Title: Coping with authoritarianism in international relocation: A case of cross-cultural adjustment research in context - Cuba

Journal: Critical Perspectives on International Business

Purpose
As the rate of growth in trade of developing and developed economies converges, international business is increasingly taking place in a growing assortment of political and ideological contexts with variable levels of tolerance for plural dissidence. This can create substantial challenges and risks for cross cultural adjustment and increases the potential for assignment failure. The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of an authoritarian regime on the process of adjustment amongst expatriate sojourners and draw out lessons for future research and policies for relocation in similar authoritarian contexts.

Approach
This was a qualitative research study over three years making use of participant observation methods as a result of researcher immersion in the local context.

Findings
This study finds that 'culture' is an insufficient category for explaining difficulties in cross cultural adjustment and demonstrates that adjustment difficulties under authoritarianism are heightened in the proximate sociocultural context, with geo-political and ideological dynamics creating more challenging conditions of life. Increased levels of social control act to heighten psychological vulnerability amongst sojourners, resulting in coping behaviours that seek a greater degree of psychological alleviation and companionship through more resource-intensive supportive networks and a tendency towards enclavism, thus inhibiting sociocultural adjustment to the host society.

Research implications
Research needs to recognise more fully the diverse nature of contexts in cross-cultural adjustment. Future research should explore different types of contexts and assess what sort of challenges may arise in relation to the process of psychological and sociocultural adjustment and the adjustive resources required to overcome them.

Practical implications
The paper contributes to the understanding of the psychological and sociocultural challenges of international relocation in an authoritarian context and serves as valuable insight for relocation planning in similar conditions, which are an ever increasing feature of international business.

Originality/value
This paper gives a unique insight into international relocation in Cuba and draws out the areas of concern for cross-cultural adjustment under authoritarian conditions. It serves as an example of how context-based research can inform cross-cultural theory and practice within an evolving landscape of doing business globally.

Keywords: Culture, Adjustment, Relocation, Cross-Cultural Communication, International Expatriate research, International management studies

Article type: Research paper

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Introduction

Cross-cultural adjustment is an essential aspect of doing business globally and it requires expatriate professionals to cope with the challenge of a new cultural environment when relocating (Tung, 1988). The increase in globalisation of business has meant that more and more employees are being relocated for overseas assignments than ever before in an increasing variety of business environments (Okpara and Kabongo, 2011). This often involves adjusting to novel local working practices and dealing with unfamiliar social and political norms and economic conditions, which can, in some cases, result in assignment failure with substantial consequences for both the professionals involved and their companies (Kraimer et al, 2016).

Since 2009, the growth rate of trade in developing economies has almost doubled, increasing substantially in relation to that of developed economies to the extent that the value of trade is now virtually equal in developing and developed countries, as emerging economies seek to catch up with wealthier ones in their share of global trade (UNCTAD, 2016). While the increasing trend of globalisation is seen by some commentators as a catalyst for both institutional and policy reform (OECD, 2009) and greater political freedom and democratisation (Wolf, 2004), most developing economies have a low index of democracy and fall into the categories of authoritarian regimes or hybrid systems, characterised by high incidences of corruption, political intolerance, social inequality and control, and low levels of basic civil liberties and rule of law (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016). As an example, seven of the ten fastest growing emerging economies identified by a recent emerging markets report, fall into the category of authoritarian or hybrid regimes, with the other three being

flawed democracies (Boumphrey, 2014). Significantly, for the first time since 1995, there are now more consolidated authoritarian regimes than consolidated democracies in the world (Freedom House, 2017a), while global press freedom declined to its lowest point in thirteen years in 2016 (Freedom House, 2017b). Consequently, global business is increasingly taking place in assorted political and ideological contexts with variable levels of tolerance for plurality and transparency (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016) and with high degrees of political risk (Henisz and Zelner, 2010). This can create substantial challenges and perils for the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriate professionals and their families and increases the potential for assignment failure.

Despite such trends, most research on expatriate adjustment has been carried out in developed contexts (Tung, 1982; Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black et al, 1992; Selmer, 2002; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008; Lazarova, M. et al, 2010), and, while some recent studies are now available from more challenging contexts, including coping with hostile environments, enclavism and terrorism, (Atiyyah, 1996; Lauring and Selmer, 2009; Okpara and Kabongo, 2011; Bader and Berg, 2014; Bader and Schuster, 2015), much more research is needed from non-western contexts in order to understand the particular challenges of adjustment to life and work in increasingly more unstable and unpredictable locations (Okpara and Kabongo, 2011).

This article explores the challenges of international relocation in Cuba, a politically sensitive location ruled by a centralised, ideological system of government. While Cuba cannot be considered a fast growing economy, it is seen as having potential for such due to its international reputation for excellence in education, health and cultural and sporting achievement far beyond its concomitant economic base (UNESCO, 2015), and it is a context

that attracts substantial international and diplomatic interest, with some 175 embassies in Havana (90 with resident ambassadors) and an estimate of some 1,000 diplomats living at any one time in the capital city (Fitzpatrick, 2016). For this reason, a study of Cuba can contribute to understanding the particular challenges of adjustment to life and work in less familiar contexts. Furthermore, a detailed ethnographic study of expatriate adjustment on location also responds to the increasing call for research into social behaviour to take place in context in order to move away from deterministic and stereotypical notions of culture that dominate international management studies (Bjerregaard et al, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2017).

