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Please cite the final published version:

Selmer, J., McNulty, Y., Luring, J., & Vance, C. (2018). Who is an Expat-Preneur? Toward a Better Understanding of a Key Talent Sector Supporting International Entrepreneurship. *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 16(2), 134-149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10843-017-0216-1>

Publication metadata

Title:	Who is an Expat-Preneur? Toward a Better Understanding of a Key Talent Sector Supporting International Entrepreneurship
Author(s):	Selmer, J., McNulty, Y., Luring, J., & Vance, C.
Journal:	<i>Journal of International Entrepreneurship</i>
DOI/Link:	10.1007/s10843-017-0216-1
Document version:	Accepted manuscript (post-print)

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Submitted to the *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*
Special Issue on “Migrant and Diaspora Entrepreneurs in International Entrepreneurship”
March, 2017
Revised July, 2017 and November, 2017

Who is an expat-preneur? Toward a better understanding of a key talent sector supporting international entrepreneurship

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Who is an expat-preneur? Toward a better understanding of a key talent sector supporting international entrepreneurship

Abstract The conceptualization of immigrant entrepreneurs has recently expanded to consider some of them as a sub-type of self-initiated expatriates that move across national borders to engage in entrepreneurial activities and opportunities. Known as ‘expat-preneurs’, and in spite of their growing numbers, this segment of the immigrant entrepreneur population has received far less attention than other types of immigrants in the international and diaspora entrepreneurship literature, and even less attention in the self-initiated expatriate field of study. In this article, we seek to address the gap in empirical studies about expat-preneurs as an important, albeit under-researched, segment of the immigrant entrepreneur and self-initiated expatriate diaspora. While we acknowledge that there may be controversy as to how our entrepreneurship lens is accepted in the international entrepreneurship domain, we see particular value in engaging with the ongoing and emerging discussion within JIEN about what international entrepreneurship can be. To advance the study of expat-preneurs from a theoretical standpoint, we demonstrate empirically that aggregating various kinds of self-initiated expatriates without first ensuring that they are demographically comparable (i.e., that there can be different types) can potentially contribute to poor construct clarity and validity about this field of research in general. More importantly, it can diminish the important role of expat-preneurs in particular within the international entrepreneurship domain, for example, by ignoring that their motivation to engage in entrepreneurial activity differs from the majority of necessity-based diaspora entrepreneurs. To illustrate our point, we surveyed self-initiated expatriates in China, Hong Kong and Singapore and compared personal characteristics. We found differences regarding their age, position, time in current job in the host location, time as an expatriate, and time in the host location overall to suggest that not all self-initiated expatriates are the same. While we found no intergroup differences for educational level, gender, or marital status, clear distinctions emerged showing that expat-preneurs are different from company employed self-initiated expatriates. We

discuss theoretical implications arising from these findings.

Keywords Expat-preneur . Self-initiated expatriate . International entrepreneurship . Construct clarity Expatriates . Business expatriates

Introduction

It has long been recognized that a country's economic health is closely tied to the vibrancy and success of its entrepreneurial sector (Aquino 2005; Floyd and McManus 2005). With this link in mind, many countries actively encourage and facilitate educational, networking, and financial systems that support entrepreneurial activity (Lee, Sohn and Ju 2011; Kara, Chu and Benzing 2010; Heilbrunn and Kushnirovich 2008). There is increasing evidence that immigrant entrepreneurs have a disproportionately positive impact on national entrepreneurial success, which increasingly involves international new ventures (Kerr and Kerr 2016; Zolin and Schlosser 2013). For example, Vinogradov and Jørgensen (2017) found that immigrant entrepreneurs were significantly more successful than native entrepreneurs in international opportunity recognition. The above notwithstanding, the conceptualization of immigrant entrepreneurs has recently expanded to consider some of them as a sub-type of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) moving across national borders – what we term ‘expat-preneurs’ (see Vance et al., 2016). Despite emerging evidence that their numbers are growing (Vance et al., 2017), this segment of the immigrant entrepreneur population has received far less attention than other types of immigrants in the international and diaspora entrepreneurship literature (Mainela, Puhakka and Servais 2015; Vissak and Zhang 2014). In this article, we seek to address the gap in empirical studies about expat-preneurs as an important, albeit under-researched, segment of the immigrant entrepreneur diaspora. While we acknowledge that there may be controversy as to

how our entrepreneurship lens is accepted in the international entrepreneurship (IE) domain, we see particular value in engaging with the ongoing and emerging discussion within JIEN about what IE can be.

