

Personality Differences in managers who have, and have not, worked abroad.

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Abstract

The present, exploratory study examined bright-side personality trait (NEO-PI-R and MBTI) and dark-side trait (HDS) differences between middle to senior managers who had, and had not, worked abroad. It also examined the relation of personality trait variables to the duration of time spent abroad. In all 3,165 females and 10,068 males aged between 23 and 65 years went to work-related assessment centre. Results for a Domain and Facet analysis of the Big Five, as well as from the Dark-Side traits revealed numerous differences. Those who had worked abroad tended to be more Open and Conscientious, and less Neurotic. There were fewer differences on measures of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and dark-side HDS among those with experience loving abroad. They tended to be more Thinking than Feeling Types, Colourful/Histrionic and less Dependent. Regression showed those with work experience abroad tended to be older, Extraverted, Open, Conscientious males with a tendency to move towards as opposed to away from people. Those who had spent longer times abroad tended to be more Open and Diligent and less Agreeable. Limitations of this cross-sectional study are discussed.

Keywords: expatriate, personality, fit, adjustment, volunteering.

This study examines the personality correlates of over 13,000 middle aged adults who had and had not worked abroad, and how long they spent there. It is concerned with the concept of the expatriate manager and based on the assumption that personality factors play a part in who chooses to work abroad and stay there for a period of time. Indeed there is literature on the “migrant personality” which suggests there is “syndrome of personality characteristics” among individuals who want to emigrate that differentiates them from those who want to stay in their country of origin (Boneva & Frieze, 2001). Of course, some jobs require going abroad which is not a matter of choice while in others people can “turn down” the offer of a sojourning work assignment, though it may be at some personal cost.

One framework for understanding expatriate success is the *Attraction-Selection-Attrition* theory (Schneider, 1987; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995). The theory suggests that people are *attracted* to specific jobs because of their interests and personality; organisations then choose people they believe compatible for different jobs, and later some people leave a job (*attrition*) when they feel they do not fit in. This Attraction-Selection-Assessment process leads organisations and groups within them to become increasingly homogenous. In this sense it is possible to talk of person-job “fit” or “misfit”, or of congruity between a person and their work-group, and a “fit” for working abroad. Thus people may be attracted to international organisations that have offices in many countries and a reputation for moving their staff around on “foreign assignments”. Similarly these organisations tend to seek out those eager to work

abroad with the abilities, personality and values to thrive. This study examines how personality relates to the choice of overseas experience. There is a vast literature on how personality influences a wide range of work related behaviours, one of which is choosing an international organisation with the possibility of being asked to work abroad (Furnham, 2008).

Indeed, some businesses, for a variety of reasons, have an active (and expensive) policy of regular job transferral, while for some occupations (e.g., travelling salesperson, diplomat, soldier, missionary), the job, almost by definition, involves travel and working abroad for extended periods. Indeed job applicant for many jobs state specifically that they choose the job precisely and specifically for the opportunity to work abroad (Furnham 2015). Our question is the extent to which personality traits play a part in this decision.

It is not until comparatively recently that social scientists have begun to consider some of the psychological causes and consequences of business transfer and the intention to migrate (Winchie & Carment, 1988). What businesses and developmental agencies, as well as academics, want to know is what are the *best individual difference predictors of work efficacy while abroad* (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). These include abilities (multilingualism), skills, personality and values. They are interested in such things as at what stage in their working lives people go abroad, how long they stay, and what particular experiences they have, as this seems to strongly impact on their performance both abroad *and* when they return (Takeuchi, Tesluk, Yun, & Lepak, 2005). They are also very interested in selecting those who will thrive in difficult and unfamiliar environments involving danger or particular hardships. There is also the possibility that the overseas experience changes personality and values which is discussed below.

There are various reasons why middle managers have experience of working abroad. Some people join organisations for that express purpose, while others astutely avoid them (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). There are many factors involved: first, whose

choice/initiative it is (the individual or the organisation): the second the extent to which it is voluntary vs compulsory; and thirdly where and for how long people are posted abroad. Other factors include personal and family circumstances. In this study most people worked for large organisations at some point in their career and were offered the opportunity to move abroad which they could refuse. Our central question is the personality differences between those with and without overseas working experience.

