

# The Influence of Moving Countries During Childhood on Personality Development

Agnes Jonsson

ACS Cobham International School, United Kingdom

## Abstract

There exists superfluous research regarding adults adjusting to a new culture, however, research relating to children's experiences are lacking. While academic conversations have established expatriates as possessing different characteristics to non-expatriates, specific factors are missing. A central question in this study was how third-culture kids (TCKs) differ from children who remain local in terms of extroversion and introversion. The study also investigated what types of moves produce different personality traits and levels of belonging. The intent of this study was to fill a gap in literature and illuminate children's effects of moving as patterns generated in childhood remain in adulthood. This correlational study utilizes surveys, including a personality test, for both expatriates and non-expatriates and narrative inquiries for the expatriate sample when finding expatriates to possess more introverted tendencies compared to non-expatriates. Among expatriates, enjoyable moves indicated higher extroverted tendencies compared to less enjoyable moves. Moreover, expatriates are found to have less sense of belonging compared to non-expatriates overall. This statistic continues to decline when isolating negative moves. The study posits more research is required in order to prove a definitive cause-and-effect relationship between moving and personality as this study can only suggest said pattern. The findings indicate child expatriates as needing greater support when adjusting to new cultures as they generally become more reserved and lack a sense of belonging.

## 1. Introduction

In 2013, a United Nations survey revealed that 232 million of the world's population live outside of their home country, a number which is only multiplying (Morales, 2017; Johnson, et al., 2003). Known as expatriates, this population typically relocate due to their occupation and are frequently accompanied by their families, whose children attend international schools (Merriam-Webster, n.d.; Morales, 2017; Pollock, et. al., 2017). There exists superfluous research regarding the effects of adjusting to a new culture on adults (Caligiuri, 2000; Harari, et. al., 2018; Selmer, 2002); however, research pertaining to how children are affected is largely lacking (Lambiri, 2005). Additionally, only developed personalities' experiences are noted as opposed to how characters are shaped as a result of moving (Caligiuri, 2000; Özbay, et. al., 2017; Harari, et. al., 2018; Zafar, 2012). Children who are expatriates, also known as Third Culture Kids (TCKs), undergo "major transitions far more frequently than those born and raised in one basic area" (Pollock, et. al., 2017; Lambiri, 2005). While personality is also determined by

genetics, assimilating to new environments during vital developmental years fosters a unique character and perspective. But can moving garner a child's self-confidence through meeting new people or does it cause reservation in protection from attachment? As a result of the gap in research, the question guiding this study arose: how do the experiences of moving countries during childhood correlate with extroversion and introversion at ages 16 to 18 comparing an expatriate and non-expatriate population?

While the number of TCKs is augmenting, families' notification of moving is shortening and "the result is often [emotional] turmoil," thus highlighting the significance of researching into this unexplored area (Pollock et al.; Lambiri, 2005). The new understanding which this study aims to find can ignite support for expatriate children in schools, which Limberg and Lambie (2011) delineate the importance of.

The intent of this mixed-methodological study is to identify and analyze a correlational relationship

between moving countries and the experiences of moving countries on personality type. The quantitative variable in this research is personality number while the qualitative variable is descriptions of identity or moves.

Although some researchers believe moving can deteriorate a child's effort of socializing (Selmer, 2002), the study hypothesizes expatriates with enjoyable moves will result in more extroverted tendencies compared to non-expatriates.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Gap in Research

Lambiri (2005) outlines the areas surrounding TCKs requiring research, one of them being "What happens to TCKs during cultural adjustment?". Caligiuri (2000) lists the several types of cross-cultural training for adult expatriates, but fails to mention any training for children, thus exemplifying the trend of disregarding a child's impact of moving. Wederspahn, author of *Intercultural Services*, asserts more research surrounding TCKs will result in stronger value of a young expatriate's childhood (Lambiri, 2005). Lambiri (2005) posits existing research generally has an American emphasis. Therefore, this study fills a gap in literature through studying international and local adolescents residing in the United Kingdom to further understand the influence moving during childhood has on personality development.

### 2.2 The Experiences of Moving

Morales (2017), Lam and Selmer (2004) and Pollock et al. (2017) contend expatriates differ in characteristics, attitudes and life patterns as opposed to children who remain local. Specifically, Harari et al. (2018) found expatriates to better assimilate to novel cultures than non-expatriates. These differences led to the researcher's hypothesis that expatriates are more extroverted. However, some scholars disagree: Selmer (2002) argues moving frequently deteriorates efforts of

attaining a social life and could therefore indicate introverted tendencies. Therefore, delving into the experiences and perceptions of a move is pertinent in order to accurately address a correlation between moving and personality type.

A notorious issue among TCKs is their sense of belonging, or lack thereof. As Baringer (2001) states, TCKs "belong completely to no one culture" and have little sense of their identity as a result. However, researchers Yadegari and Alinaghi (2020) believe friendships ameliorate belonging to a location, therefore raising the prediction that friendships equate to a more enjoyable move.

Another factor considered was the extent to which the expatriate knew the language of the new country, also known as the host country (Kanas and van Tubergen, 2009). Gardiner (n.d) expresses language learning as salient in order to fully participate in the new environment, therefore a prediction can be made that lacking ability to communicate with one's environment produces a less enjoyable experience.

### 2.3 Personality

The Myers & Briggs Foundation (n.d.) defines extroversion as outgoing or sociable and introversion as shy or withdrawn. Zafar (2012) corroborates that extroverted individuals receive energy from the outside world while introverts do from within themselves. Moreover, Zafar (2012) utilizes this definition when finding extroverts as better language learners than introverts due to their ability to be 'risk-takers' and sociable. While Özbay et al. (2017) initially agreed, they were unable to find a statistically significant correlation between extroversion and language acquisition.

