically, "greater role specialization in sedentary groups led to a more exclusively female preoccupation with child-related activities. Hence, girls receive more training in social sensitivity" (Segall et al., 1990: 243). After reviewing the evidence, Segall et al. (1990) conclude as universal that women have behavioral dispositions that are different from those of men. For one, they are more socially responsive. But, "it is clear that these sex differences are the product of cultural forces, operating through socialization practices and reflective of ecological factors" (Segall et al., 1990: 252-3). Hofstede (1984) also concluded that female/male differences are more significant in some societies than in others.

Neuroscience research has established the importance of sex hormone levels for brain formation in fetuses (Greenfield, 2003) and for neural transmission and other brain functions (Cahill, 2005; LeDoux, 2002). Sex hormones have been found to influence bond formation in mammals, although proof for humans is still absent (LeDoux, 2002). Animal studies at the neural level have found that sex hormones are involved with the functioning of the amygdala and the hypothalamus (LeDoux, 2002). A study on humans with advanced brain scanning technology showed that the same images stimulated the left amygdala in women and the right amygdala in
men, indicating different memories of emotionally charged situations by women and men (Cahill, 2005). The amygdala is the part of the limbic systems that is the central evaluation system for behavior and controls emotions. The hypothalamus regulates vegetative functions such as heartbeat and influences fight-flight reactions (Roth, 1996). Emotions and fight-flight reactions are important in the cross-cultural adjustment process. Therefore, there is a prima-facie neurological case for sex differences in adjustment. Although proof of some of these neurological relationships is still pending, it is evidence for structural and functional differences between female and male brains.

Numerous sociological and psychological studies have indicated that women are on average more empathic, more nurturing, more likely to express emotions and engage in self-disclosure, have better social skills, are more co-operative and self aware (Harvey, 1997; Martin, Knopoff, & Beelemann, 1998; Nicholson, 2000; Van Velsor, Taylor, & Leslie, 1993; Westwood et al., 1994). The relatively new branch of evolutionary psychology tries to explain these differences in evolutionary terms. Based on the principle of natural selection it ties differences between the sexes to the difference in optimal strategies for females and males to create offspring and pass on their DNA (Nicholson, 2000; Saad & Gill, 2000; 2001).

For expatriate research the ultimate reason for the differences in psychological functioning between women and men is not important. The fact that there is a difference, on the other hand, is. Most expatriate research has focused on males who constitute the majority of expatriates. Therefore, recommendations on how to improve chances of success abroad are tailored to the average man and may systematically exclude initiatives that would particularly support women. But before such research is justified, it needs to be established that there are salient differences in the adjustment patterns of women and men.

Cross-cultural adjustment theory

The main driving force in a social system or culture is communication. For Hall "culture is communication" (Hall, 1959: 94). Social processes consist of verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors. Structural features such as a set of values or underlying assumptions in a society develop and change as a result of communication (Schein, 1984). The distinction between processes and structures is a temporal one. Value sets in a culture are relatively fixed in the short-term but fluid in the long-term. For example the average population replacement rate in Europe from the 1970s to the 1990s was such that about two fifth of the adult population was changed, and with it the structure of its values (Abramson & Inglehart, 1995). During an average expatriate assignment of three to five years, values appear as rather firm structures. An expatriate needs to adapt to both processes and structures in the new environment. Adjustment happens as a result of communication behaviors. For the purposes of this paper social processes consist of communication behaviors and include day-to-day interactions as well as the establishment of relationships (Hammer, Gudykunst, &

1 Abramson and Inglehart (1995) study short-term (several years) and long-term (several decades) value change. They show that there is short-term fluctuation of materialist/post-materialist values in Europe related to changes in inflation rate.
Wiseman, 1978) and their continuation. The establishment of relationships and day-to-day interactions will be regarded as processes. Social structures are temporarily stable results of communication and are made up of general living conditions, institutions, values, and norms in a given culture.