In the study of IE, which includes diaspora entrepreneurship predominantly originating from developing countries, it is important to understand migration flows and directions, institutional effects, network dynamics, and other structural economic circumstances (Mainela, Puhakka and Servais 2015; Coviello and Cox 2006). However, other individual-level underlying factors influencing international entrepreneurship activity are also worthy of analysis, including individual career aspirations and socio-cultural determinants, both of which require a more contextual perspective (Elo 2016). The purpose of this article is to provide a clearer individual-level understanding of expatriate entrepreneurs ('expatpreneurs'). An improved understanding may in turn lead to more effective national policy and support systems that further support entrepreneurship success and, ultimately, build economic health.

Who is an expatriate?

Expatpreneurs, as a sub-type of self-initiated expatriates, fit within the broader category of business expatriates, defined as, "legally working individuals who reside temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen in order to accomplish a career-related goal, being relocated abroad either by an organization, by self-initiation or directly employed within the host-country" (McNulty & Brewster 2017 p. 46). The focus of early academic research into business expatriates, typically from developed countries, began in the 1950s with studies of the expansion of American companies abroad including the challenges associated with managing 'overseas executives' (Mandell 1958; Howell and Newman 1959; Thompson 1959; Wallace

1959). Expatriate researchers in the 1980s and 1990s followed on with a dual-track interest in MNE policies for managing expatriates (Torbiorn 1982; Mendenhall, Dunbar and Oddou 1987; Peterson, Sargent, Napier and Shim 1996) and research about expatriates themselves (Tung 1988; Boyacigiller 1990; Black and Gregersen 1991; Feldman and Thomas 1992). Decades of research since the 1950s shows that the historic conceptualization of the expatriate construct is borne out of business employment, with the demand for expatriates being ‘tailored to the organizational context of working abroad’ (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld and Dickmann 2014, p. 2303) and based on the notion that expatriates will help organizations meet their business objectives (Edström and Galbraith 1977; Tung 1984; Tharenou and Harvey 2006; Tungli and Peiperl 2009).

In the context of expatriation, the major contribution from studies of business expatriates to date has been the concept of organization-assigned expatriates (AEs) - people whose careers usually unfold within one organization which seeks to help them improve their career advancement through multiple long-term assignments (Jokinen, Brewster and Suutari 2008). Employment as an AE implies: (a) that expatriates are assigned by organizations; and (b) that employment by an organization is a key characteristic, thus distinguishing AEs from non-business expatriates (for example, tourists, retirees, refugees, sojourners) on the basis of the *temporary*, *voluntary* and *task-related* nature of their institutionally sponsored employment. With the recent introduction of research about self-initiated expatriates (SIEs; Suutari and Brewster 2000), also typically originating from developed economies, conceptualizations of expatriates now position them according to two distinct types. The first category consists of individuals who, according to Shaffer, Kraimer, Chen and Bolino (2012, p. 1286), “initiate and usually finance their own expatriation and are not transferred by organizations; they relocate to a country of their

choice to pursue cultural, personal, and career development experiences, often with no definite time frame in mind”, i.e., SIEs (see Doherty, Richardson and Thorn 2013; Andresen et al. 2014; Cerdin and Selmer 2014; Selmer and Luring 2010). The second category are people who are sent abroad by an organization, i.e., AEs (see Shaffer et al. 2012; Haslberger, Brewster and Hippler 2014). Extant literature has thus been very clear in the past decade that the path to becoming a business expatriate can take different forms of expatriation, i.e. that it can be organization-initiated or self-initiated.