There is an extensive research literature on the choices and challenges of working abroad (Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen & Bolino, 2012). These studies are concerned with the predictors of accepting a work assignment abroad, as well as the correlates of success and satisfaction while abroad (van der Velde, Bossink, & Jansen, 2005). For instance, in a meta-analytic study Hechanove, Beehr and Christiansen (2003) found self-efficacy, frequency of interaction with host nationals, and family support consistently predicted different types of adjustment. However, like many other studies this focused on reaction to the sojourn experience rather than the choice to go (Huang, Chi, & Lawler, 2005).

Personality and adaptation abroad

The present study was concerned with “bright” and “dark” side personality differences between a large group of British managers who had, and had not worked abroad. Bright-side traits are considered to be traits measuring normal personality functioning while dark-side traits are more associated with dysfunctional traits (Furnham, 2015; Furnham & Crump, 2005).

Some studies have looked at the personality trait correlates of a successful expatriate assignment. Ones and Viswesvaran (1997) summarized criterion-related validity studies of personality-related predictors for expatriates. Findings indicated that the personality determinants of expatriate early returns, job performance, adjustment, and other criteria were

different. Conscientiousness appeared to be a good predictor of expatriate job performance, and a valid predictor of overseas counterproductive behaviours. Most of these studies have also found that personality variables predictive of expatriate adjustment include Emotional Stability whereas, for job performance, ambition and aspects of Openness to Experience were predictive. A little later, Caligiuri (2000) found that Extraversion, Agreeableness and Emotional stability were negatively related to the desire to terminate their overseas assignment while Conscientiousness was related to positive supervisor ratings on the assignment.

Studies by Mol and colleagues have looked at personality correlates of those interested in becoming expatriates (Mol, Born, Willemsen, van der Molen & Derous, 2009) as well as trait correlates of work performance among expatriates. They found Extraversion, Agreeableness, Emotional Stability and Conscientiousness, but not Openness related to job performance along with other variables like cultural sensitivity and language ability (Mol, Born, Willemsen & van der Molen, 2005). Recently Canache, Hayes, Mondak and Wals (2013) found Openness and Extraversion was correlated with the intention to migrate in 22 country samples. Earlier Boneva and Frieze (2001) found that those who chose to migrate compared to those who do not want to resettle in a foreign country tended to be more achievement and power, but less affiliation oriented, and overall more work oriented.

Most of the personality related work in this field has however been concerned with trait correlates of adjustment and performance on foreign assignments (Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black & Ferzandi, 2006; van der Zee & van Oudenhoven,; Zimmermann & Neyer, 2013).

Interestingly all these studies looked at personality traits prior to moving abroad. It is possible that an overseas experience actually changes personality. This issue of the stability of personality over adulthood has been extensively researched.

The Stability of Personality

There have been many studies that examine the stability of psychological characteristics over time. The debate about the equivocal nature of both findings and conclusions regarding continuity vs. change revolves around a number of issues such as the reliability and validity of personality tests used (to account in part for measurement error); the moderator variables considered (like sex, education and ethnicity) ; the age at which people are measured (i.e. adolescents, adults, old age); the time span that shows most change and stability; how change is measured (such as mean level change, rank order, ipsative change); the stability of the environments of people and what, if anything leads to change (Roberts, Caspi & Moffitt, 2001; Roberts, Walton & Viechtbauer, 2006).

The results have patterns to them though there inevitably remains many disagreements (Ardelt, 2000). All agree that there is evidence of both stability and change. From these studies it may be possible to draw the following conclusions: Personality seems most stable between the ages of 30 and 60yrs particularly using established big five measures to assess it. There are modest increases in Emotional Stability and Agreeableness over this period with Extraversion and Neuroticism showing least change (both with a slight decline) and Conscientiousness showing most change (an increase). Males seem more stable than females.

Various studies have been reported using longitudinal data and cross-lagged correlation coefficients, path analysis and structural equation modelling where the causal ordering in the analysis has not matched the time at which data was gathered (Cheng & Furnham, 2012). That is, because it is generally accepted that some factors are generally stable over adulthood (like height) it is assumed that when they are measured is relatively unimportant (i.e. people remain very similar in height from 20-60). It is however generally accepted it is desirable to measure

variables according to the causal modelling pattern and also check the reliability of those measures.