Adjustment encompasses cognitions, emotions, and behaviors (Kim, 1988; 1991). It has a subjective and an objective side (Taft, 1988). Emotions and cognitions are subjective. Observable behaviors are objective. Defined as state (Berry, Kim, & Boski, 1988), adjustment is the degree of fit between individual and environment regarding social processes and structures (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1988). A good fit means the perceived adequacy of one's behaviors, cognitions and emotions (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985). The definition of successful adjustment may vary depending on whose perspective one takes: Brewster argues that too good a fit may not suit the organization (Brewster, 1993). This might lead to allegiance issues (Black & Gregersen, 1992).

Defined as process (Berry et al., 1988), adjustment is the acculturation of the newcomer, or the convergence (Barnett & Kincaid, 1983; Kincaid, 1988) over time of behaviors, values and norms, and underlying assumptions of the individual with those prevailing in the environment (Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992; Schein, 1984; Trompenaars, 1993). Obviously, expatriates as temporary residents in a host culture adapt mostly on the rather superficial level of behaviors, to a small extent regarding values and norms, and probably not at all with respect to underlying assumptions.

The literature on expatriates reflects, to some extent, the two dimensions of cross-cultural adjustment regarding processes and structures on the one hand (referred to as facets) and regarding behaviors, cognitions and emotions on the other (referred to as dimensions). Black (1988) and Black and Stephens (Black & Stephens, 1989) argued for three facets of interaction adjustment, general adjustment and work adjustment. The former two are somewhat parallel to the distinction of processes for interactions and structures for general adjustment. Work adjustment is conceptually different as work is one specific life sphere. Examples of other life spheres are the bowling club, the Parent-Teachers' Association, the local chapter of a charity, the local church, etc. (Trompenaars, 1993). In each of these spheres processes and structures exist towards which a newcomer must adapt. The principles are the same, only the focus of attention changes and with it the specific processes and structures that need adapting to. For a discussion of the principles of cross-cultural adjustment, there is no necessity to focus on any specific life sphere. Work adjustment then can be analyzed by the application of general concepts of cross-cultural adjustment to that specific life sphere.

Ward and colleagues have suggested a two-way measurement distinguishing psychological and socio-cultural adjustment (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1999; Ward, Okura, Kennedy, & Kojima, 1998). Psychological adjustment refers to the emotional/affective domain, and socio-cultural to the behavioral domain. Their proposed socio-cultural adjustment scale includes cognitive items such as understanding. In this respect their approach covers the behavioral, cognitive and affective dimensions mentioned above.

An instrument developed to take into account facets and dimensions of adjustment found that there were sufficient grounds to measure the facets of relationships, day-to-day interactions, values and general conditions separately (this author, 1999; 2005). Norms
and institutions were excluded in an iterative factor analysis of 67 items from expatriation literature. The self-report instrument measures cognitions, more specifically cognitive certainty, and emotions. Behaviors cannot be reliably measured via self reports. Accordingly, the hypotheses for this paper focus on cognitions and emotions related to the facets of relationships, day-to-day interactions, values and general conditions.

Hypotheses

Communication is the basis for the development of different cultures. It is also the vehicle for learning a new culture. Women have, on average, better social skills and are more empathic and self-aware than men (Harvey, 1997; Martin et al., 1998; Nicholson, 2000; Van Velsor et al., 1993; Westwood et al., 1994). These characteristics will help women to learn more quickly than men how to establish and maintain relationships in the host country. Since women know better than men how to do deal with relationships, they will also feel better about establishing and maintaining them.

Hypothesis 1a: Female expatriates have higher cognitive confidence about how to establish and maintain relationships than male expatriates.

Hypothesis 1b: Female expatriates feel better about establishing and maintaining relationships than male expatriates.