Despite the caveat that personality is also fostered by genetics (Holden, 1987), Powledge (2011) confirms the environment nonetheless remains influential by comparing twins separated at birth. The effect of the environment is the

common difference between expatriates and non-expatriates. Furthermore, Macaskill (2007) argues, while it can slightly evolve, personality largely remains constant throughout life, thus highlighting the significance of childhood experiences in adulthood. For instance, Fouarge et al. (2019) attest children who move during childhood are more likely to continue moving during adulthood than individuals who did not.

#### **2.4 Methodologies Present in Literature**

When approaching topics of expatriatism or personality type, researchers commonly rely on surveys. For instance, Özbay et al. (2017) incorporate the renowned Myers-Briggs Type Indicator personality test when surveying students' behavior in a classroom. Because personality is best known to the individual, the self-reporting methodology is most appropriate for this psychological and sociological area of research. Therefore, surveys were pertinent in this study's data collection, such as when depicting non-expatriates' sense of identity.

As an overarching methodology, researchers in the field of personality and expatriatism tend to rely on correlational research (Özbay et al., 2017; Lam and Selmer, 2004; Fouarge et al., 2019). For instance, Johnson et al. (2003) incorporate correlational research when investigating the relationship between personality and social ties among expatriates. Correlational research is defined as the investigation of "the degree to which two variables move uniformly with respect to each other," (Lord, 1973). In other words, this type of methodology looks into patterns among two or more variables which cannot be manipulated by the researcher (Price, et al., 2017.). This method precisely describes this study's abilities and aims. Like Johnson et al.'s (2003) study, the use of surveys generated these variables.

To better understand the experiences of moving, the researcher interviewed a selected sample of

expatriates. Jovchelovitch (2007) defines interviews as the timeless and "universal competence" of storytelling and is "widespread ... in the social sciences." Kohonen (2004) claims narrative inquiries are effective in measuring TCKs' evolving identity. Inspiration was also drawn from Cuss (2012) and Sobkowiak (2019) who conducted interviews to garner a greater understanding of study-abroad students' experiences. During the interviews in this study, the researcher displayed *The Interchange Institute's* Reflection Photos: photographs of various objects and scenes connoting various meanings. The purpose of these photos was to elicit better emotional recollection of the moves. Nguyen (2021) employs a similar strategy when allowing study-abroad students to select photos which best summarize their experience, describing it prompting deeper reflections.

This study most closely replicates Lam and Selmer's (2004) research as they compared, through the use of a survey, the characteristics of a local population to that of an expatriate population in order to find the "perfect business candidate." This comparison-like research best enhances a correlational relationship between the presence and absence of a factor (in this instance expatriatism).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants**

The two groups of participants are expatriates and non-expatriates aged 16 to 18. The significance of the age is an increase in maturity and experiences to draw upon compared to younger pupils.

The expatriate participants are students aged 16 to 18 attending an international school outside of London, which the researcher also attends. The institution encompasses approximately 1,230 students ranging from Kindergarten to 12th grade where the students aged 16 to 18 are enrolled in 11th and 12th grade. In 11th grade, 142 students are enlisted

and in 12th grade 157. In 11th grade, 31 students or 21.8% are British, meaning they live in their native country. Similarly, in 12th grade, 38 students or 24.2% are non-expatriates. The predicted population of expatriate students in 11th and 12th grade is therefore approximately 230. However, the British population could have moved throughout their childhood and only now live in their native country. Out of the predicted population of 230, 73 students participated in the survey, equating to a 31% response rate. One participant was omitted from the analysis of personality type due to their indecipherable response, but was included in the qualitative analyses.

The second group of participants are non-expatriates attending an independent British school outside of London. Approximately 1,055 attend the institution, ranging from nursery to Sixth Form. Roughly 120 students are aged 16 to 18. While the exact number is unknown, the large majority of participants are non-expatriates. 35 individuals responded to the survey, equating to a 29% response rate.

Because the population of the non-expatriates is 120 while the expatriate population is 230, the researcher decided to utilize stratified sampling in order to remain consistent with the population proportion, thus more accurately representing the population. The number of participants for both groups was approximately 30% and therefore equal in proportion to their population.

The two schools were selected to eliminate potential confounding variables due to their close proximity and similar socioeconomic backgrounds of students as both are private institutions.

### 3.2 Data Collection

#### Expatriate Surveys

The survey completed by the expatriate sample consisted of a personality test (Appendix A) followed by a series of reflective questions regarding moves

(Appendix B). The reflective questions were generated by the researcher and drew inspiration from existing literature.

The personality test was used in order to accurately determine the individual's extroversion or introversion. While B.F Skinner argues personality is a futile strategy in determining one's entirety, Cattle, a source Engler (1995) cites, refutes it as a useful prediction of what a person would do in a given situation (Engler, 1995). According to Berry et al., (2002) "one of the most frequently used self-report personality instruments for cross-cultural comparison studies is the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire," which Holden (1987) agrees with. Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire plots the individual on a scale of 1 to 24, the larger the number the higher the extroverted tendencies, classifying it as the quantitative portion of the mixed-method research. Due to its vast employment in research (Özbay, et al., 2017; Berry et al., 2002) and simplicity to complete, the researcher employed Eysenck's Personality Inventory.