This Study

This exploratory study used the results from assessment centre data based which has been used to provide data for various other studies (Furnham, Crump & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2007; Furnham, Crump & Ritchie, 2013). The consultancy collected this information to enable them to determine whether there are any differences in intercultural adaptability between people who have spent a lot of time abroad and those who have spent less or none, because this is an important dimension when assessing leaders for global clients.

This study compared the personality profile of a large group of middle aged managers on whether or not they had worked abroad. They were compared on two “bright side” measures, the NEO-PI-R and the MBTI as well as a dark side measure the Hogan Development Survey (HDS). No previous study it seems has used three different well established personality measures to explore this hypothesis. Our data did not allow an analysis of the motive for working abroad nor whether it was “compulsory”, “advised” or voluntary. However given the companies from which people came it was clear that for the vast majority were not required to go abroad but could choose to do so. We also could not measure, in this retrospective study, whether the experience overseas had changed an individual’s personality. Whilst we accept this is possible the research evidence reviewed above suggests that any change may be small and the result of many other factors. That is, we are making the assumption that personality factors play a part in the choice to work abroad and that they do not change much as a consequence of that experience. The acquisition of skills and changes in values however may be much more prone to change (Furnham & Bochner, 1986).

The research on personality and vocational preferences, risk taking and leisure pursuits informed our hypotheses (Furnham, 2008). Thus stable extraverts (sanguine types) and those who

are open seek out and thrive in situations characterised by novelty, variability and challenge such as working in a foreign country. The hard-working, reliable and Conscientious person may choose a working sojourn abroad to increase their skills and competence. Based on the previous literature on the Big Five it was predicted those who had worked abroad were less Neurotic (i.e., better adjusted) (H1), more Extraverted (H2), Open (H3) and Conscientious (H4).

We had Myers-Briggs data and we hypothesised as above that Extraverts would be more likely to have had experience abroad than Introverts (H5), as well as Perceiving rather than Judging people (H6).

There is now an extensive literature on the sub-clinical personality disorders and the extent to which they are related to management success and failure. Those in Cluster B or “Moving Against” people seem particularly interested in risk-taking and seeking out opportunities for promotion (Furnham, 2015). It was also predicted from the increasing studies on dark side personality traits that Antisocial/Mischievous (H7), Narcissistic/Bold (H8), Histrionic/Colourful (H9) and Schizotypal/Imaginative (H10) people would have had experiences of working abroad (Furnham, Trickey & Hyde, 2012). We believe this is the first study to examine sub-clinical personality disorders in this context.

We looked at personality correlates of time spent abroad. Again this may not be a matter of choice, though it could relate to work success and adaptation. Therefore in accord with previous studies on personality and work success we believe time spent abroad would correlate positively with Conscientiousness (H11), Extraversion (H12) and low Neuroticism/Stability (H13). These hypotheses were based mainly on the fact that these variables are most predictive of overseas work performance and that those who are more successful stay longer

Method

Participants

In total 13,233 British working adults took part in this study of which 3,165 were females (318 worked abroad) and 10,068 males (1,726 worked abroad). In all 2,044 had worked abroad and 11,189 had not. Their mean age was 42.36 years ($SD = 7.12$ years) with the range of 23 and 65 years. They were nearly all (over 95%) graduates and in middle class occupations with English as their mother tongue.

Measures

1. NEO-PI-R. The NEO-PI-R (Costa & McCrae, 1992) is a 240-item inventory, assessing the FFM Domains of Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), Openness to experience (O), Agreeableness (A) and Conscientiousness (C), with 6 Facets (8 items each) structured under the Domains. Respondents are requested to provide self-descriptions using a 5-point Likert scale. Sample items are Neuroticism: “I often feel lonely or blue”; Extraversion: “I like to have a lot of people around me”; Openness: “I experience a wide range of emotions or feelings”; Agreeableness: “I try to be courteous to everyone I meet”; and Conscientiousness “I work hard to accomplish my goals”. Its psychometric properties and validity have been well-documented cross-culturally. No item-level information was available for the current sample, but Cronbach’s Alpha coefficients for the Domains with the Facets as the indicators were .84, .79, .74, .72 and .82 for N, E, O, A, and C respectively (McCrae & Costa, 2010).
2. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator-Form G (MBTI; Briggs & Myers, 1987). The Myers-Briggs indicator is a Jungian-based inventory that uses a paper-and-pencil, self-report format. It is composed of 94 forced-choice items that constitute the four bipolar discontinuous scales which are implied in Jung’s theory. Sample items are