For this purpose, the two main research questions identified were:

1. What aspects of adjusting to their new environment do sojourners identify as the most challenging and stressful?

2. How do they deal with the challenges and the stress that they face?

The first research question explored the main challenges that sojourners identified in their relocation experience in Havana, both with respect to the local environment (proximal elements) and to the changes that they had to make to their lifestyle as a result of the move (distal elements). These were identified as stressors, defined as increased demands on individuals provoked by a major life change in the form of a cross-cultural transition that requires adjustive resources and coping behaviour at the psychological and sociocultural level (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). From this insight, the impact of authoritarianism is examined on the adjustment process and recommendations are made for future research in countries with high levels of authoritarianism, economic disparity or social injustice, and which are becoming increasingly important for international economic and political interests.

Cross-cultural adjustment in context

The process of adjustment amongst international expatriates has long been a subject of research and theory in international management studies, but, more recently, the focus of attention has treated adjustment as a multidimensional concept related to domains of activity, whether specifically at work, in life outside work or when involved in interaction with host nationals, (Black et al, 1991; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi et al, 2005) and to the spouse and family (Harvey, 1998; Moore, 2002; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008; Weeks et al, 2010), rather than a unitary, linear phenomenon of "culture shock" common to all (Oberg, 1960). Such approaches recognise that acculturative stress should be treated within a psychological framework (Berry, 2006) and that the source of anxiety may not be rooted in a particular problematic culture, but in the actual process of experiencing a new cultural environment. In this vein, Ward et al (2001) propose a model that comprises *affective* responses within the frame of psychological adjustment, together with *behavioural* responses through the culture learning that leads to sociocultural adjustment and *cognitive* elements related to identity adjustment and attitudes towards others from different backgrounds. This model recognises the interplay of affective responses within the frame of *psychological adjustment*, together with behavioural responses through the culture learning that leads to *sociocultural adjustment* and cognitive elements related to identity adjustment and attitudes towards others from different backgrounds. In this sense, more recent studies have tended to broaden the scope of adjustment and examine the impact of relocation on those that are not solely the relocated employee, with anxiety "spilling over" from one domain to another and "crossing over" from one person to another (Westman, 2001). This addresses the criticism that expatriate adjustment research has tended to be predominantly "expatriate-centric" and has neglected the wider group of other "stakeholders", including accompanying spouses and children, relatives at home, the company and host country nationals (Takeuchi, 2010). What is suggested here, then, is a more integrated framework to emphasise the importance of a multiple stakeholder approach to adjustment.

This brings into view the importance of context for cross-cultural adjustment research (Fitzpatrick, 2017). Context is seen here as a complex and dynamic concept, creating a frame, around social interaction (Goffman, 1974), with elements of the physical environment, but also a behavioural environment, governed by shared history, values or beliefs, and the larger geo-political and dialectical processes of the extrasituational context, which extends beyond, but impinges upon, the immediate setting (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992). Thus, while the frame of context acts as the cradle of social behaviour, social actors have to navigate it as part of their experiential trajectory as they interact with others. In this sense, context is at the same time "proximate", exhibiting socio-political, economic and ideological elements and influences, which frame and impact upon social behaviour, but also "distal", drawing in remote elements pertaining to participants' background or social position, the various roles that they play and their own personal cultural trajectories, which can orientate them in the interactive, discursive processes as they construct their experience of their new environment (Day, 2008).

Such an approach avoids *a priori* and stereotypical assumptions about the local "culture" and focuses on the notion of context as a dynamic and evolving social process, imbued with "relational tension" (Martin, 2015), created by inequity and power disparity, rather than simply an arbitrarily bounded space where interaction unfolds. Consequently, more recent approaches to cross-cultural adjustment draw on a social constructionist perspective, originally developed by Berger and Luckman (1966), with particular focus on the sociolinguistic notion of discourse, or language in social context, where implied rules and conventions and implicit power relations govern the social construction of shared understanding in all aspects of social behaviour (Holliday, 2011; Piller, 2011). The rest of this paper explores the nature of the context under

study, and the methods used, and draws upon the findings of the research to inform international companies on the particular challenges of authoritarian regimes.