The personality test consists of 57 yes-or-no questions which the researcher grouped into: mood, habits, preferences and health. Below are examples from each category:

1. Mood
  - a. Do you ever feel 'just miserable' for no good reason?
  - b. Are you an irritable person?
2. Habits
  - a. Do you sometimes gossip?
  - b. Are you mostly quiet when you are with other people?
3. Preferences
  - a. Do you like going out a lot?
  - b. Do you prefer reading to meeting people?

4. Health
  - a. Do you get palpitations or thumping in your heart?
  - b. Do you get attacks of shaking or trembling?

The second part of the survey, reflections of moves, was repeated for each location and covered belonging, friendship, language learning, cultural difference, time span, support and overall attitude toward moving and living there. Below are the 12 questions based on the area covered:

1. Background Questions:  
 Short-Answer and Multiple Choice
  - a. Where did you live prior to your move?
  - b. Where did you move to?
  - c. How old were you when you moved?
  - d. Were you able to speak the language of that new location?
  - e. How long did you live in that new location for?
    - i. 6 months or less
    - ii. 1 year
    - iii. 2 years
    - iv. 3 years
    - v. 4 years
    - vi. 5 years
    - vii. 5+ years
    - viii. I still live there

The intent of these questions was to provide objective background information. The background information, such as location and language, may have a possible influence on the experience, therefore the researcher wanted to be able to consider the data as a possible variable. Pollock et al. (2017) discuss the significance of age when moving, arguing adopting the role of an expatriate between the ages of “one and four will affect a child differently” than “between the ages of eleven and fourteen.”

2. Reflective Questions:  
 Long-Answer
  - a. Describe how it felt to move.
  - b. Describe how it felt living there.

These long-answer questions were designed to provide the participant's attitude of moving and were therefore of heavy importance as they alluded to the participant's perception of the move. The questions also enabled participants to write anything they felt couldn't be expressed elsewhere. The researcher relied on these responses when determining loss of identity.

3. Perception of New Location:  
 Scale of 1-10
  - a. How culturally different did you perceive the new location compared to the previous?
  - b. How much did you feel like you belonged or felt a part of that new educational environment?
  - c. How would you rate your social life at that new location?

These questions were intended to evoke reflection on cultural difference, level of belonging and social life at the new location. These are three prominent factors in determining the experience of a move as they either allowed for the participant's inclusion or isolation from the new location (Yadegari & Alinaghi, 2020; Gardiner, n.d.; Baringer, 2001).

4. Process of Moving:  
 Multiple Choice
  - a. Where did you receive support from during the move?
    - i. New School
    - ii. Family
    - iii. No Support
    - iv. Don't Remember
    - v. Friends
    - vi. Other
  - b. Check which best describes your move



- i. Abrupt (knew about the move a few weeks or a month before the move)
- ii. Prepared (knew about the move a few months to a year or more before move)
- iii. Don't remember

These multiple choice questions filled in information about participants' perception of moving through the time and level of support received, both of which can influence the experience (Pollock et al., 2017; Limberg and Lambie, 2011)

A few questions were posed at the conclusion of the survey regarding the participants' overall identity:

5. Identity Reflection:

Short-Answer and Multiple Choice

- a. When someone asks you where you are from, do you know what to answer? Explain.
- b. Where do you feel like you belong? Select all that apply
  - i. What your passport says
  - ii. Where your parents are from
  - iii. Where you were born
  - iv. Where you lived last
  - v. Where you have lived the longest
  - vi. Other
- c. How do you feel moving has changed your personality? Would you have been the same if you hadn't moved?

The intent of these questions was to discover the level and location of belonging as a result of their experience as an expatriate in order to directly compare with non-expatriates (Baringer, 2001). In the final question, the participants could propose hypotheses or possible

explanations for how or why they believe moving has molded their personality.

### Expatriate Interviews

In order to generate more insight and categorization of the expatriates' experiences into the themes, the researcher interviewed three expatriates. At the conclusion of the survey students had the option of disclosing their email to be contacted. Out of the students who agreed, the researcher selected students with both positive and negative moving experiences in order to most efficiently capture experiences. During the interview, the researcher displayed photographs from *The Interchange Institute* to spark recollection and conversation and more precisely delineate the different experiences (Nguyen, 2021). The packet consists of 100 photographs, but so as not to overwhelm the participants, the researcher shortlisted 20 (Appendix C). The researcher categorized the photographs into: objects, human figures and landscapes. Each interviewee selected three pictures per move which they believed best encapsulated their move and explained their reasoning. The researcher then repeated this process for all of the participant's moves. In order to maximize accuracy of the responses, the interviewer remained congruent with the participants' language so as not to influence them and only posed follow-up questions if necessary (Jovchelovitch, 2007). The conversation was recorded on a password-protected device and then imported onto *Otter*, an application transcribing audio. The researcher corrected any errors in the transcription. The data produced from the interview was analyzed following Thomas and Harden (2007)'s thematic analysis method in order to generate the themes.

### Non-expatriate Survey

The non-expatriate survey was significantly shorter than the expatriates' due to their lack of moves. Therefore it

only consisted of the Eysenck’s personality test (Appendix A) followed by an overall reflection of identity:

1. When asked where you are from, do you know what to answer?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Somewhat

The intent of this question was to identify a difference between the trend of belonging among expatriates and non-expatriates.

2. How do you feel living in the same country during your childhood has shaped who you are?

The purpose of this short-answer question was to provide participants’ insight and predictions of how they believe their personality has developed as a result of their upbringing. This response could directly compare to the expatriates’ version of this question.

3. Do you feel like you belong in England? Explain.

The researcher wanted to understand if clear knowledge of one’s nationality or possessing a more stable childhood correlates with belonging.