Extraversion-Introversion: "At parties, do you (a) sometimes get bored (b) always have fun?"; Intuitive-Sensing: "Is it higher praise to say someone has (a) vision (b) common sense?"; Thinking-Feeling: "Are you more careful about (a) people's feelings or (b) their rights?" and Perceiving-Judging: "When you go somewhere for the day, would you rather (a) plan what you do and when, or (b) just go? The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator has been the focus of extensive research and substantial evidence has accumulated suggesting the inventory has satisfactory validity and reliability (Myers, 2000; Myers & Myers, 1990).

3. Hogan Development Survey (Hogan & Hogan, 1997). The HDS taxonomy is closely related to classical personality disorders described by the DSM-IV-TR (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The HDS adopts a dimensional as opposed to a categorical model. The HDS consists of 154 items that are completed via participants stating either their agreement or disagreement on a five point scale. The items score for 11 scales. The label for each scale and a sample item from each are: Excitable ("I can get angry quickly"); Skeptical ("There are some people I will never forgive"); Cautious ("People tell me I am not assertive enough"); Reserved ("I consider myself to be a loner"); Leisurely ("People at work expect me to do everything"); Bold ("I was born to do great things"); Mischievous ("I often do things on the spur of the moment"); Colorful ("In a group I am often the centre of attention"); Imaginative ("People describe me as unconventional"); Diligent ("I tend to be a perfectionist about my work") and Dutiful ("I take pride in being a good follower).

The scale has been found to predict work preferences (Furnham et al., 2012) with the manual reporting internal reliabilities ranging between .50 and .79 (average alpha = .67) and test-retest reliabilities between .58 and .87 (average alpha = .75). This

scale has a higher order factor structure labelled Moving Against, Away from and Toward others (Hogan, Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2007).

Procedure

Participants were tested by a British based psychological consultancy over a 10 year period. Each participant was given personal feedback on their score and consented to their anonymous data being published. They were nearly all employed as middle to senior managers in British companies. They took this test as part of an assessment exercise, run by an external psychological consultancy.

Results

A. Going Abroad

For all the analyses the total population was divided into those who had, and had not worked abroad. If a person had missing data on any of the variables concerned they were dropped from further analyses. Covariates included the gender of the person, and their age at testing. Because of missing data the N varied for each of the analyses. The large sample suggested that we interpret only significant results at $p < .001$.

1. The Big Five

First a MANCOVA and ANCOVAs were computed for the Big Five Domain scores comparing those that had, and had not been abroad. Gender and age were covariates. Gender ($F(5,7777)=124.26, p<.001$) but not age were significant covariates. The MANOVA was

significant ($F(5, 7777) = 20.38, p < .001$). This was repeated for each of the five facets. Results were significant for Neuroticism ($F(6, 7764) = 8.59, p < .001$), Extraversion ($F(6, 7765) = 6.20, p < .001$), Openness ($F(6, 7765) = 6.01, p < .001$), Agreeableness ($F(6, 7765) = 6.05, p < .001$), Conscientiousness ($F(6, 7764) = 8.25, p < .001$). The ANOVA results are given in Table 1. Those who had gone abroad were less Neurotic but more Extraverted, Open, Agreeable and Conscientious. Although these differences were significant the effect sizes were not large varying from .09 to .21 (Cohen's d). This confirmed H1 to H4.

Insert Table 1 here

Table 1 shows the results for the ANCOVAs for 30 facets. The results showed that for all six Neuroticism factors, four Openness and four Conscientious factors the results were mostly consistent with the overall finding for the associated factor.

2. The MBTI

A MANCOVA and ANCOVAs were computed on the four scores co-varying gender and age (see Table 2) Gender ($F(4,6746)=32.68, p<.001$, but not age were significant co-variates. The main effect was significant ($F(4,9465) = 6.65, p < .001$). The ANCOVAs indicated only one significant difference on the Thinking-Feeling scale. Those who had gone abroad had lower Feeling scores than those that had not: 27.07 ($SD = 15.82$) vs 29.27 ($SD = 15.45$) ($F(1, 9486) = 24.21, p < .001$).