The introduction of SIE research was pivotal for extending the conceptualization of expatriates to include those who go abroad primarily for the perceived value of international work experience for their long-term personal and professional development (Shaffer et al. 2012; Doherty and Dickmann 2013; Tharenou 2013). McNulty and Brewster (2017) and McNulty and Vance (2017) conceptualized several different sub-types of expatriates as being studied under the SIE rubric. For example, there are: (a) localized expatriates/LOPATs - AEs who, after completing a long-term assignment contract, then transition to full local terms and conditions in the host country as directed by either the employer or at their own request (Tait, De Cieri and McNulty 2014); (b) permanent transferees/PTs - employees that resign from the home country office and are hired by the host country office of the same MNE but for which there is no return (repatriation) to the home country, no guarantee of company-sponsored reassignment elsewhere, and only local terms and conditions offered in the host country (Yates 2011; Tait et al. 2014); and, (c) foreign executives in local organizations/FELOs, who hold local managerial positions supervising host country nationals in local organizations where these organizations have their headquarters (Arp, Hutchings and Smith 2013; Arp 2014).

It is in the SIE research that we find a fourth sub-type of SIE – (d) expatriate entrepreneurs

(‘expatpreneurs’), being defined as “an individual temporarily living abroad who initiates an international new venture (self-employment) opportunity in a host country” (Vance, McNulty, Paik and D’Mello 2016, p. 202). The study of expatpreneurs makes both a theoretical and practical contribution to research about business expatriates in general and to the understanding of IE. As the definition of business expatriates includes all forms of initiation in the decision to move, the definition encompasses expatriates that are AEs *and* SIEs, *as well as* the various sub-types of SIEs, including expatpreneurs (see Vance et al. 2016).

In this article, we advance the study of SIEs and international entrepreneurship from a theoretical standpoint by demonstrating empirically that the aggregation of various kinds of SIEs can potentially contribute to poor construct clarity. As a result, we may not clearly see SIEs’ characteristics and potentially valuable role in IE. This is distinct from, yet related to, the diaspora entrepreneurship literature (Mainela, Puhakka and Servais 2015; Mullings 2011; Coviello and Cox 2006). Using expatpreneurs as an example, our research question is thus:

Research Question: Are personal characteristics of expatpreneurs different from those of company employed SIEs?

We distinguish between company employed SIEs and expatpreneurs based on organizational employment; whereas company employed SIEs work for an organization, expatpreneurs are self-employed. We use a sample of 325 SIE respondents (268 company employees and 57 expatpreneurs) originating from developed countries (including Germany, USA, Denmark, and Italy). They are all residing and working in China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. We use this sample to examine whether expatpreneurs, while being a sub-type of SIEs, are in fact different than company employed SIEs in terms of their age, marital status, educational level, gender, position level, time abroad, and length of time in the host location. These findings could have

implications for the study of SIEs in relation to their reasons for going abroad, and reasons for remaining abroad and for how long. From a theoretical perspective, these findings could further elucidate that separating the various sub-types of SIEs is an important methodological step that helps to determine construct validity. This could be by determining the extent to which each sub-type of SIE may be used for different purposes by employing organizations, or why (and when) an SIE might leave an organization to enter into self-employment. Andresen et al. (2014) note that while studies about self-employed expatriates are important, it remains a neglected segment of the larger cohort of SIEs. Moreover, our findings contribute to the literature on international and transnational entrepreneurs, suggesting research themes of temporality, cross-cultural experience, and host location embeddedness that may represent new factors to be considered.

Who is an expat-preneur?

The characteristic qualities of initiative, personal responsibility, and self-management of career among SIEs can exist in individuals who are self-supporting and/or self-employed (Andresen et al. 2014) as much as it might also exist among those employed in a multinational firm (Altman and Baruch 2012) or those employed from local markets as local foreign hires (Selmer, Andresen and Cerdin 2017). Vance et al. (2016) noted that the distinction between SIEs and migrants is controversial (cf. Andresen et al. 2014). This is especially so among migrants and elite diaspora of immigrant entrepreneurs who are highly skilled and possess strong entrepreneurial intent, with numerous alternatives for their livelihood and career (Leinonen 2012; Mullings 2011; Kloosterman and Rath 2001; Saxenian 2002). Nevertheless, the authors' conceptualization of expat-preneurs distinguishes SIEs from migrants based on McNulty and Brewster's (2017) definition of business expatriates (above). Migrants by comparison (including immigrant