Women face different challenges depending on which host country they live in (Adler, 1987; Caligiuri et al., 1999; 1996b; 2001; Taylor et al., 1996a). They also perceive different opportunities in different countries. In several Asian countries, women found that they were mostly regarded as foreigners and that their gender was less relevant for their interactions or their success (Adler, 1987). Similarly, Caligiuri and Tung (1999) found that cultural difference measured with Hofstede's (1984) scale did not affect success. Compared to men, women face a more complex adjustment challenge. Not only do they have to learn about the role of foreigners in their respective host countries, they also have to learn about what impact, if any, their gender has on their life in the host location.

Men, on the other hand, only have to deal with their role as a foreigner. They do not face the complexities of the relationship between gender role and host culture. Therefore, women will have less cognitive confidence in day-to-day interactions than men. This will be paired with lower emotional adjustment for women.

Hypothesis 2a: Female expatriates have lower cognitive confidence about day-to-day interactions than male expatriates.

Hypothesis 2b: Female expatriates feel worse about day-to-day interactions than male expatriates.

Value differences are a key distinguishing characteristic of different cultures. The most cited project to chart cultural differences to date, Hofstede's dimensions (Hofstede, 1980; 1984; 1992; Hofstede & Bond, 1984; 1988) is value-based. Values also feature prominently in Schein's (1984), Trompenaars' (1993) and House et al.'s (2004) conceptualizations of culture. Expatriates have to adapt to different value systems in different countries. Different researchers have studied gender differences in values. Eaton and Giacomino (2001) studied 36 personal values and found significant differences in 18 of them. They concluded that there were "very large differences" between women and men (Eaton and Giacomino, 2001: 222). In a comprehensive study of religious values based on several large data sets including the World Values Survey (Abramson et al., 1995) sociologists found that, across different countries,
women tend to be more religious (Miller & Stark, 2002). Neither gender socialization nor differences in social power among genders played a role in explaining the difference. A study of Finnish students using Hofstede's masculinity - femininity subscale found women to have significantly more femininity-related values than men at the beginning and at the end of a multi-year course in business studies (Lämsä, Sääkäinen, & Turjanmaa, 2000). Na and Duckitt (2003) found significant age and gender differences in values in Korea. Gender-related value differences were larger in the older group. In workplace values, on the other hand, Glover et al. (2002) found no significant difference between women and men. The fact that women and men hold different values has no bearing on finding out about the values in the foreign location. Therefore, no difference in cognitive confidence should arise. Women have more empathy than men. They may empathize more with the values of the local population and hence feel better about them.

**Hypothesis 3a:** There is no difference among female and male expatriates in cognitive confidence about values.

**Hypothesis 3b:** Female expatriates feel better about local values than male expatriates.

Adjustment to general living conditions is a facet of cross-cultural adjustment that is well-researched (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005; Black, 1988; 1990; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black et al., 1989; Caligiuri et al., 1999; David, 1972; Selmer, 1998, 2002; Selmer et al., 2003; Stephens & Black, 1991; 1996b; Taylor et al., 1996a; Ward et al., 1999). There is no reason to believe that it is more or less difficult for women to learn about housing or other environmental conditions than for men. Therefore, there will be no difference in knowledge about general conditions. Women are more self-aware than men. Consequently, they will more be more sensible in noticing the challenges posed by general conditions in the host culture, which will make them feel worse. At the same time, women have more realistic expectations about expatriate relocation, while men underestimate some of the challenges (Harvey, 1997). Met or over-met expectations are associated with higher levels of general adjustment (Black, 1992). There are two opposing forces with greater sensitivity on the one hand, and more realistic expectations on the other. Therefore, the overall differential impact on the affective adjustment of women and men is undetermined.

**Hypothesis 4a:** There is no difference among female and male expatriates in cognitive confidence about general conditions.