Insert Table 2 here

3. The HDS

A MANCOVA and ANCOVAs were computed on the eleven HDS scores, co-varying gender and age (See Table 3) Both age ($F(12,4070)= 8.32, p<.001$; and gender ($F(12,4070)=13.67, p<.001$) were significant. This main effect was significant: $F(10,9233) =$

9.38, $p < .001$, and the ANCOVAs indicated six significant differences. Those who travel abroad were less Cautious, Reserved, Leisurely and Dutiful but more Bold and Imaginative. Thus only H8 and H10 but not H7 and H9 were confirmed. This result has occurred in many other factor analyses of this scale (Furnham et al., 2012). The MANCOVA was then repeated on these factors; this was significant: ($F(3,4089) = 7.93, p < .001$). One of the three factors were significant namely Moving Against ($F(1,4091) = 15.07, p < .001$). Those who had worked abroad were higher on Moving Against and lower on Moving Away from others which is in accordance with many other findings in the area.

Insert Table 3 here

4. Regression

A logistic binary regression was performed for each test including gender and age. This was significant for the Big Five (Chi-Square=163.25, $p < .001$ with three factors highly significant: Gender $B = -.583$, Wald 57.53, $p < .001$; Neuroticism: $B = -.008$, Wald=19.73, $p < .001$; Openness: $B = .012$, Wald=48.35, $p < .001$). The regression for the MBTI was significant (Chi-Square=48.69, $p < .001$). Two variables were significant: Gender ($B = -.437$, Wald 25.63, $p < .001$) and Thinking-Feeling ($B = .007$, Wald=13.27, $p < .001$). The binary regression for the dark-side variables was also significant (Chi-Square =137.77, $p < .001$). Five factors were significant : Gender $B = -.563$, Wald=32.07, $p < .001$, Age $B = -.01$, Wald=6.70, $p < .01$; Cautious $B = -.04$, Wald=5.24, $p < .05$, Colourful $B = -.04$, Wald= 6.20, $p < .01$ and Imaginative: $B = .128$, Wald=58.67, $p < .001$.

B. Time Spent Abroad.

In all 3,815 people in the sample had lived abroad, the mean time being 1.58 years ($SD = 2.47$).

We correlated time abroad with all personality variables. Most were significant but small: the biggest was $r = -.09$ with the MBTI, EI score suggesting that Introverts had spent less time abroad than Extraverts.

With this as the criterion variable we computed a series of step wise regression where first gender and age were entered in the first step and in the second step the personality variables.

1. MBTI: This regression was significant ($F(6,2279) = 30.56, p < .001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .07$). The results showed that by our criteria on age ($\beta = -.25, t = 11.91, p < .001$) was significant.
2. NEO: This regression was significant ($F(7,3260) = 29.96, p < .001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .06$). The results showed that age ($\beta = -.21, t = 11.68, p < .001$) was significant as well as Openness ($\beta = -.11, t = 5.72, p < .001$), and Agreeable ($\beta = -.08, t = 4.54, p < .001$). Thus older, Open and Disagreeable types had spent more time abroad.
3. HDS: This regression was significant ($F(13,2485) = 10.01, p < .001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .05$). The results showed that age ($\beta = -.13, t = 6.56, p < .001$) was significant as well as Imaginative ($\beta = -.13, t = 5.70, p < .001$). Thus older but more Imaginative people spend more time abroad.
4. Two further multiple regressions were computed. In the first, there were three steps: age and sex, then the Big Five NEO, followed by the HDS. The regression was significant: $F(18,2463) = 7.99, p < .001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .05$. Four variables were significant: Age ($\beta = -.13, t = 6.19, p < .001$); and Imaginative ($\beta = .12, t = 4.75, p < .001$). A final regression involved regression all 30 facets after age and sex. This too was significant ($F(32,3232) = 8.85, p < .001, \text{Adj } R^2 = .07$). Age ($\beta = -.19, t = 11.08, p < .001$) and three facets were significant at $p < .001$. They were O2 Aesthetics ($\beta =$

.09, $t = 4.01$, $p < .001$); O6 Values (beta = .06, $t = 3.38$, $p < .001$); and A5 Modesty (beta = -.09, $t = 4.37$, $p < .001$).