### 3.3 Procedure

For the expatriate sample, the researcher emailed all 11th and 12th grade students at the international school as the identities of expatriate students were confidential. Email was the most feasible and effective method to distribute the survey to as many students as possible. As a result of the first email, the researcher acquired 57 responses, but to obtain a more statistically significant result, another email was sent where the final result of 73 responses was met.

For the non-expatriate sample, the head of Sixth Form at the independent school was contacted and agreed to distribute the survey to the students through email. 35 responses were acquired after one email.

The data was stored on a password-protected device and directly imported into Google Sheets to avoid

potential errors. All participants signed a consent form before commencing the survey and interview (Appendix D; Appendix E).

The online personality test was embedded within the survey and participants were asked to paste their result.

## 4. Findings

The findings focus mainly on personality type and level of belonging depending on the sample and the themes of moves. Other factors which emerged, such as language learning, are also analyzed. The data was examined through finding patterns in a correlation statistic. As a result of the interviews, the researcher computed the following themes (the images referenced are found in Appendix F along with the full transcript):

Theme	Definition
Loss of Identity	Kohonen classifies identity as synonymous with a perception of self which “evolves in interaction between the person and his or her social environment.” Therefore, this study’s definition of a loss of identity is an indication of grief at abandoning environmental or social factors which define the individual, such as home, in the short-answer description. For example, an interviewee described the image of two children as representing nostalgia: “I spent the most time in Russia... it was kind of like leaving...my childhood self behind.”
Largely Positive	Two interviewees selected a photo of a field of flowers, describing their move as peaceful and filled with fond memories. The definition of a largely positive experience for the purpose of this study is a feeling of inclusion and belonging in the new environment along with satisfaction with social life, as evident in the participants’ social life and belonging rating

and description. The word “largely” is included as participants may have felt an initial sense of hesitation when moving, but were content when they arrived or settled in.

Isolating

The researcher included subsections of cultural and social isolation as each yielded contrasting results. As Kohonen (2004) found, culture shock is prevalent among expatriates. One participant chose a photo of a brick wall: “nothing was moving and I just couldn’t understand what anyone was saying.” Another interviewee demonstrated social isolation, explaining: “all the kids there weren’t really nice...they had been in the same school together since they were like three. So they all had like friend groups already and like no one would accept... someone new.” This study’s definition of cultural or social isolation is the distinction and separation between the expatriate and the new location’s cultures or individuals, as highlighted in the rating of cultural difference or social rating or description.

Family or Community Bonding

Huntley (2011) employed themes of family bonding when correlating parental support to a transitioning period of a child’s life, which this study is taking inspiration from. One interviewee selected the photo of a herd of elephants as they believed it represented family bonding: “I was really young when we moved so...I think those [the photo] represent my...youth and...being kind of protected by my parents.” This study’s definition of family or community bonding is support received from external sources as indicated by their response to the question about support.

Prepared or Accepting

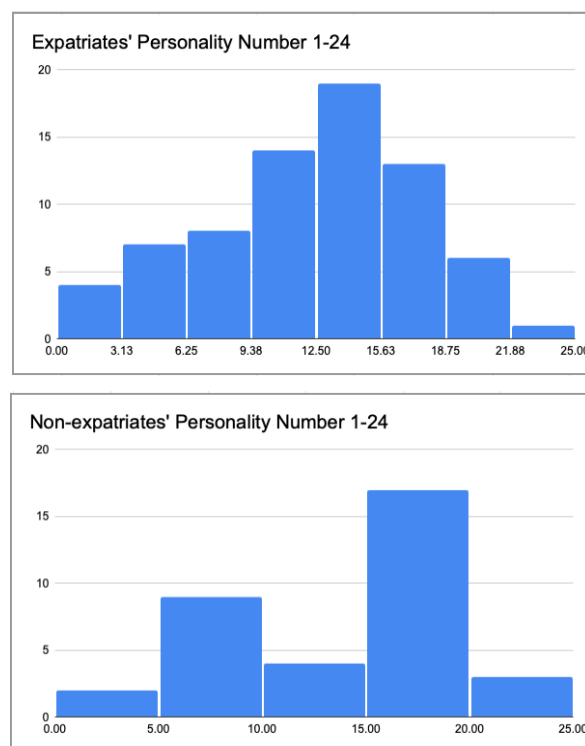
The photo of checkboxes was frequently used in describing a prepared move among the interviewees. One participant outlined “we were kind of ready to move... we had done all... we wanted to do... we’re ready to move on.” This study defines preparedness or acceptance in moving as the sufficient time to process the new transition and a

readiness to experience and adapt to a new environment. The researcher categorized the participants based on their response to the question defining “prepared” or “abrupt.”

Descriptive statistics were used to succinctly summarize the participants’ results.

### 1. Overall Personality Number (comparing expatriates with non-expatriates)

**Figure 1**  
*Personality Number of Expatriates and Non-Expatriates*

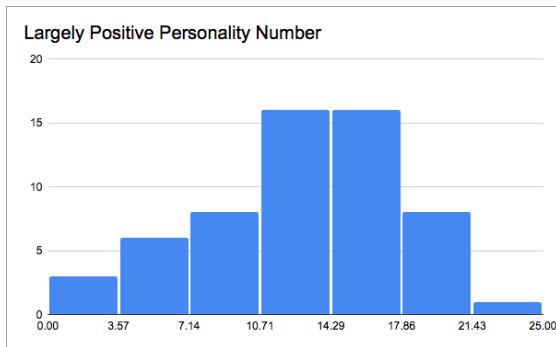


As pictured, the non-expatriate sample obtained a higher mean personality number of 13.429 while the expatriate sample possessed a mean of 12.506.