entrepreneurs) leave their home and (often) developing country on a permanent basis, many with the specific intent to attain citizenship in a new and typically developed country (Kloosterman and Rath 2001; Castles and Miller 2009; Al Ariss and Ozbilgin 2010; Al Ariss and Syed 2011; Zolin and Schlosser 2013). Being primarily motivated by the push of economic and socio-political necessity (Saxenian 2002; Khosa and Kalitanyi 2015), the key distinction, then, between SIEs and migrants is that a migrant does not conceive of a ‘host country’ that is providing a temporary stay; rather, the new country is intended to become their home country. SIEs, on the other hand, generally perceive their stay as temporary and do not view the host country as their permanent home, as doing so would interfere with their ‘free agent’ mentality to self-direct their career, particularly as new local or international business opportunities may arise. SIE status is determined by its temporary nature wherein citizenship of the host country is not intended, sought after, or provided. While this distinction does not presume that a temporary move cannot change over time to become permanent (Massey and Bartley 2006; Waldinger 2008), our focus here is nonetheless on the intended temporary stay of the expat-preneur in the host country, without acquiring citizenship or utilising host country citizenship (in the case of dual-citizenship) for the purposes of their stay.

A further distinction in the expat-preneur conceptualization is to include only those SIEs who engage in some form of business or professional activity as distinct from SIEs typically of a younger age and primarily motivated to move abroad more by curiosity and perceived adventure (tourism, traveling, backpacking) than by pragmatic career capital development concerns (Inkson and Myers 2003). Company employed SIEs, like AEs, are defined as such because they are legally employed as professionals on a temporary basis in a country they view as hosting their career (i.e. the ‘host country’), thus meeting the criteria for being business expatriates in the

context of international human resource management practice. Unlike AEs, company employed SIEs tend to be uninhibited by organizational and occupational constraints, and are motivated to take charge of their careers rather than to wait for their organization to arrange for an appropriate career opportunity – in this case involving international work experience (Richardson and Mallon 2005; Jokinen et al. 2008; Cerdin and Pargneux 2010; Tharenou and Caulfield 2010; Andresen, Bergdolt and Margenfel 2012). They also tend to have greater familiarity and experience with the local host country business environment (Vance et al. 2017). Company employed SIEs may therefore be ideal individuals to pursue IE opportunities for themselves, as expat-preneurs, except that, unlike migrants and diaspora entrepreneurs from developing countries (Elo 2016; Saxenian 2002), they do not live abroad with the intent to stay permanently.

Grounding expat-preneurs in entrepreneurship career theory

As with Dyer's (1994) theory development related to entrepreneurial careers, expat-preneurs as SIEs begin to recognize their own self-agency in turning from a traditional expatriate career path within a MNC or opportunity within a local host country organization, and instead focus on an entrepreneurial career. Whether the individual's recognition to pursue an international entrepreneurial career occurs before, during, or at the end of a traditional AE or company employed SIE experience depends on a number of factors: the particular context at hand (Welter 2016); individual personality (Baron, Tang and Hmieleski 2011); amount and quality of human capital and social resources available to entrepreneurs (Davidsson and Honig 2003); degree of the entrepreneurs' ability to sense and recognize local host country new venture opportunities (Baron 2006); and their proclivity toward risk-taking (Hayward, Forster, Sarasvathy and Fredrickson 2010). Appetite for risk-taking is particularly important since

transforming to the status of expat-preneur often requires a decrease in the individual's dependable compensation level, at least initially. Another especially prominent career development factor is the tendency for social relationships and personal circumstances to often encourage the decision by expat-preneurs to remain in the host country for an indefinite length of time. This could for example be in the case of an expat-preneur's marriage (or close personal and/ or romantic relationship) with a local individual who desires to remain in the host country (see Vance and McNulty, 2014). Thus, strong personal ties in the host-country (including those associated with a local spouse) may expand the degree of human capital and social resources available to expat-preneurs and their ability to actively and effectively participate in local host country 'opportunity recognition' (Lauring and Selmer 2010). In addition, a flexible and self-managing career perspective is critical for permitting one to consider an international entrepreneurial career opportunity in the host country that lies outside of the comparative stability of MNC employment as an AE or SIE employment within a company.