The Study

This study relates to ethnographic research carried out amongst international expatriate professionals on location, based in the capital city of Havana, over a three year period. The group studied were temporary sojourners, on location for a varying number of years before returning home or moving on to another temporary assignment, or "sojourn". Cuba is a very distinctive context for an international expatriate assignment, in that it is internationally cloistered, largely shielded from independent outside scrutiny and with high levels of social and political control (Aguirre, 2002), which renders the context largely inaccessible to independent social research (Bell, 2013). This high level of research sensitivity has meant that scholarly works on Cuba are rare and tend to be unbalanced, fuelled either by excessive and exoticised enthusiasm or disenchantment for its revolutionary past and socialist legacy, and too distant from the everyday life to understand its complexity (Kapcia, 2008). While, some contact with Cuban life is readily accessible through the tourist industry, the tourist experience of Cuba is essentially superficial and the tourist "gaze" (Urry, 2002) is comfortably stage-managed to positive effect, which bears little resemblance to prolonged immersion in daily life. For this reason, the current study represents an important contribution to understanding the psychological and sociocultural processes of international relocation in a fairly inaccessible context and serves as valuable insight for relocation planning in similar conditions.

The context

Daily life in Havana and Cuba must be understood with reference to its recent historical and dialectical trajectory, embodied in its social revolution, and the influence that this has had on

the current political status quo and its struggling economy. Cuba operates a single party state that has a monopoly on all political, social and economic activity on the island and all formal education, institutions of social organisation and media channels are centralised under state-control. On a day to day basis, this structure means that most aspects of social organisation are centralised and monitored through the state and that there is an interchangeable identification between the state and the government, characterised by blurring of the boundaries between all institutions of authority (Aguirre, 2002). Cuba has been described as an insulated state, where there is no freely available international press or media and where access to the internet and other forms of communication is restricted and censored (Wilson, 2011; Baron and Hall, 2015). Furthermore, the human rights situation in Cuba has long been under scrutiny from international agencies and governments, pointing to serious breaches of civil liberties for exercising freedom of expression (Human Rights Watch World Report on Cuba, 2014; Reporters Without Borders: Cuba, 2015; Amnesty International, 2016). In this sense, Cuba fulfils all the criteria for definition as an authoritarian regime (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016), exhibiting an absence of political pluralism, independent judiciary and free media, alongside frequent infringements and abuses of civil liberties, censorship and suppression of governmental criticism. In this sense, the dominant discourse of the regime pervades the interpretation and analysis of events, which is the prevailing version available to citizens when making sense of their social world. Providing explanations about history and current events allows the Cuban regime to shape people's beliefs and official ideology becomes the predominant source of explanation for historical events and news about the outside world. While this may be the case for most political regimes, according to some sources, the constant sense of siege and emergency that pervades government discourse and official media in Cuba serves to deflect attention away from accountability for the poor state of the economy and the harshness of daily life, while allowing the regime to explain away and mask inequalities and

justify disproportionate social control as protecting the successes of the revolution (Aguirre, 2002; Wilson, 2011; Sánchez, 2014).

Cuba operates a centrally planned economy organised through state-run monopolies, which are administered by government ministries. The current state of the Cuban economy is extremely weak, caught between the effects of the United States embargo and the continued operation of an unproductive, centrally planned economy that tolerates only small scale private enterprise and remains suspicious of individual initiative (The Economist, 2013). The economy declined abruptly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulting in severe economic hardship and scarcity of basic materials and products and Cuba has become dependent on large scale tourism and other benefactors, such as Chavez's Venezuela. Day to day economic life is dominated by the operation of two currencies, one of which is known as the convertible currency, pegged to the value of foreign currencies and directed at paying for imported goods and services, sourced mainly through the tourist industry and through foreign companies (The Economist, 2012b). The two "economies" are largely kept separate through different retail outlets with different pricing mechanisms, which has engendered a dual economy that has created inequality and seen the growth of elitism, transgressing the principles of the revolution to form a new social hierarchy in Cuban society (Wilson, 2011). Scarcity and inequality have exposed both the local population and expatriate sojourners alike to a high level of legal risk, which places unusual demands on the adjustment process with potentially severe consequences for personal welfare (BBC, 2012; Purvis, 2017).

Recent attempts at reform by Raúl Castro, who took control from his brother, Fidel, in 2008, because of ill health, to liberalise the economy, for a number of observers, has focused only on small adjustments to economic life, which have had little impact on the current political model

and merely serve to preserve the status quo (Ravsberg, 2010; The Economist, 2012a; Sánchez, 2014). The idea that individuals will be able to enhance their own personal wealth through entrepreneurship, for example, is frowned upon by the Cuban government and, consequently, Castro has always been careful to stress that reform is designed to preserve the "successes of the revolution" and ensure the continuity of the current political system (BBC, 2014). Likewise, the US embargo has been relaxed in recent years for "cultural exchange" to take place between the two countries and diplomatic relations have been "normalised", which has boosted tourism and revenue for the government, considered vital for the continued funding of the communist model and the retention of its revolutionary heritage (The Economist, 2011; New York Times, 2014)). However, recent announcements have shown that a reversal of this progress may be imminent with the new presidency (New York Times, 2017).

Thus, the pressures of change and reform have led to the adoption of political and social measures that seek to preserve the perception of the success of the Cuban revolution in the face of ever dwindling resources and this has had an impact on civil liberties, freedom of expression and transparency. Cuba continues to be a highly politicised society that experiences considerable economic and geopolitical pressures, which provide the extra-situational backdrop to the adjustment process and which can have a profound effect on the quality of everyday life.