**Hypothesis 4b:** There is no difference among female and male expatriates in how they feel about general conditions.

**Method**

**Sample**

This study is based on a convenience sample (N=185; 117 women and 68 men). It consists mainly of members of American and British women's clubs in Madrid, Spain and the Frankfurt metropolitan area in Germany and their spouses. In addition, expatriate employees of a multinational corporation residing both inside and outside of Europe participated in the study. Finally, a small number of expatriate faculty members at an American university and members of the expatriate community in Madrid responded as well.
In order to allow comparisons of the results in this paper with an earlier exploratory study of female-male adjustment differences (Selmer et al., 2003), only employed persons were entered into the analysis. This left 57 women and 65 men in the sample. Women’s ages ranged from 24 to 54 with a mean of 36.3 years (SD 9.0 years). Men’s ages ranged from 25 to 65 with a mean of 39.4 years (SD 8.8 years). Seventy percent of women and 79 percent of men were married or living with a partner. Respondents were highly educated. Eighty-two percent of women and 86 percent of men had obtained at least a bachelor’s degree. A further 14 percent of women and 6 percent of men had completed some course work towards a college degree. Respondents’ jobs fell into three main categories: journalism (35 percent); general business such as information technology, finance, sales and marketing (27 percent); and public sector such as positions in embassies and teaching (8 percent). Fifty-three percent of women and forty-eight percent of men worked in non-managerial positions. A further 19 percent of women and 27 percent of men worked in lower- and mid-level management positions. Seventeen percent of women and 24 percent of men were in upper-management and executive positions. Finally, eleven percent of women and 2 percent of men were self-employed. The average length of stay for women was 4.1 years (SD 4.1 years). The total number of years women had spent abroad including the current stay was 9.6 years (SD 5.9 years). The average length of stay for men was 3.5 years (SD 3.9 years). The total number of years men had spent abroad including the current stay was 11.7 years (SD 9.2 years). Respondents resided in 22 different countries. Forty-four percent of women and 29 percent of men lived in Germany, 26 percent of women and 31 percent of men were in Spain, and 4 percent of women and 11 percent of men in the United States. Thirty-four percent of women and 26 percent of men were citizens of the United States. Another 36 percent of women and 43 percent of men were citizens of the United Kingdom. Missing data for outcome variables led to a final tally of 28 women and 40 men in the analysis. As in Selmer and Leung's (2003) analysis age, marital status, position, and length of stay were used as covariates.

Instrument

Cross-cultural adjustment was measured using a self-report questionnaire, which included 12 items related to processes and structures which were measured with questions regarding cognition and emotion (this author, 1999; 2005). Issues covered in the instrument are outlined in the appendix. Answers were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale, plus seven meaning highest adjustment. The range for cognitions was from 1 to 7, for emotions from -7 to +7. Positive emotions were left as recorded, negative emotions re-coded with a minus sign. Scores were calculated by averaging responses to the questions loading on the eight different variables. Individuals with missing values were excluded from analysis.
Results

Table I shows descriptives and correlations among different facets and dimensions of adjustment. All cognitive facets are significantly correlated. They are all above the mid-point; the average for the general conditions facet is quite high, indicating a high level of adjustment. All affective facets are also significantly correlated. Averages are in positive territory for all except day-to-day interactions, indicating a lower general adjustment level to this affective facet. Standard deviations are marginally greater for the affective dimension. The cognitive dimension of general conditions is correlated to the emotional dimension of relationships and highly correlated to the emotional dimension of general conditions. Emotions related to values are highly correlated with the cognitive elements of relationships and, to a lesser extent, day-to-day interactions. They are not significantly correlated with cognitions related to values, indicating that knowing about the values of the host country does not necessarily result in feeling good about them. On the other hand, if cognitive and affective adjustment to relationships and day-to-day interactions is present, so are positive feelings about the values in the host society. Emotions related to general conditions are correlated only with the cognitive facet of general conditions and no other cognitive facets. At the level of correlations, cognitive and affective dimensions emerge as somewhat distinct and so do the facet of general conditions to a larger and the facet of values to a lesser extent. Relationships and day-to-day interactions seem to be at the core of cross-cultural adjustment as measured by this instrument.