Continuing the theme of individual agency that encourages career self-management, Turker and Selcuk's (2009) entrepreneurial support model (ESM) considers the key impact on entrepreneurial career intention of contextual factors. According to this model, entrepreneurial intention is considered a function of structural, educational, and relational supports (Henderson and Robertson, 2000). For expat-preneurs, their educational background and subsequent professional experience provide a critical foundation for first recognizing an opportunity and then assessing the feasibility of an envisioned entrepreneurial venture beyond the MNC. For AE-transitioned expat-preneurs in particular, the significant level of prior functional and technical knowledge that they hold (Baron 2006) is likely to be instrumental for new business development, as is their past significant organizational experience and their effectiveness in

contributing current world-class business processes and practices to support organizational growth and operational success. Therefore, compared to company employed SIEs who often are considered traveling ‘soldiers of fortune’ (i.e., pursuing career development opportunities abroad), AE-transitioned expat-preneurs likely constitute a much more technically experienced and proven professional category of entrepreneurial business talent. AE-transitioned expat-preneurs also represent potentially valuable and unique knowledge workers in the local labor force, and can be especially valuable in developing countries where such skilled talent is in short supply. In a similar fashion, local market conditions may or may not provide adequate economic structural support to actualize the perceived entrepreneurial opportunity (Swaminathan, 1996). This local environmental support includes local and national governmental assistance (e.g., education, incentives, education, funding), as well as dependable professional relationships with local business partners who can provide collegial and moral support for expat-preneurs in the course of their inherently uncertain and stressful new venture start-ups. Expat-preneurs display the classic behavioral characteristics and traits of entrepreneurs pursuing independent work, with their high self-efficacy and internal locus of control, proactive personality, flexibility, and proclivity to forge ahead in the face of risk and uncertainty (Yan 2010; Prabhu, McGuire, Drost and Kwong 2012). But unlike company employed SIEs, who travel abroad of their own volition and resourcefulness and subsequently secure employment in the local host country with locally based organizations or MNCs (Suutari and Brewster 2000), expat-preneurs, while living and working abroad, engage in creatively discovering and exploiting opportunities outside of their home country domestic markets through initiating their own independent business developments efforts, or by employment in joint new venture development activities that address local consumer demand and business needs (Zahra and George 2002). Vance et al. (2016) contend that

expatpreneurs are becoming involved in new venture opportunities at an increasing rate, whether anticipated before moving abroad (as *pre-departure expatpreneurs*), or after moving abroad (as *transitioned expatpreneurs*) when they recognize opportunities and engage in entrepreneurial activity as a source of employment. Unlike ‘necessity entrepreneurs,’ such as low-skilled migrants who generally have little economic choice and are pushed into entrepreneurial activity for self-support, expatpreneurs are ‘opportunity entrepreneurs’ who have more flexibility and options to allow enterprise exploration, and tend to have higher marketable skills, which they utilize in observing, recognizing, pursuing, and exploiting local opportunities, as well as in potentially making greater local economic contributions (Block and Wagner 2010; Deli 2011; Borozan 2014). Whether the recognition to develop an international entrepreneurial career occurs before, during, or at the end of a (traditional) AE or company employed SIE experience depends on a number of factors, including the individual’s personality (Baron, Tang and Hmieleski 2011), degree of social and human capital resources available to them (Davidsson and Honig 2003), the extent of their ability to engage in local host country ‘opportunity recognition’ (Baron 2006), and their propensity for risk-taking (Hayward, Forster, Sarasvathy and Fredrickson 2010). A particularly salient factor is that personal circumstances and social relationships often support the decision by expatpreneurs to remain in the host country for the longer term where, for example, marriage to a host country national who desires to remain there can be key reason for them doing so (see Vance and McNulty 2014). Thus, strong personal ties in the host country may facilitate the degree of social and human capital resources available to the expatpreneur, and the extent of their ability to engage in local host country ‘opportunity recognition.’