Methods and analysis

This was a qualitative research study over three years making use of participant observation methods as a result of researcher immersion in the local context. The kind of challenges faced by doing research in such a setting as Cuba, a politically sensitive location, creates a number of pitfalls and obstacles to independent enquiry, and researchers have been obliged to immerse

themselves in daily life through close contact with the local population in order to understand the demands of everyday life in such a restrictive regime (Hirschfield, 2007; Wilson, 2011; Bell, 2013). A similar approach was favoured in this study and, because of the participative nature of the research project and the reliance on an inductive approach, the data was organised and analysed with methods influenced by *Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and the techniques of thematic coding common to qualitative research (Ritchie et al, 2003). The analytical framework adopted was the approach from stress theory in which acculturative stress is described as a product of a balancing process between the novel and unfamiliar demands or challenges placed on individuals experiencing a new cultural environment and their capability of applying adjustive resources, or coping behaviors in order to deal with change (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008).

In order to identify the new demands and adjustive resources in this context an approach using nouns and noun phrases to detect the most salient topics was used (Strauss and Corbin, 1998) and organised thematically in order to interpret and explain the underlying challenges of the context and the adjustive responses of sojourners. The research study was designed to explore the key elements of the adjustment process in the particular context of Havana and to relate them to what international organisations could do to prepare expatriate sojourners for relocation in similar contexts.

Findings

The main findings of the study can be described in relation to the two principal research questions. In terms of what sojourners relocating to Cuba found challenging and a source of stress, two categories were identified. On the one hand, challenges and sources of stress could be traced to the proximate sociocultural environment (proximal elements), which were related

to the particular nature of the Cuban context, including elements that created scarcity and inequality and the methods of ensuring social control and vigilance to protect the government's ideological ascendancy. On the other hand, other sources of stress could be traced to the experience of a changing lifestyle and role and responsibilities, as a result of re-location (distal elements), which sojourners essentially brought to the sojourn and struggled to cope with. A description of these findings are set out below.

Sources of acculturative stress originating from the proximate sociocultural context

Scarcity was a prominent theme amongst obstacles to adjustment, because the shortages and poor quality and availability of goods and materials resulting from economic difficulties had a profound impact on the process of arrival, setting up home and daily living in general. Delay and stress in the adjustment process created intercultural tension between sojourners and locals, affecting morale and, thereby, inhibiting adjustment. The search and establishment of appropriate housing dominates the first few months of an expatriate move and, because of the housing shortage in Havana, a number of newly arrived families revealed that they had to spend many months in hotel accommodation without most of their personal belongings, as full residence status and release of heavy baggage depended on finding approved accommodation. While it is common for sojourners to stay in temporary accommodation during relocation, it was the length of the process of setting up home that was significant in this context for many. Some sojourners also lamented that, due to lengthy delays, they had to begin their new job, or start their children in school, without the basic and familiar comforts of a home environment and without the usual support of close family and friends, while restrictions on communications through the internet by mobile phone made it difficult to build new social networks. Once accommodation has been found in Havana it is often in poor condition and in need of some repair, but the lack of basic goods for house repairs, even such basic items as nails, sand, glass,

everyday tools and so on, often causes extensive delays in upgrading the quality of housing. The scarcity of basic foods, in particular, was a common source of daily frustration, and even seasoned sojourners recounted that they spent a great deal of their time trailing the shops for basic goods until they had exhausted all possibilities and become exasperated by the lack and inconsistency of supply. The lack of international brands, convenience foods for quick preparation, or specialised foods, inflated prices and inconsistency in supplies and poor hygiene in the shops all dominated conversations amongst newly arrived sojourners. While many of these inconveniences may be considered small and manageable, there was a sense amongst sojourners that it was the accumulation of frequent daily hassles around quite routine tasks which increased the demands and stresses of life in the new setting and impacted on the quality of their daily life and sense of comfort. This, in turn, influenced their attitudes to their new home and the ability or motivation to adjust.

Despite the scarcity, as time went on, sojourners tended to adapt to the situation and develop strategies for obtaining supplies. Above all, they learned that there were unofficial ways to obtain goods through the informal economy and took the risk of obtaining basic supplies illegally and at greater expense. This black market was a means for Cubans to liberalise the rigid, planned economy and gain access to the dollar-pegged convertible currency through redistribution of what was available in the workplace, in people's homes and official supply chains by selling directly to sojourners. As most things other than locally grown agricultural goods can only be bought with the convertible currency, the co-existence of two currencies has effectively created a two tier society. While it is prohibited for Cubans to earn in the convertible currency, they are allowed to receive money transfers from relatives overseas. Sojourners related how the currency could also be accessed informally, whether by earning clandestine second salaries in international companies, through domestic employment with sojourners,

through tips from tourists or by selling through the informal economy. This included selling items of value owned from pre-revolutionary times, such as glassware or furniture, or pilfered goods from the workplace, such as eggs or vegetables destined for the military, or wine and other goods confiscated at Customs, or cuts of meat or fish obtained informally.