INSERT TABLE I

The cross-cultural adjustment differences between women and men were analyzed with a multivariate general linear model. Dependent variables were the eight outcome variables in Table I. Gender was the fixed factor and covariates were age, marital status, position, and length of stay. There was a weak overall multivariate effect of gender (F=1.993, p=0.064). Analysis of the detailed effect of gender on cross-cultural adjustment showed significant differences in the cognitive and affective dimensions of relationships (F=8.329, p=0.005; F=8.035, p=0.006), and the affective dimension of values (F=3.848, p=0.054). None of the other differences in averages were significant in this small sample. Hypotheses 1a and 1b received strong support. Hypotheses 2a and 2b were equally clearly rejected. Hypothesis 3a and 3b received tentative support. In a larger sample an equal means difference in the cognitive dimension of values would be significant and would lead to rejection of hypothesis 3a. Hypothesis 3b was supported on the 0.1-level of confidence, which is acceptable for an exploration with a small sample. Hypotheses 4a and 4b were confirmed as there is no significant difference between women and men regarding general conditions.

INSERT TABLE II
Discussion

The study generally found high levels of adjustment, as would be expected: those who could not adjust at all are unlikely to be in the sample as they are unlikely to have stayed abroad. Working women in this study had higher average adjustment levels than working men in all facets and dimensions when controlling for age, marital status, level in the organization and length of stay. This presents a challenge to the still token-level share of women in foreign assignments (Caligiuri et al., 1999), which was first identified two decades ago (Adler, 1984; 1984a; 1984b; 1987). Only some of these differences are significant, though.

As expected, women have significantly higher levels of adjustment to establishing and maintaining relationships. Their generally acknowledged superior social skills help them to learn faster and to be more confident in their knowledge about how to establish and maintain relationships in the host culture. This also helps them to feel better regarding their relationships with their hosts.

Counter to expectations, there was no significant difference in adjustment to day-to-day interactions. Whatever insignificant difference there was went in the wrong direction. Based on the sample population in this study women have no more difficulty than men in adapting to this facet. Interestingly, both women and men felt slightly negative overall about their daily interactions. This was the only aspect where average respondents scored below the mid-point of the scale. One of the arguments against sending women on foreign assignments is that the host culture relegates women to an inferior position in society and that this would cause female expatriates undue strain and performance difficulties compared to men (Adler, 1987). Yet, several studies have challenged this assumption (Adler, 1987; Caligiuri et al., 1998; 1996b; 2001; Taylor et al., 1996a). Women expatriates face many challenges, some the same as men’s, some different. Women in their own cultural environment face different challenges than men. They can cope with them at home: why shouldn’t they be able to do so abroad? Results from this study show that there is little reason for a blanket assumption that women will face more of a struggle.

The results for relationships and day-to-day interactions tentatively held true even if the magnitude of cultural differences as measured by Hofstede’s (1984) dimensions of power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and masculinity was taken into account. These results are not reported here, because the further reduction in effective sample size resulting from additional missing data created unreliable statistics. Selmer and Leung (2003) found that women had higher overall interaction adjustment than men. This agrees with the relationship facet in this study, but not with the day-to-day interactions facet. One reason for this may be the multi-country sample in the present study, whereas Selmer and Leung studied expatriates in Hong Kong. Cultural differences may be more salient in short-lived day-to-day interactions with strangers than in the longer-term building and maintaining of relationships. Women can apply their social skills better in deeper contacts than in the more shallow aspects of daily interactions. The adjustment to day-to-day interactions, therefore, depends to a larger extent on external variables. Adjustment to relationships on the other hand has a larger portion that depends on personal characteristics such as empathy and social skills. Waxin (2004) established that, in addition to the host culture, country of origin has a direct effect on interaction adjustment measured with the Black and Stephens (1989) scale. In a sample with multiple countries of origin and destination the various cultural influences may balance out. This could explain the lack of...
difference in adjustment to day-to-day interactions in this study. Future research into differences in adjustment patterns between women and men should control for both country of origin and destination country.