The expatpreneur concept is grounded in how individuals engage with employment once

they are living abroad and relies on three boundary conditions (Vance et al. 2016): (1) self-employment; (2) requiring formal registration of a business in a host country for the purposes of residency; and, (3) taxable income, where the formal registration of a business in the host country brings with it the obligation to declare earnings and, if required, tax liability on those earnings. Successful entrepreneurs, in general, build a viable business that has value in the marketplace, and the value is determined externally by earnings, profitability, growth, and market share (Hessels, Grilo, Thurik and van der Zwan 2011).

Method

Target population and place of investigation. In the current study, managers identified as SIEs residing and working in China, Hong Kong and Singapore were targeted. Four screening questions were applied to retain only members of the targeted sample (Creswell and Clark 2007). We asked whether the respondents were currently living in one of the targeted host locations and whether their nationality and residency status was different than that of the host country (indicating expatriate status). To ascertain whether they were a member of the managerial staff we asked: “What is your current position?” The fixed response alternatives included (1) CEO/GM, (2) Top manager, (3) Middle manager, (4) Team leader, and (5) Non-managerial staff. Since only managerial staff members were targeted in the current study for comparability reasons, respondents selecting the last category were eliminated. Finally, to select SIEs, whether entrepreneurs or not, we asked if their current job was (1) acquired independently (self-initiated) or (2) they started their own company abroad (expat-preneurs).

Data collection. A web-based survey software package was used to administer the questionnaire (Dillman, Smyth and Christian 2014). Based on information from LinkedIn and various

commercially available country lists of foreign businesses in China, Hong Kong and Singapore, the online questionnaire was sent to 2,963 expatriates in those host locations. We received 637 responses amounting to a response rate of 21.5 per cent, which is an acceptable outcome based on other studies (Harzing 1997). Of these, 325 respondents passed the screening questions indicating that they were SIE managers residing and working in China, Hong Kong, or Singapore.

Sample. For the purpose of this study, the selected sample of SIEs was divided into two cohorts based on whether they were company employed SIEs ($n=268$) or expat-preneurs ($n=57$). The background variables of these two groups appear in the Results section.

Instrument. Background variables were measured by single direct questions to the respondents; for example, to determine the age of respondents, we asked: “How old were you on your last birthday?”

Results

Sample means, standard deviations and zero-order Pearson correlations of all variables are provided in Table 2.

Insert Table 1 about here

The Research Question was explored through one 8 x 2 Multivariate Analyses of Variance (MANOVA). Table 2 displays a significant multivariate inter-group effect for the company employed SIEs and the expat-preneurs ($F=8.94$; $p<.001$). Results of ANOVAs indicated a significant between-group difference for five of the studied personal characteristics. There were intergroup differences regarding *age* ($F=2.63$; $p<.05$), *position* ($F=3.55$; $p<.01$), *time in current*

job in host location ($F=1.94$; $p<.05$), *time as expatriate* ($F=1.94$; $p<.05$), and *time in host location* ($F=1.94$; $p<.05$). These findings support an affirmative answer to our Research Question whether personal characteristics of expatpreneurs are different from company employed SIEs.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

The affirmative answer to the Research Question demonstrates that the two sub-types of SIEs we studied (expatpreneurs and company employed SIEs) have differing personal characteristics in important respects. Differences concerning five personal characteristics (*age, position, time in current job in host location, time as expatriate* and *time in host location*) have theoretical implications. Notably, there may also be theoretical implications where no differences were found (e.g., for *educational level, gender* and *marital status*).

Compared to company employed SIEs, expatpreneurs were older, had higher positions, had spent a longer time in their current job in the host location, had been expatriates longer, and had been in the host location for a longer time. This implies that the path to becoming an expatpreneur (whether pre-departure or transitioned) is influenced significantly by temporality; i.e., factors associated with time. Personal characteristics such as maturity and deep experience living and working abroad may be common traits among expatpreneurs. We surmise that being more experienced about expatriate life in general, and having a deeper knowledge of the host location in particular, facilitates their proclivity to forge ahead with their entrepreneurial ambitions despite the risks and uncertainties they are likely to face (Yan 2010; Prabhu et al. 2012). Similarly, their longer time in the host location could afford them more social and human capital