Consequently, over the years, a dual economy and a dual society have emerged with a contrast between those Cubans who have access to luxuries goods and services and those who do not, and who co-exist alongside a significant presence of relatively affluent foreign residents with access to foreign currency and to the dedicated outlets of goods and services that the convertible currency sustained. Such inequality in living conditions, coupled with the tendency of the Cuban authorities to corral foreign residents into particular residential areas with access to particular supply channels had particular consequences for intercultural interaction as the informal economy brought sojourners into contact with the growing inequality within Cuban society. Sojourners' direct engagement with Cubans was essentially clouded by the differences in the conditions of life between the two groups. This created tensions in a context of segregation and economic hardship and sojourners' engagement with local society could become complex and alienating. Levels of interaction varied greatly and were largely dependent on sojourners' ability to speak Spanish and their willingness to interrelate on a sociocultural level and seek a positive engagement with the sociocultural context. This could be a vibrant and enriching experience, allowing sojourners to explore issues and views of life first hand, or it could be an uncomfortable engagement with the consequences of growing inequality and illegality in Cuban society. In reality, the sojourner population represented a captive market for Cubans to access a better quality of life and interaction could become transactional and opportunistic or exploitative in both directions. Many sojourners expressed feelings of regret at playing a part in this inequality or having to stand by and see how some

Cubans had a better lifestyle than others, which had an impact on their own experience of adjustment. This increased the uncertainty of everyday life for sojourners, particularly for those who had negative experiences and many sojourners retreated into “expatriate enclaves” (Lauring and Selmer, 2009), largely avoiding engaging in contact with local life or interacting with the local population. Thus, the daily struggle to survive and the problems of the informal economy and the challenges of opportunism in the interface between sojourners and the local population gave rise to situations of disadvantage and exploitation in the context of tight social control.

Another challenging aspect of the proximate sociocultural context was the political and social control inherent in the authoritarian system of government in Cuba, which meant that monitoring and surveillance were a regular part of daily life in Havana, both for sojourners and locals. Although contact between Cubans and sojourners was frequent and fluid, it was monitored and there was a sense that it was conditioned by a perceived need by the authorities to manage contact with and create distance between visitors to the island and local people. Sojourners often commented that it was difficult to get to know Cubans well and this, together with the very limited and controlled internet access, the absence of international press, magazines or books and the availability of only official Cuban media channels of television, radio and press, created a heightened sense of isolation from the rest of the world, including from close family and friends overseas. The movements and communications of foreign residents are monitored closely in Cuba and dealing with authorities through a framework of high levels of bureaucracy and power distance affected both working life and private life. Sojourners related such things as being followed by security, particularly in the beginning of the sojourn, having their number plate recorded when parking, hearing clicks on the phone as calls were being listened to and emails being intercepted and sent back or not reaching their

destination. Other examples of how daily life was influenced were delays in decision-making in business, with requests for information or meetings being ignored, or being questioned when withdrawing money from the bank. Also, when travelling, the need for businessmen to obtain a visa to exit the country, or not being allowed to import small essential appliances due to restrictions on electricity and having them confiscated at the airport were other regular hassles that accumulated over time and affected morale. The pervasive sense and psychology of feeling restricted and watched, together with everyday sights of police control of the local population and the potential for possible penalty or detention all became an evident part of everyday life. A vivid account of one sojourner's experience of the Cuban justice system is recounted in Purvis (2017) and this was not an isolated case. Overall, the authoritarian nature of the context, sustained by political ideology and intolerance of public dissent, created an unease and vulnerability amongst visitors throughout the sojourn, which could lead to potential animosity towards the local context.

Overall, then, acculturative stress had its origin in the unfamiliar demands of sociocultural proximate context for relocating sojourners. The particular nature of the physical, behavioural and extra-situational dimensions of this particular context created a particular trajectory for sojourners to navigate and which would require adjustive resources to ensure psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Scarcity and inequality, for example, emanate from the economic and social conditions that surround daily life in Cuba, with their origin in history and geo-politics, while the social control and surveillance that envelopes everyday life is an ideological response by the Cuban authorities to preserve the regime's hegemony. Consequently, conditions of life created by prevailing political and economic realities had a fundamental effect on how residents lived their lives and the daily struggle with shortages, supplies and uncertainty dominated the adjustment process.

Acculturative stress resulting from changes in lifestyle (distal elements)

While many challenges for sojourners came from the sociocultural environment, acculturative stress also came from changing circumstances and the new lifestyle that sojourners adopted in their new location, particularly for non-working spouses. In most cases, individuals were taking on a new role, whether through a new job, going to a new school or perhaps changing or giving up a career and the change process could affect the whole family.