As expected, women did not differ from men in their confidence about knowledge of local values, but they felt significantly better about them. It may be a function of empathy, of being able to understand others and what drives them on their own terms that allows women to feel better about local values. Women and men hold differing values (Eaton et al., 2001). These value differences tend to be consistent across different countries (Miller et al., 2002). Women show less variation than men in many physical characteristics such as height and in many psychological ones as well (Nicholson, 2000). Therefore, expatriate women may have to confront slightly smaller value differences to their local counterparts compared to expatriate men, which might explain, at least in part, why they feel better about local values.

As expected, there was no difference between women and men in adjustment to general conditions. They were equally confident in their knowledge and they felt similarly regarding general conditions. This result agrees with Selmer and Leung's (2003) findings. Cognitive adjustment to general conditions was the highest for both, women and men. Schein's (1984) model of cultural layers puts artifacts and creations at the first, explicitly observable, level. General conditions are easily observable. Therefore, cognitive confidence about them will be high. That does not necessarily mean that one feels good about general conditions. Both women and men feel slightly positive about them, but women feel better about relationships and values. Men, on the other hand, feel on average best about general conditions.

Table III shows how adapted women and men are as percentages of ‘full’ adjustment. It also shows the difference between cognitive and affective adjustment. The dimensions of adjustment are more synchronized for the establishment and maintenance of relationships and for values than for day-to-day interactions and general conditions. There are no obvious reasons for this difference. One speculation might be that relationships and values are more important to people; closer to who they are. Therefore, cognitive adjustment and feelings have to be more closely related in order to avoid dissonance. Any large discrepancy in those areas might motivate them to adapt further in order to create a balance, independent of the general level of adjustment. Day-to-day interactions and general conditions, on the other hand, are more external to the person. Just because one knows a lot about day-to-day interactions and general conditions and is confident about one’s knowledge does not mean that one has to like and feel good about them. A dissonance in those areas is bearable, perhaps even expected, as a normal consequence of living abroad.

INSERT TABLE III

Compared with the study by Selmer and Leung (2003) a few interesting points emerge. Overall levels of adjustment are roughly similar. Men's affective adjustment in this study is lower than in Selmer and Leung's. They found that women had significantly lower psychological adjustment, which is conceptually similar to affective adjustment albeit measured with a different instrument. This is contrary to the findings in this study where women had significantly higher levels of adjustment in two of the four affective facets.
Reasons for this discrepancy are not obvious from the two studies, but it is interesting to note and is worthy of future research. Selmer and Leung found women had higher interaction adjustment. This agrees with the results here with a slight qualification: the instrument used here distinguishes two facets of interaction adjustment and found women more cognitively and emotionally adapted to relationships, but not to daily interactions. In Selmer and Leung's study, women and men were equally adjusted to general conditions. This study here found the same patterns regarding cognitive adjustment. But in affective adjustment women scored significantly higher than men.

Overall, this study provides further evidence on the differences in adjustment patterns of women and men.

Limitations

This study suffers from a number of limitations common to cross-cultural adjustment research. First, it is based on a cross-sectional convenience sample. Second, the sample size is rather small and is further reduced in some of the analyses because of missing data. Third, the missing data may stem from a systematic refusal by less or more adapted persons to answer certain questions. Fourth, the single method of data collection may lead to common method variance. On the positive side, the study is largely in agreement with the results from Selmer and Leung (2003), who used a different sample and different outcome measures. Where disagreements appear, they stem from the more detailed measurement of adjustment outcomes and not from a clash in principle.