### 2. Personality Number for Each Expatriate Theme

**Figure 2**  
*a. Largely Positive*



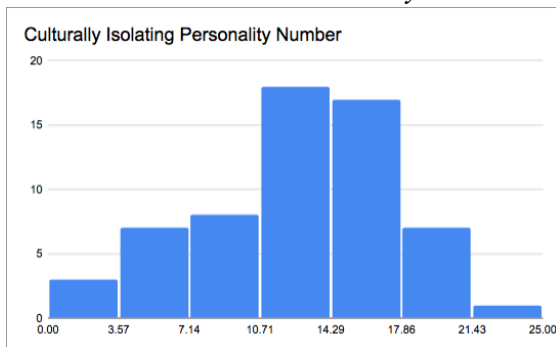


The mean personality score for a largely positive experience is 12.778 with 58 participants in the category. This theme produced the highest result in the expatriate sample.

*a. Isolating*

**Figure 3**

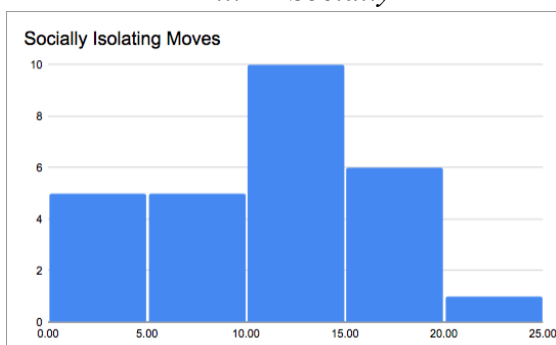
*i. Culturally*



Cultural isolation obtained an average personality number of 12.557 with 61 responses. This theme produced the highest personality number out of the three negative themes.

**Figure 4**

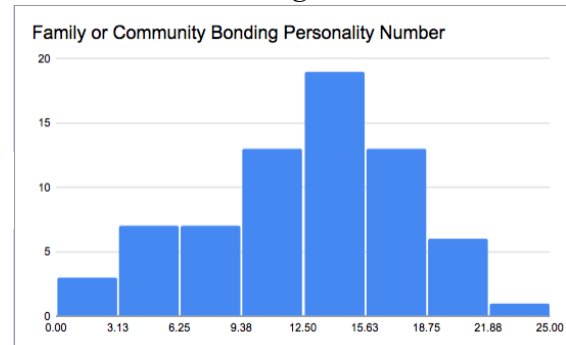
*ii. Socially*



Participants with one or more moving experiences classified as socially isolating averaged a personality number of 10.815, the lowest statistic of any theme.

**Figure 5**

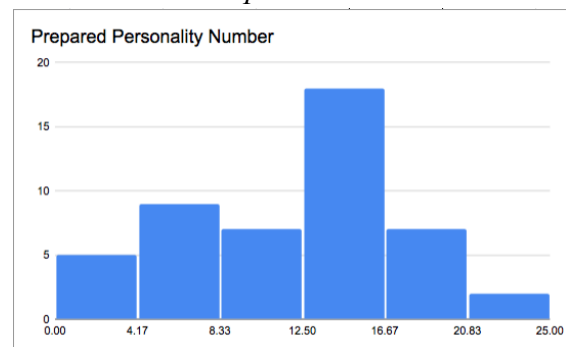
*b. Family or Community Bonding*



The expatriate theme of family or community bonding received a mean personality number of 12.667.

**Figure 6**

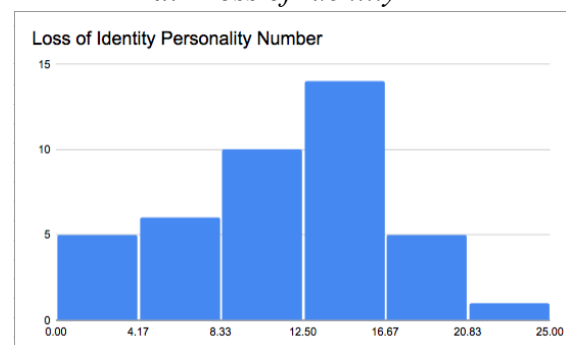
*c. Prepared*



Participants who experienced one or more prepared moves on average had 12.167 in personality number.

**Figure 7**

*d. Loss of Identity*

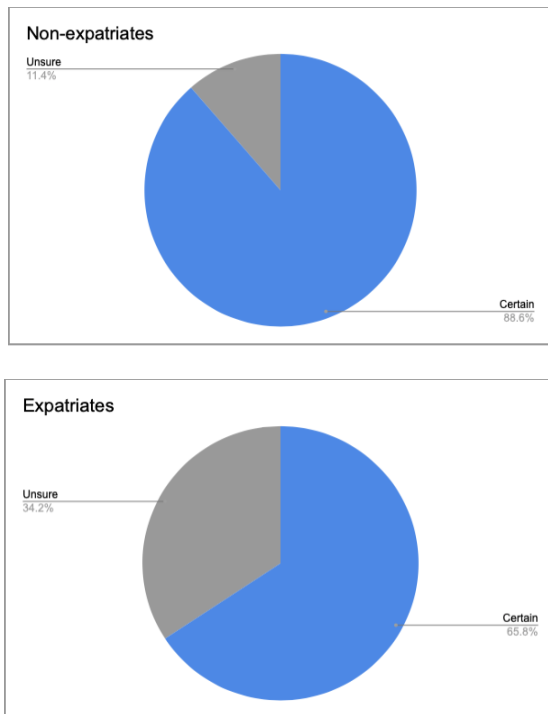


The mean personality number for expatriates experiencing one or more moves indicating a loss of identity is 11.927.