The position and challenges of the non-working spouse was a common theme in Havana, as there was little possibility of local employment. Changes in family circumstances and responsibilities as a result of the spouse not working and spending more time at home sometimes altered the balance of duties and the nature of relationships in families or couples, particularly for those that had given up a career to move with their family. For some, the amount of time spent at home alone affected their state of mind or emotional well-being and many of the newly arrived expatriates had no Spanish or limited knowledge of a lingua franca, such as English, in order to be able to meet new people. Meeting people and establishing new friendships were made all the more difficult, particularly at the beginning of the sojourn, due to the difficulty in disseminating information about what was happening in terms of events for expatriates. There were limited facilities to advertise events, as no private media were allowed, mobile phones were in limited supply and expensive and many sojourners did not have access to internet communication as it is highly restricted and poor quality. This meant that the main source of information was by word of mouth, which made it difficult to benefit from without having a wide range of acquaintances, a rarity on recent arrival. These communication restrictions also meant that keeping in touch with friends and family at home was also

restricted. The loss of support networks resulting from relocation put extra pressure on some spouses as the main care provider, particularly when their partner's new job entailed longer hours or increased travel causing them to be absent from home. As a result, many spouses reported that they found it difficult to establish new acquaintances and spoke about feeling lonely or depressed, "trapped at home" or "isolated" from the world, though this eased gradually into the sojourn as contact with others across different domains increased.

The home and family life was considered a focal point for all concerned, as both a refuge and a forum, as the main source of support for all in an unfamiliar environment and in the absence of familiar support systems. A problem at school or at work was shared by all in a more intense way as the domains of daily life – work, school and social life - were more inter-connected and dense in such a close expatriate environment, particularly as sojourners tended to live a segregated life in relation to host nationals. However, in contrast, once the initial phases were over, the majority of spouses managed to adapt and reap the benefits that the new environment had to offer them. Positive attitudes towards their new life helped facilitate coping behaviours, turning the family relationship into a positive force, which could lead to better adjustment

Adjustive resources and coping strategies

In terms of adjustive resources and coping strategies employed to overcome challenges, three areas were identified. Firstly, support and resources for psychological adjustment were provided at an institutional level, through work or sponsoring organisation, schools and leisure groups. Secondly, those that could not access substantial institutional resources, for reasons outlined below, had to make use of their own resources on an individual level, based on such things as their experience, language ability and their skills and resourcefulness in building relationships and benefiting from social networking to resolve difficulties. Finally, the

experience of adjustment was also articulated in the sociocultural arena and the degree to which sojourners enhanced their encounters in relation to the host society or not.

Support from institutions, such as the employer, the school and sponsoring organisations, were important to help individuals and families overcome challenges. Support from others, whether from individuals or from organisations, in their relocation experience was a key theme identified in the study and this could come from a variety of sources. In the first instance, an individual's work organisation had a role to play in settling the employee and his or her family into the new environment, both in a physical sense of ensuring that they were installed in appropriate and comfortable accommodation, had all their belongings safely delivered, had obtained all the necessary authorisations to settle in the host country and in terms of morale and psychological well-being. However, the level of support was observed to be very variable and depended to a large extent on the size and resources of the work organisation, often leaving individual families to fend for themselves and rely on informal support. Apart from an individual's work organisation, the international schools played an important role in welcoming and settling sojourners into expatriate life, organising events to welcome newcomers, provided information and a forum to discuss issues and, above all, provided the opportunity for networking and getting to know other people. Sports clubs, too, often set up team events and leagues in leisure time, while religious groups were a source of common interest for people, all of which enabled sojourners to network, pursue a pastime and socialise. However, the close knit environment created by work socials and school community activities, while offering a high degree of psychological comfort in the form of friendship and camaraderie, could also inhibit sociocultural adjustment to the wider local context. In this sense, the incentive to interact with the sociocultural environment could be reduced and could

lead to enclosed enclaves, where large groups of well-supported expatriates worked and socialised together and often ignored their cultural surroundings.

Personal resources were described as being important by sojourners in order to overcome obstacles and could speed up the adjustment process, particularly where institutional resources were lacking. These were defined as individual qualities, traits or behaviours that enable an individual to adjust to an unfamiliar environment more easily than others. These ranged from intrinsic personal or cognitive qualities, such as positive attitudes to change or tolerance of difference, and to ways of behaving, such as showing cultural sensitivity to different ways of life or proactively building networks and meeting a wide range of people, all of which have been cited in research as being important for an individual to cope with adjustment to a new environment (Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Aycan 1997). Another category of factors were those that came from particular individual skills and experience related to the relocation process, such as the ability to speak Spanish or to cope with such a novel environment, particularly amongst sojourners who complained of receiving limited support from their employer and who had to rely on their own experience and resources. For example, those that had previous experience of Latin America and arrived with good Spanish were already tuned in to adjusting to the context, despite the problems of supply in the economy, while those whose means and conditions of employment were more favourable had greater spending power and could access resources to make life more comfortable. Being able to afford a car or pay the high rates for internet or a mobile phone in order to be able to communicate and build networks were examples of this in the study.