Discussion

We have made three important, hopefully defensible, assumptions in this study. *First*, that personality factors played a major part in the fact that some people had an abroad experience compared to others. That is, that an individual's personality determines, in part, whether they seek out jobs that offer, as well as accept/reject, any invitation to work abroad. There is a significant literature which would support this assumption, namely that personality predicts the desire to travel and work abroad (Canache et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2001).

Second, that most people in our sample had had the option of working abroad. Inevitably some organizations in some sectors do not offer the experience of working in another country. Indeed it could be that personality factors play a part in job/organisational choice and that one factor influencing them is the possibility that people may be offered the opportunity to work abroad. Thus people who use to work for an airline, a foreign bank or a large multinational company may have been influenced in their choice, partly as a function of their personality. More and more people work abroad but it is possible that people in some sectors and in some jobs are never offered that opportunity. The question for us is the possibility of confounding data.

Third, that person does not fundamentally or significantly change (in values or personality) as a function of working abroad. There is an extensive literature on the plasticity vs plaster debate on the stability of personality over time and as a function of particular experiences. The literature suggests that there are small but predictable changes over time with general maturation and that personality function can change as a function of therapy (Roberts

et al., 2006). It is possible that the trauma or learning experiences of working abroad has a major or long term effect on an individual's personality or value system though it remains unclear which factors are most important in that change and how the process operates.

However our data set was cross-sectional and therefore we cannot rule out the possibility that the experience of working abroad had an impact on a person's personality trait profile. Furthermore we do not know how many times people worked abroad or where they worked which are potentially relevant variables.

The results by-and-large from this study support previous literature in the field. Those who had been abroad were less Neurotic, more Extraverted, Agreeable, Open and Conscientiousness. This profile has been associated with business success though there remain doubt around Agreeableness (Howard & Howard, 2000). The results were strongest for traits Neuroticism and Openness suggests that self-evidently people who are curious and open to novelty choose to work abroad while those who are prone to anxiety and depression do not

This study went further than most by examining personality at a facet level. This analysis showed that the facets of Neuroticism particularly Anxiety and Depression most strongly differentiated between those who had, and had not worked abroad. The results also showed that only two facets of Agreeableness (Trust and Straightforwardness) differentiated between the two groups. It may be assumed that travel and working abroad is too stressful for Neurotics and hence avoided, while it appears to be a very attractive option, by definition, for those who are Open-to-experience. Despite the many significant differences however it needs to be acknowledged that the effects size were small, with Cohen's *d* rarely exceeding .20.

This study also looked at results from two other tests. The results from the MBTI were interesting and surprising for two reasons. First, only one of the four dimensions showed a significant difference. Those who were more "Thinking" rather than "Feeling" oriented tended

to have more experience of working abroad. This makes sense for reasons: Feeling scores are associated with Neuroticism (Furnham, 1996) and Thinking scores are associated with management adaptation and success (Furnham & Stringfield, 1993). Second the Extraversion-Introversion dimension did not show a significant difference yet the same dimension on the NEO-PI-R did. It is not clear why this is the case as these two measures are highly correlated. It may be that the two measures of extraversion are focusing on rather different facets (i.e. impulsivity, sociability, optimism) which are differentially related to the outcome measure

This study also used the HDS dark side measure which has been used in many recent studies and shown to be related to both work success and failure (Furnham et al., 2012; 2014). Six of the eleven scales showed a marginally significant difference. More Imaginative, but Cautious, Leisurely and Dutiful people had had experience of working abroad.

We expected two dark-side traits namely Bold and Mischievous to be related to overseas experience but this was not the case. Previous work has shown that moderate-to-high, but not very high, scores on Bold and Mischievous people do well in business, take risks and get promotion (Furnham et al., 2012, 2013, 2014). However the results from the higher order analysis suggested that the dark side factors were indeed relevant to the experience of working abroad. The Moving Against others factor has been associated both with management success (in the sense of promotion) but also with failure (Furnham, Ritchie & Crump, 2013). These traits are associated with ambition, excitement seeking and manipulateness which may explain why they are associated with working abroad. Thus it is possible that people are chosen to go and work abroad as a function of their previous work success. The characteristics which differentiate those who have and have not worked abroad appear to mirror those that are associated with productivity and upward mobility, though of course the direction of causality is not clear. Similarly those who tendency is to Move Away from Others tend not to go abroad.