### 3. Belonging (comparing expatriates with non-expatriates)

**Figure 8**

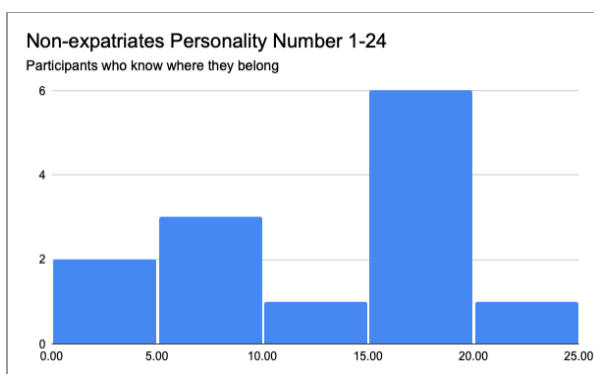
a. Amount of participants with a clear understanding of where they belong



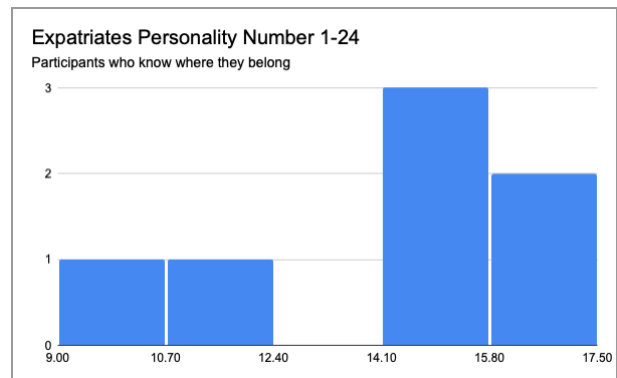
As figure 8 demonstrates, non-expatriates overall have a stronger sense of belonging (88.6%) compared to expatriates (65.8%).

**Figure 9**

b. Personality number of participants who are certain of where they belong



For the non-expatriate sample, the average personality number is 13.29.

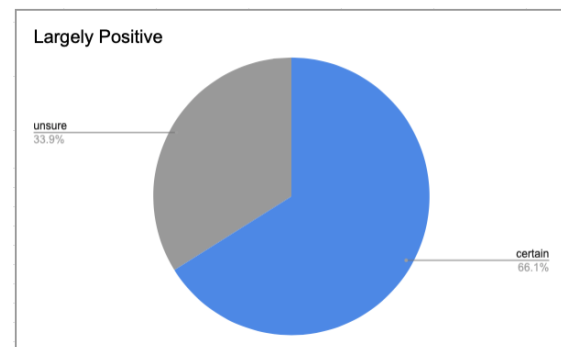


The expatriate sample's average personality number is 12.71 for participants certain of where they belong which is higher than the overall average for the expatriate sample.

### 4. Belonging Per Expatriate Theme

**Figure 10**

a. Largely Positive

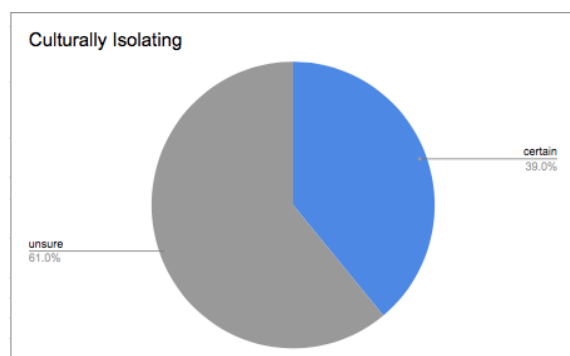


This theme produced the greatest amount of expatriates certain of where they belong (66%).