Conclusion

Women are an underused resource in international assignments. The reason for this often lies with a bias in the sending organization and the barriers put in the path of career women (Harris, 2002; Harris et al., 1999; Linehan et al., 2001). Nevertheless, study after study shows that women can be successful abroad (Adler, 1987; 1996b; 2001; Taylor et al., 1996a). This study contributes to the growing evidence by showing that women tend to be better adapted than men overall, and significantly so in such important areas as the building and maintaining of relationships with members of the host culture including customers, business partners and local employees. Of course, this does not mean that women's chances of being accepted in the host country and related opportunities for success are the same for women and men the world over. Rather, "it depends" (Caligiuri and Caseio, 1998: 406). Companies have to assess carefully the conditions for success and the different support measures women and men may require in order to be successful abroad. But it would be an injustice and a waste of talent to continue to exclude women from expatriate ranks and relegate them to token status abroad.

2 The discussion of results sometimes uses a language of causality. The reader should be aware that this cross-sectional research has only established associations between variables. A more elaborate research design involving longitudinal data is required to show causal relationships.
APPENDIX

Outcome Measure

INTERACTIONS (A)
1. Reprimanding a local person of lower status than you - telling off someone for something that they have done wrong (based on: Furnham and Bochner, 1982)
2. Dealing with a local person who is upset/cross and aggressive/abusive (based on: Furnham and Bochner, 1982)

RELATIONSHIPS (R)
3. Establishing friendships with local people
4. Getting to know your local neighbors
5. Finding social contact with locals (based on: Spradley, 1972; Earley, 1987)
7. Approaching others (locals) - making the first move in starting up a friendship (based on: Furnham and Bochner, 1982)

CONDITIONS (C)
8. Living conditions in general
9. Dealing with the housing conditions, for instance reliability of electricity or phones, or amount of available space
10. Dealing with the environment, for instance noise levels, pollution, litter (based on: De Leon and McPartlin, 1995)

VALUES (V)
11. Prevailing political values of local nationals
12. Religious values of local nationals

The response scales for each of the items are as shown below. Respondents were asked to answer questions a), b) and c) for each of the items above.

COGNITION (C)
a) People who live in a foreign country sometimes are uncertain about various aspects of life in the foreign culture. How confident are you about your knowledge regarding the following?
7=completely confident; 1=not confident; N/A (move to next item)

EMOTION (E)
b) Which one of the following four groups of emotions most closely resembles what you generally feel?

satisfaction/happiness; anxiety/fear; impatience/anger; sadness/depression

c) How strong is this emotion (are these emotions) generally?

7=extremely strong; 1=barely noticeable

Emotions were coded along a positive – negative range (+7 to –7) with anxiety, anger and depression forming the negative branch.
### Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td>.315(**</td>
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<td>.367(**</td>
<td>.377(**</td>
<td>.352(**</td>
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** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table I: Means, standard deviations and correlations among adjustment variables

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Cronbach’s alphas for the scales were as follows: Cognitions – relationships (.91), day-to-day interactions (.78), values (.79), general conditions (.81); Emotions – relationships (.88), day-to-day interactions (.46), values (.64), general conditions (.63). Particularly, the result for emotions related to day-to-day interactions is disappointing. The alphas are higher than the several of the alphas in Project GLOBE, which accepted coefficients of .43 and .45 on the organizational values dimensions for institutional collectivism and for power distance, and several others in the .5 and .6 ranges (Hanges and Dickson, 2004). The authors emphasize that the “literature on criterion-referenced tests has documented the utility of scales exhibiting little, in any, internal consistency” (Hanges and Dickson, 2004: 147). In line with them it is suggested to add items to the less consistent dimensions in future research.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<th>Men</th>
<th></th>
<th>F-ratios</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Multivariate Effect</th>
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<td>Mean</td>
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** Significant at the 0.01 level.

* Significant at the 0.1 level.

Table II: Multivariate general linear model results
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<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>21.0%</td>
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</table>

Table III: Percent of 'full' adjustment and difference between cognitive and affective adjustment
References