It should be pointed out that there were some inconsistencies between the various results. The dutifulness facet of Conscientiousness suggested that people who had been abroad were more dutiful yet the result from the similarly labelled traits from the HDS suggested that the opposite was true. The dutiful trait from the HDS is based on the Dependent personality disorder which may explain why high scores are not found with those who have been abroad.

However, it should be noted that despite using various statistical tests we were unable to account for much of the variance (just under 3%). The question therefore is what other factors account for more of the variance and more clearly differentiate those who have and have not worked abroad. That is, whilst personality traits do play a part, other factors like demography (sex, age, education) and motives do play a part. Indeed we did show that inevitable age was related to going abroad, presumably as older people had more opportunities to do so.

One major limitation of this study is the missing information about why, when and where people went abroad. It would be desirable to their personal circumstances (family situation, rewards for going abroad). Also it is quite possible that those who accept a sojourn in a relatively, close-by, developed country are different from those who accept the more “challenging assignment” of a distant, developing country with relatively poor infrastructure. Other factors may also play a part like the “age and stage” of the manager, whether the assignment is seen as a critical for development and promotion, and whether they go abroad with their family (Takeuchi et al., 2005). It would be desirable to know which job sector people came from and the impact of that. These factors were not known in this study, though we do know how long managers spent abroad in total. In this sense the present study could be thought of as a pilot study throwing up various hypotheses which could be further investigated.

A second limitation was that this was a cross-sectional study and we were thus unable to disentangle the issue of cause and consequence (selection and socialization). It has been established that personality traits can and do change as a consequence of particular experiences (Ludtke, Roberts, Trautwein & Nagy, 2011; Specht, Egloff & Schmukle, 2011). Indeed, as noted above there is evidence that personality traits predict international mobility experiences as subsequent personality development (Zimmerman & Neyer, 2013). Longitudinal studies are always preferential, but data of this sort are very difficult to acquire.

A third limitation is the representativeness of this sample. Clearly it was not representative of the British population: participants tended to be better educated and from a high socio-economic group. It was however probably large enough to be typical of the sort of working adults who had an opportunity to work abroad. The fact that the sample was much smaller for some measures (i.e., HDS) should however not be taken as a sign of selective attrition as this measure was introduced at a later stage in the assessment centre programme.

A fourth limitation refers to the fact that this data was entirely based on self-report which has well known limitations which include socially desirable responding. It has been suggested that the problem can be divided into impression management where people give responses they believe will make them look good, as well as self-deception where people give inaccurate responses though they do not necessarily know they are doing this. It would have been desirable to have observation data from those who knew the participants well.

Clearly this is an area of importance for applied researchers which requires large samples followed over time to examine the causes and consequences of working abroad. The fact that working abroad is more common than in the past suggests a possible agenda for future research. Whilst this study concentrated on personality correlates of going abroad it may also be important to look at both abilities and values/motives. Thus it may be that the ability to learn

foreign languages is a critical factor in going and succeeding while working abroad. Equally an interest in people rather than things, and ideas more than data help people adapt to the ambiguities and complexities of working abroad. It is also important to consider how the social network of a person contributes to their working abroad (Furnham & Bochner, 1986). For instance it has been established that the happiness of an expatriate's partner and family play a major part in their adaptation and well-being. Another area of research may explore how cultural differences and similarities between the sojourners country of origin and destination effects their happiness and adaptation (Hofstede, 2001).

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Table 1. Means, SDs and ANCOVA results for the Big Five Domains and facets of the NEO-PI-R test.