b. Isolating

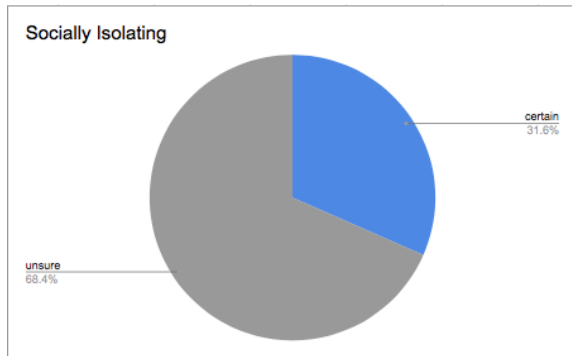
**Figure 11**

i. Culturally



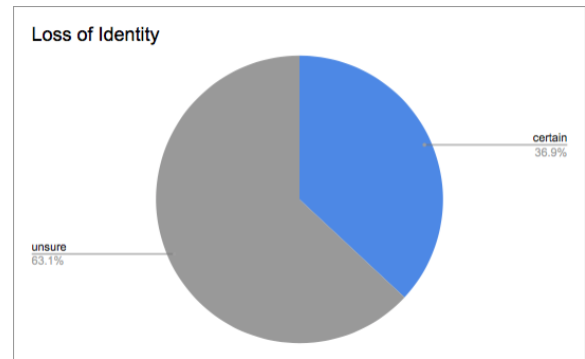
**Figure 12**

*ii. Socially*



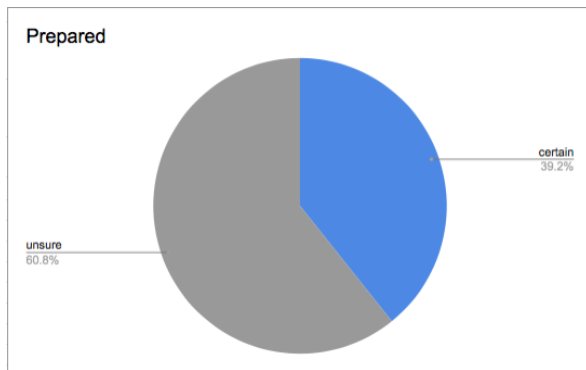
**Figure 15**

*e. Loss of Identity*



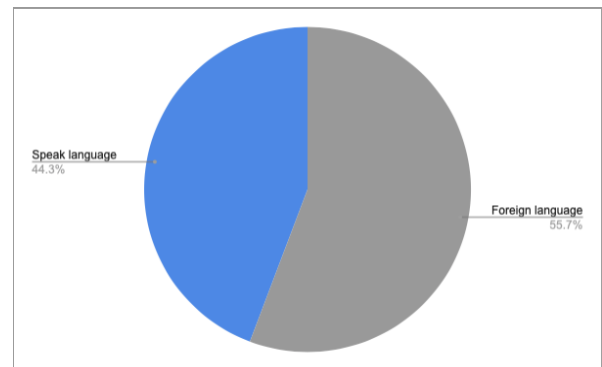
**Figure 13**

*c. Prepared*



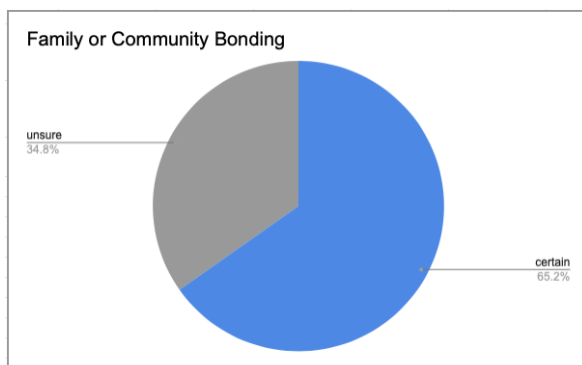
### 5. Language Acquisition in Culturally Isolating Moves

**Figure 16**

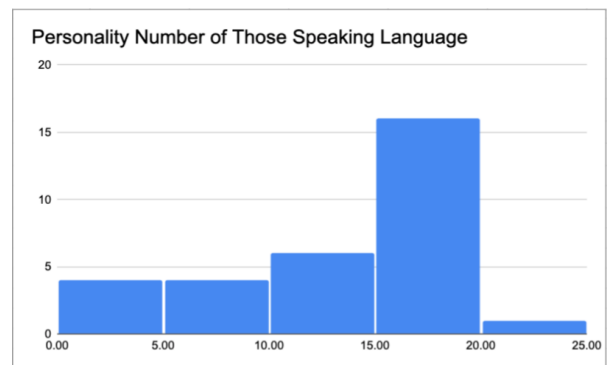


**Figure 14**

*d. Family or Community Bonding*



**Figure 17**



The mean personality number for expatriates who could speak the language of the host country in one or more of their culturally isolating moves is 13.065.

## 6. Where Expatriates Attribute Belonging

Figure 18

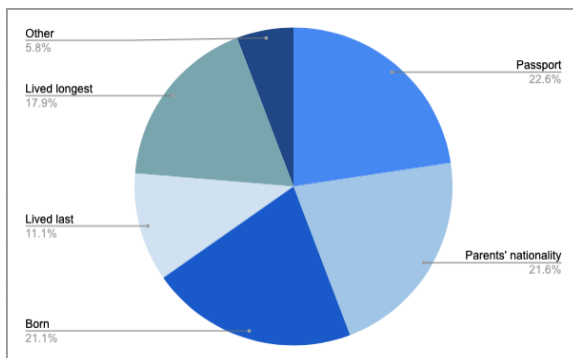
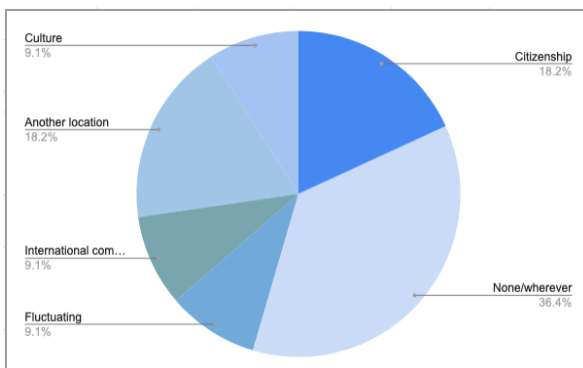


Figure 19

Within the "other" category



## 5. Discussion

**Hypothesis 1:** The expatriate sample produces a higher amount of extroversion compared to non-expatriates.

As figure 1 demonstrates, the non-expatriate sample produced a greater level of extroversion compared to expatriates as the mean was 13.429 compared to 12.506, respectively. The hypothesis is therefore incorrect. A possible explanation for this trend is, as Selmer (2002) suggests, frequently changing locations provokes reserved characteristics as opposed to more outgoing ones due depleting efforts of making friends. When asked how they believe moving has influenced their personality, some participants expressed

that moving "definitely affected my ability to get close to people because I know that I'm going to have to leave them eventually." On the other hand, many still stated they felt moving has made them more extroverted and confident.

**Hypothesis 2:** Expatriates with positive experiences will produce higher amounts of extroverted tendencies compared to expatriates with negative experiences.