resources that, in turn, allows expat-preneurs to discover and exploit local and/or regional opportunities or to engage in joint new venture development activities (Vance et al 2017; Zahra and George 2002). While it would be natural to assume that expat-preneurs hold higher positions than company employed SIEs, given that self-employment permits an individual to appoint themselves as Managing Director or President of their company, holding a higher position nonetheless entails a tendency to have higher marketable skills and a deeper level of ‘street credibility’, which in turn facilitates their ability to observe, recognize, pursue, and exploit local opportunities (Block and Wagner 2010; Deli 2011; Borožan 2014). Interestingly, educational level, gender and marital status appear to have no bearing on expat-preneur versus company employed SIE status, suggesting that the traits of SIEs in general (initiative, personal responsibility, and self-management of career) is unencumbered by family responsibilities, qualifications and credentials, and gender stereotypes. As Vance et al. (2016) highlight in their observation of expat-preneurs in Singapore, just as many were non-degree-holding married mothers as they were Ivy League-educated, male, child-less bachelors.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings act as a warning to researchers against aggregating various sub-types of SIEs without first ensuring that they are demographically comparable. In other words, not all SIEs are the same (see Andresen et al. 2014; McNulty and Brewster 2017; McNulty and Vance 2017). In this study, we have shown that two (of the four) sub-types of SIEs have different personal characteristics, and it is likely that other sub-types of SIEs could also be different. Differences in personal characteristics across the two sub-types of SIEs we studied could, for example, impact on their motivations for going abroad, or whether they are likely to be a pre-departure versus transitioned expat-preneur and at what point in time in the host country they are likely to act on their entrepreneurial ambitions. Our point is that

interpretations of the findings of SIE studies will differ to the extent that careful consideration is given, and analysis undertaken, of the various sub-types of SIEs included in the sample. Conversely, a lack of differentiation between the various sub-types could lead to misleading results.

Borrowing from McNulty and Brewster (2017), the above example illustrates several methodological implications for empirical studies about SIEs in general. First, unstated assumptions about the people being researched in SIE studies could result in the measures used not accurately representing the underlying concept being tested. In turn, it may be difficult to draw inferences from these studies and to assess and compare the findings across other SIE studies. Further, these unstated assumptions can contribute to poor construct clarity by not adequately describing the concept one is claiming to investigate (Bono and McNamara 2011; Cappelli 2012).

Limitations

As in all studies, this investigation has shortcomings that limit its generalizability. First, although the sample overwhelmingly originated from a variety of non-Asian countries, the findings emanate from only three host countries: China, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Hence, the results may not be generalizable to other host countries. Second, all data were based on self-reports, hence interpretations of the results must be factored against the self-rated and subjective assessments we obtained. Background variables can nonetheless have a factual character and may not pose a substantial problem in relation to subjectivity or problems associated with common method variance (cf. Brough, Johnson, Drummond, Pennisi and Timms 2011). Third, the expat-preneur cohort in our study was much smaller than the cohort of company employed SIEs, which could impact the extent

of statistical power. But given that the results clearly demonstrate that statistically significant inter-group differences were detected, our findings could be interpreted as erring on the conservative side and it may be speculated that, with equally sized sub-samples, more statistically significant results could be detected (cf. Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black 1995).

Beyond the focus of our present study, future research should continue to examine the role and placement of expat-preneurs as we have characterized them (self-initiating in their entrepreneurial activity from predominantly developed countries) within the broader conceptual framework of IE inclusive of diaspora and migrant entrepreneurs (Elo 2016; Mainela, Puhakka and Servais 2015). From the diaspora entrepreneurship literature, we recognize that there also are smaller numbers of individuals from developing countries who are not pushed to migrate only by necessity, but who choose to become diasporans to fulfil their entrepreneurial career goals and dreams (Vissak and Zhang 2014). More research is needed to examine commonalities and differences between these upwardly mobile and career-oriented diaspora entrepreneurs and expat-preneurs.