Social network building also enabled sojourners to develop support and companionship for psychological adjustment and to adjust socioculturally in such a segregated and insulated

context, which helped them to overcome obstacles and crises. Social life helped create ties quickly with other people as part of an open network, which could also develop into stronger ties through friendship or specific needs, replacing the close networks of family and friends at home. Social networks also helped sojourners create multiple bridging relationships for a wide collaborative network of weaker ties for mutual benefit in the context of the informal economy, which served to help sojourners cope with the practical challenges generated by some of the environmental demands of Cuba. This created "a sense of community", which provided social companionship and emotional support, particularly at difficult times and within the context of surveillance and limited access to external communications. However, for some it could also create a sense of claustrophobia and, at times, in-fighting and discrimination leading to situations of exclusion and categorisation that could be alienating. Overall, however, the creation of supportive and collaborative networks was largely positive and a critical means of helping people "in the same boat" to cope with lifestyle change and make the most of their experience.

Social networks, however, rarely went beyond the sojourner community and full sociocultural adjustment to the Cuban context was fairly rare amongst sojourners, particularly for those on short term assignments and for those that could benefit from the wider networks of a large embassy or company. In such cases, while social networking was sufficient to establish a certain level of companionship and support, to a certain extent it also promoted enclavism. This, in turn, could create a certain amount of inhibiting pressure on in-group members, often reinforcing negative stereotyping towards the context, which could hold back all but the most adventurous. Furthermore, the political sensitivity of the context, where involvement in local life was subject to monitoring, and the impact of the dual economy, in which sojourners and locals lived within different economic models, meant that social contact between sojourners

and host nationals became largely transactional. Contact with the local population, to a large extent, had to be "allowed" or "tolerated" by the authorities and required a concerted and persistent rapprochement by sojourners over time. For this reason, most sojourners remained close to the sojourner "community" and sociocultural contact with the host society was largely limited to interaction with tradespeople and employees with few opportunities to develop unmonitored social contact, resulting in full adaptation over time into Cuban society.

Discussion

Cross-cultural adjustment in Cuba was seen in this study to be framed by geo-political and ideological dynamics that created more challenging conditions of life, as well as impacting on distal elements related to the change in lifestyle caused by relocation. The particular impact of the authoritarian context was seen to intensify and inhibit certain aspects of adjustment, which brings into view a number of considerations for international management studies and how they employees and their families can be prepared for an international assignment in a similar context. These are discussed below.

'Culture' is an insufficient explanation for difficulties in cross-cultural adjustment

The particular conditions of daily life as a feature of the sociocultural proximate context should be seen to be heavily influenced by the socio-political and economic forces that surround the historical context. This indicates that invoking "culture", or cultural difference, as a means of explaining adjustive challenges is clearly inadequate and masks the practical circumstances and processes in establishing comfortable living conditions. In this sense, the tangible distance expressed by some between their own worldview and what they perceived as Cuban attitudes and practices could be better explained through categories and phenomena related to dialectical and discourse processes that permeated daily life. Also, framing power differences between

populations as cultural also makes an assumption that there is a natural cohesion and permanent homogeneity and predictability in the way people live collectively. It devalues individual choice or agency and assumes largely permanent and invariable common values, behaviours and attitudes amongst large groups of individuals, who are not necessarily all known to each other personally, and who all tend to view those from outside in the same way as potentially antagonistic.

Authoritarianism increases focus on the distal context in cross-cultural adjustment

The way in which sojourners navigated lifestyle and role changes were influenced by remote or distal elements in the form of their cultural, social and occupational background, their habits and expectations from their previous life and the attitudes and viewpoints that they brought from outside the context. However, while these distal elements tend to emanate from outside the proximate context, the restrictions and insularity created by authoritarianism complicated the adjustment process to lifestyle change and affected morale more acutely. In this sense, the infrastructure of daily life created by authoritarianism contributed to restricting communication and employment opportunities, particularly for spouses, and inhibited both contact with virtual support networks and social contact with host nationals.

Authoritarianism inhibits sociocultural adjustment

Overall, the authoritarian nature of the Cuban context, sustained by political ideology and intolerance of public dissent, coupled with a wary reception of foreign presence on the island, created a psychological unease amongst sojourners and repressed the wider sociocultural adjustment of sojourners to the Cuban context. Likewise, daily life in Cuba is overtly influenced by the dominant discourse of authority in which the Cuban Communist Party invokes the principles of the revolution in order to legitimise autocratic decision-making and

defend a perceived common historical worldview and cultural legacy amongst the wider population in which individuals are exhorted to sacrifice personal interest for the well-being of society in general. The portrayal of the revolution as being in constant peril from imperialism through the dominant discourse led to the otherisation of the outsider, in which visitors were perceived by the authorities as a potential threat. Intercultural contact was, thus, principally tethered to transactional interaction between sojourners and tradespeople and employees, resulting in relatively limited opportunities to develop unmonitored social contact that might have resulted in enduring sociocultural adjustment and long term integration. This was reinforced to some degree by the psychological comfort that closed and familiar social networks brought to sojourner groups, which could encourage negative stereotyping by in-group members towards the local context and served to create distance between the host and society and sojourners. Of course, genuine and prolonged sociocultural adjustment might not necessarily be customary in international relocation and may occur regardless of the nature political arrangements of the local context. However, this study indicates that the obstacles to sociocultural adjustment presented by the strength of the attachment to ideological causes and the perceived danger in compromising purported revolutionary principles served to magnify the tendency to otherisation of incoming temporary residents and inhibit the likelihood of their sociocultural adjustment.