	Not Abroad		Abroad		F	Cohen's d
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Neuroticism	64.85	19.9	60.75	19.3	45.04***	0.21
Extraversion	127.74	18.8	129.42	17.9	15.10***	-0.09
Openness	119.83	18.8	122.91	18.0	56.63***	-0.17
Agreeableness	119.42	15.8	120.11	15.5	6.76**	-0.04
Conscientiousness	133.90	17.4	136.29	16.7	22.66***	-0.14
N1 Anxiety	12.24	5.24	11.16	5.07	45.81***	0.21
N2 Hostility	10.11	4.62	9.62	4.57	11.57***	0.11
N3 Depression	9.48	4.79	8.70	4.45	30.02***	0.17
N4 Self Conscious	11.77	4.33	11.16	4.16	21.58***	0.14
N5 Impulsivity	14.75	4.45	14.22	4.30	12.66***	0.12
N6 Vulnerability	6.56	3.53	5.98	3.45	26.85***	0.17
E1 Warmth	23.71	4.02	23.66	4.06	0.96	0.01
E2 Gregarious	20.01	4.72	20.19	4.72	3.88*	-0.04
E3 Assertiveness	20.88	4.53	21.49	4.20	20.92***	-0.14
E4 Activity	21.72	4.13	22.29	3.91	31.65***	-0.14
E5 Excite. Seeking	18.88	4.52	19.11	4.41	1.60	-0.05
E6 Pos. Emotions	22.60	4.70	22.67	4.65	2.77	-0.01
O1 Fantasy	16.77	4.88	17.04	4.74	8.80***	-0.06
O2 Aesthetics	17.29	6.00	18.09	5.80	38.01***	-0.14
O3 Feelings	21.87	4.26	21.86	4.10	1.96	0.12
O4 Actions	19.85	4.22	20.43	4.14	39.83***	-0.14
O5 Ideas	20.43	5.28	21.45	5.03	52.98***	-0.20
O6 Values	23.62	3.41	24.03	3.45	22.31***	-0.12
A1 Trust	21.95	4.15	22.44	4.13	21.36***	-0.12
A2 Straightforward.	18.65	4.45	18.98	4.48	11.28***	-0.07
A3 Altruism	23.86	3.50	23.72	3.46	0.14	0.04
A4 Compliance	18.04	4.06	18.06	3.97	0.39	0.01
A5 Modesty	17.47	4.67	17.34	4.49	0.07	0.03
A6 Tender Minded	19.48	3.48	19.54	3.45	1.69	-0.02
C1 Competence	24.25	3.23	24.63	3.24	15.26***	-0.12
C2 Order	18.96	4.56	19.15	4.36	2.62	-0.04

C3 Dutifulness	24.90	3.51	25.45	3.45	29.61***	-0.16
C4 Achievement	23.26	4.03	25.90	3.76	34.93***	-0.28
C5 Self-Discipline	23.89	4.12	24.32	3.83	14.56***	-0.11
C6 Deliberation	18.65	4.43	18.81	4.41	0.49	-0.04

Note: * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$

Table 2

Means and SDs and ANCOVA results for the MBTI

	Not Abroad		Abroad		F	Cohen's d
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Extraversion-Introversion	22.80	15.51	22.91	14.04	0.10	0.00
Sensing-Intuitive	22.27	14.59	21.82	14.37	1.18	0.03
Thinking-Feeling	27.46	15.79	29.49	15.41	12.54***	0.13
Judging-Thinking	23.57	14.61	23.11	14.30	1.40	0.02

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 3

Means and SDs and ANCOVA results for the HDS.

	Not Abroad		Abroad		F	Cohen's d
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
Excitable	3.12	2.55	3.01	2.60	0.29	0.04
Skeptical	4.56	2.28	4.43	2.32	2.13	0.06
Cautious	3.53	2.72	3.02	2.94	30.10***	0.18
Reserved	4.67	2.25	4.52	2.15	4.10*	0.07
Leisurely	4.93	2.15	4.69	2.14	11.96***	0.11
Bold	7.28	3.16	7.49	2.57	5.47**	-0.07
Mischievous	6.91	2.51	7.02	2.46	1.61	-0.04
Colourful	7.81	2.97	7.94	2.78	1.48	-0.05
Imaginative	5.39	2.37	5.93	2.32	50.70***	-0.23
Diligent	8.86	2.39	8.90	2.45	2.17	0.01
Dutiful	7.11	2.07	6.89	2.02	11.96***	0.11

Note: *** $p < .001$ * $p < .05$