Participants who experienced one or more moves which fell into either the "largely positive" or "family or community bonding" category proved to, on average, possess a more extroverted personality than those experiencing negative moves ("culturally isolating," "socially isolating" and "loss of identity"). Figure 2 demonstrates "largely positive" experiences averaging 12.778 and 12.667 for "community or family bonding" in figure 5. As researchers Yadegari and Alinaghi (2020) claim, friendships and relationships can ameliorate a move due to their support (Johnson et al., 2003)

The only exception, however, are "prepared" moves as participants averaged 12.167 (figure 6,) which is lower than "culturally isolating" moves with a mean of 12.557. Perhaps time to prepare beforehand isn't the most salient factor in adjusting to a move or individuals who felt ready to move only felt so as they did not enjoy that location. An explanation for the outlier "culturally isolating" among the negative themes may suggest that culture shock is not as influential for expatriates as researchers, such as Gardiner (n.d.) and Kohonen (2004), claim. Another interpretation is, as Caligiuri (2000) finds, extroverted and open expatriates adjust better to new cultures. If cultural isolation is so prominent among expatriates as Kohonen (2004) suggests, perhaps culturally isolating moves form extroverted tendencies.

Nonetheless, the three positive themes ("prepared," "family or community bonding" and "largely positive") generally

encompassed participants with greater extroverted tendencies as opposed to 11.927, 10.815 and 12.557 for the three negative themes, thus emblemizing the hypothesis as true. Expatriates with positive experiences did not, however, produce higher personality numbers than non-expatriates.

**Hypothesis 3:** Researchers, such as Baringer (2001), posit expatriates struggle with a sense of belonging, therefore a more subtle hypothesis which emerged is that expatriates have less security in location of belonging compared with non-expatriates.

Figure 8 delineates a distinct difference between the level of belonging among the two samples: 88.6% of non-expatriates displayed a clear sense of knowing where they belong whereas only 65.8% expatriates demonstrated the same certainty. This discrepancy suggests a truth in the hypothesis.

### 5.1 Level of belonging depending on theme

The expatriate theme with the most participants revealing a lack of belonging is “socially isolating” with 68.4% of participants unsure of where they belong (figure 12). The second to lowest level of belonging is the “loss of identity” category with 63.1% of participants possessing a depleted sense of place (figure 15). In other words, 36.9% of participants who have experienced one or more “loss of identity” moves are certain of their belonging and 31.6% of participants express the same certainty for “socially isolating.”

On the contrary, the category with the most respondents garnering a clear sense of belonging is “largely positive” as 66.1% fall under the “certain” category (Figure 10). Second is “family or community bonding” with 65.2% of participants (Figure 14). Again, the idea of friendships as a pertinent influence in belonging is revealed by the data, as Yadegari and Alinaghi (2020) suggest. Therefore, expatriates surrounded by

nurturing relationships are more likely to have a definitive sense of belonging compared to those lacking supportive presences.

### 5.2 Language Learning

Gardiner (n.d.) claims language acquisition of the host country aids in assimilating to the new environment fully; however, 44.3% of participants who experienced cultural isolation could speak the language of the new location in one or more of their culturally isolating moves (figure 16). This statistic suggests that language acquisition does not necessarily provide integration nor is it the pertinent factor determining cultural isolation. Moreover, within the “culturally isolating” theme, the mean personality number of those able to speak the language of the host country was 13.065, higher than the overall personality number of 12.557 for the “culturally isolating” theme (Figure 17). This data hints at Zafar’s (2012) claim that extroverts are more likely to be better language learners.

### 5.3 Where participants assign belonging

According to figure 18, expatriates assigned belonging to their passports more often than any other category (22.6%). While a passport is simply representative of one’s nationality, it can also provide certainty and comfort for expatriates. Moreover, four participants in the “other” category felt belonging to no particular place while another felt the most belonging in an international community (figure 19).

## 6. Limitations

This study encountered a multitude of limitations in terms of method design, execution and data interpretation. Firstly, errors may have risen due to reliance on surveys: during the personality test portion, participants may have input an erroneous result or underwent self-reporting bias. The use of surveys may also have restricted respondents from



expressing themselves fully due to the wording of the questions or amount of factors considered. Another limitation was the sample size as the findings may not have been representative of the whole expatriate or non-expatriate population. It is not certain whether all participants in the non-expatriate sample have lived in their native country throughout their entire childhood, which could have skewed the result. Moreover, the analysis of the data may be a confounding variable since the themes and classifications were curated by the researcher. Replications of the study may produce different results due to varying interpretations. Finally, the results cannot prove causation; it is unknown whether moving is the single factor controlling the personality number or level of belonging between the two samples and whether moving or not causes the extroverted or introverted tendencies.

## 7. Conclusion and Further Research

While not all results aligned with the hypotheses, the data is able to provide foundations for further exploration. As Lambiri (2005) suggests, more research surrounding the influence of expatriatism on children's personality development is necessary in providing adequate support, which this study suggests is lacking. Therefore, possible targets for this study are counselors or expatriate families who can provide TCKs with additional support and consideration (Harari et al., 2018).

Questions this study raises, which future research may answer, are: what techniques are most effective in preparing TCKs for moves? What factors are most important to expatriates in order to feel integrated into an environment? Why did socially isolating themes correlate with a lower personality number compared to culturally isolating themes?

Moreover, research could address lack of belonging: 34.2% of expatriates demonstrated uncertainty of where they

belong compared to 11.4% among non-expatriates. This trend highlights deterioration of sense of place along the way. Another possible area of research is examining where expatriates, compared to non-expatriates, assign belonging, such as whether or not expatriates are more likely to assert their belonging to abstract concepts like a community compared to concrete ones among non-expatriates.

Because this study was unable to prove causation, a longitudinal study comparing identical twins' experiences and personality types as an expatriate and non-expatriate would be beneficial in more closely partaking in the nature versus nurture debate.

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