Adjustment in authoritarian contexts is more resource-intensive

The study showed that the level of resourcefulness to support coping strategies for psychological adjustment, both at an institutional level and on a personal level, was of high intensity in order to resolve difficulties in order to ensure individuals and families fully settle into the new environment and establish a sense of well-being after transfer. The authoritarian context resulted in a more restricted supply of and accessibility to resources and the

infrastructure available for supporting daily life was weak and inhibited the chance of generating alternatives for meeting basic living and social needs. Resources for adjustment had to be generated within local institutional and sojourner networks, whether in terms of responding to basic needs or providing support for psychological well-being and social adjustment, thus making the adjustment to life in Cuba much more resource-intensive than contexts that can be considered more open and acceptance of plural social and political systems. The persistent need by the authorities to control and scaffold social interaction in order to retain a particular designated political and social order put pressure on economic inventiveness and interpersonal behaviour, which required more abundant systems of social support and adjustive resourcing as a result.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the understanding of the psychological and sociocultural challenges of international relocation in an authoritarian context. It gives a unique insight into international relocation in Cuba and draws out the areas of concern for cross-cultural adjustment under authoritarian conditions, serving as an example of how context-based research can inform cross-cultural theory and practice within an evolving landscape of doing business globally. The insight gained can help to inform the study of adjustive behaviour in contexts that are overseen by singular political, religious or elitist hegemonies, characterised by high levels of ideological governance, economic disparity or social injustice, and which have become major trading nations with substantial local markets open to international business. Such contexts, which are an increasing feature of expatriate mobility, will undoubtedly pose similar proximal and distal challenges in the adjustment process to the ones described in this study and international organisations should be aware of and prepare for the increased demands placed on employee mobility and adjustment.

Directions for future research

Drawing on the insights gained in this study further research in context would be fruitful along the same lines, on the understanding that intercultural interaction occurs within a discursive and dialectical framework, rather than narratives based on *a priori* notions of culture relating to national or ethnic stereotyping. Such research should further explore the socio-political and economic variables in authoritarian contexts that can create a framework of increased difficulty in adjusting to everyday life and offer more insight into how to prepare individuals for the challenges to be encountered. Recent examples include resistance to change and uncertainty, favouring tribal loyalties over company goals, and a complex ethnic and linguistic landscape (Okpara and Kabongo, 2011), or hostility to foreigners, uncertain legal status and absence of rights at work and erratic and authoritarian leadership styles at work (Atiyyah, 1996), all of which may be seen to stand in contrast to the rational, orderly and statutory frameworks of the working contexts found in developed and democratic societies. Alternatively, comparative research in locations where challenges are similar in terms of democracy, governance or socio-economic influences and where ideology or belief dominate and control everyday life would be of value. Other factors that might come into view could be levels of poverty, conflict, health and education policy, power differentials and such in any given location, which regulate the availability of goods and services, for example, or the level of personal safety, or the facilities for healthy living and wellbeing in international assignments. The nature of this kind of research would bring into view the practical aspects of adjustment in particular contexts, rather than relying on abstract notions and models of cross-cultural adjustment.

Cross-cultural management theory, then, needs to embrace the complexity of the adjustment process in different contexts in seeking to inform international management practice. A new vein of research is required in order to explore the developing and expanding range of contexts in international business in order to understand the serious challenges of adjusting to hostile and volatile environments. This needs to go beyond the travails analysed in traditional cross-cultural management theory, which tend to focus on the experience of western businessmen in already developed contexts, such as Western Europe, the Pacific Rim and the United States (Black, 1988; Black and Gregerson, 1991; Dunbar, 1994; Caligiuri et al, 2001; Mohr and Klein, 2004; Waxin and Panaccio, 2005), for example, and embrace a more complex, evolving international and polycentric business landscape, particularly in developing contexts. The notion of context should replace simplistic classifications of cultural stereotyping and regimented guidance on perceived typical behaviour in any given location and look deeply into the geo-political, economic and sociocultural backdrop in order to identify what might impact upon behaviour and create constraints to adjustment. In this sense, research needs to recognise more fully the diverse nature of contexts in cross-cultural adjustment and take the focus of attention off "culture" in order to establish the discursive and dialectical processes that create relational tension in context as the prime motivation for research. Overall, then, by understanding all of these elements of and responses to the context under study a rich account of what adjustment entails ensues and contributes to international companies' policies on relocation.

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