Conclusions

The findings of our study constitute new information about SIEs in general, and expat-preneurs in particular. Notably, as an emerging field of academic research, few statistical studies have examined a large cohort of expat-preneurs, let alone compared them with other sub-types of SIEs and diaspora entrepreneurs. Thus, the present study constitutes an important redirection of attention in IE literature toward immigrant entrepreneurs as business expatriates typically from developed countries who are having a significant impact upon entrepreneurial growth within individual countries and across the global economy. Additionally, there are potential positive,

valuable spillover effects from expat-preneurs to the local economies of developing countries in terms of building local economic vitality, enhancing local professional practice, and strengthening the local labor skill base (Dearie and Geduldig 2013). An improved understanding of the expat-preneur international career phenomenon can be useful to the development of effective and targeted national policy and practices that provide greater recognition and support for expat-preneurs.

Our study also broadens understanding and extends discussion of IE beyond extensive past work of diaspora entrepreneurship predominantly originating from developing countries that examines network dynamics, migration flows and directions, institutional effects, and other structural economic circumstances (Mainela, Puhakka and Servais 2015; Coviello and Cox 2006). Moreover, as with other recent important work in typology construction in diaspora entrepreneurship requiring a more contextual understanding (Elo 2016), our study examines individual-level underlying factors influencing IE, including individual career aspirations and socio-cultural determinants.

The results of our study further extend research on SIEs by, for example, building on the Vance et al. (2016) seminal conceptual paper on expat-preneurs, but in this case with empirical data. Our findings open up new research themes and avenues for studies of international and transnational entrepreneurs in general, wherein temporality, cross-cultural experience, and host location embeddedness represent new factors to be considered. Last, but not least, our results provide an opportunity to extend social and human capital beyond the multinational corporation (MNC) to consider these types of capital in the context of the foreign individual embedded in the local and regional environment without MNC support.

TABLE 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among the Variables¹

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Age ²	44.04	9.90	1.00							
2. Educational Level ³	2.61	.88	.04	1.00						
3. Gender ⁴	1.21	.41	-.16**	.04	1.00					
4. Marital Status ⁵	1.22	.42	-.22***	.06	.05	1.00				
5. Position ⁶	1.79	.90	-.35***	.07	.23***	.11*	1.00			
6. Time in Current Job in Host Location ²	6.03	5.45	.40***	.09	-.07	-.06	-.21***	1.00		
7. Time as Expatriate ²	13.07	8.15	.65***	.08	-.18***	-.18***	-.32***	.50***	1.00	
8. Time in Host Location ²	9.22	6.85	.44***	.06	-.14**	-.12*	-.26***	.67***	.70***	1.00

¹ 318≤n≤325 due to missing values; ² Years; ³ Doctorate=1, Master=2, Bachelor= 3, Professional Qualification=4; ⁴ Male=1, Female=2; ⁵ Married=1, Not Married=2; ⁶ CEO/General Manager=1, Top Manager=2, Middle Manager=3, Team Leader=4;
 * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 2: MANOVA and ANOVA for Personal Characteristics by Company Employed SIEs and Expat-Preneurs ¹

	Company Employed SIEs Mean (SD) n=261	Expat-Preneurs Mean (SD) n=56	Multi- variate Effect	Uni- variate <i>F</i> - Ratios
			8.94***	
Age ²	43.11 (9.64)	48.16 (9.91)		12.52***
Educational Level ³	2.63 (.88)	2.54 (.91)		.55
Gender ⁴	1.21 (.41)	1.20 (.40)		.06
Marital Status ⁵	1.21 (.41)	1.25 (.44)		.51
Position ⁶	1.95 (.91)	1.07 (.26)		52.10***
Time in Current Job in Host Location ²	5.45 (4.65)	8.58 (7.87)		15.73***
Time as Expatriate ²	12.48 (7.87)	15.46 (8.63)		6.38*
Time in Host Location ²	8.82 (6.53)	11.06 (7.88)		5.04*

¹ N=317; ² Years; ³ Doctorate=1, Master=2, Bachelor= 3, Professional Qualification=4; ⁴ Male=1, Female=2; ⁵ Married=1, Not Married=2; ⁶ CEO/General Manager=1, Top Manager=2, Middle Manager=3, Team Leader=4; * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

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