

# Cosmopolitan Identity: Expatriate Children in Vietnam



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## Abstract

This article explores the identity of expatriate children in the development of cosmopolitan individuals. Multinational corporations are creating a growing population of culturally savvy individuals who are able to operate within widely different cultural and linguistic contexts. These individuals are more inclined to develop cosmopolitan skills as contradictory cultural demands challenge their daily expectations. From corporate relocations to political exile, and from historical migrations to local globalization, these individuals confront diverging perspectives and possess the know-how to mediate them. Ethnographic interviews with Vietnamese and French expatriate high-school students in Vietnam illustrate the tension between the traditional French education system and the many diverse cultures native and expatriate students need to negotiate in this globalized world. Using a multi-disciplinary framework, this article broadens the notions of self-identity, cosmopolitanism, corporate expatriations, cultural hybridity and paradox by taking them outside of their respective fields of study.

## Keywords

Cosmopolitanism, Expatriate Children, Vietnam, Self-Identity, Hybridity, Cultural Sensitivity, French Educational System, Management Theory

“In a sense, cosmopolitanism is a necessary tool for people who cross borders. And it’s not as we think, as high end, going from summer in London to winter in Canada; it’s about crossing cultural lines in the sand as well as crossing borders.”

-Andrew Lam, Personal Interview, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2018

“So why do people in these places sometimes feel that their identity is threatened? Because the world, their world, is changing, and some of them don’t like it.”

-Anthony Kwame Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*

“Rarely have multinational corporations fully considered the role of the expatriate child, in spite of the fact that the majority of expatriate managers are married and have children.”

-Corinna T. De Leon and Diana McPartlin, *Adjustment of Expatriate Children*

## **Introduction**

In my entire academic career at NYU, I found myself always gravitating back to notions of identity and globalization. Nothing around me was enough to explain or validate the confusion I had toward my identity. I was born in Shanghai in 1996 to Shanghainese parents, who were also born and raised there. My parents grew up in a rising China, a fortunate moment in history, in the midst of Deng Xiaoping’s 1978 opening-up reforms. They worked hard and jumped into the field of finance right after university. In 2001, my father received a phone call that changed the course of my life. His company asked him to relocate to Paris. I was five years old and unsuspecting of how this move would later affect my self-identity. From 2002 to 2005, I lived in Paris and attended Ecole Monceau, a public kindergarten and elementary school in the 8th *arrondissement*. These were my linguistic and cultural formative years and I spent them outside my native country. In 2006, when I returned to Shanghai after my father completed his expatriate assignment, I had fully assimilated into French culture and refused to speak any language other than French. I denied my Chinese nationality and found refuge in my friends within the French community, at the French

School of Shanghai. At school, life was *normal* to me because it provided linguistic and cultural continuity. The student body was ninety percent French and ten percent foreign or local Chinese.<sup>1</sup> I was among that ten percent. I was, in a sense, the reverse case of the French expatriate child who moved to Shanghai for their parents' job. I grew up always blatantly aware of cultural differences and always felt the need to assimilate or conform in order to hide what made me stand out.

While my environment defined me when I was in France and molded me with its French archetype, I did not experience any of that when I moved to New York. My experience at NYU and in Global Liberal Studies provided me with somewhat of a neutral ground to analyze all aspects of my identity. Junior year, I met Natsuko Saegusa, a Japanese student who grew up in Japan but moved to the UK to study abroad at the age of eleven. We found ourselves constantly discussing the same issues of identity and cultural malleability.

I struggled to find a name for the population I wanted to study, partially because I am part of it, and partly because there is only a small body of academic research. I finally settled on Anthony Kwame Appiah's work on *Cosmopolitanism* because it is broad enough to encompass all the topics I want to cover and specific enough to focus on the experience of expatriate children. I also settled on expatriate children to name the population in question because it was the simplest and most relevant way to refer to students like me, students who have been uprooted and who internalized cultures other than their parents' home cultures. I deliberately chose to step away from the most conventional term "Third-Culture Kid" [TCK] coined by Ruth Useem in the 1970s in defining the population at hand. I believe the term "Third Culture" limits the subject's cultures to two, as opposed to the sum of all influences one has had. For a TCK, there is a third cultural space created by the interaction between each parent's home culture. The notion here might limit the

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<sup>1</sup> *AEFE*. "Lycée Français De Shanghai." Agence pour L'Enseignement Français à l'Étranger, 2018, [ww.aefe.fr](http://ww.aefe.fr). Accessed 12 Apr. 2018.

conception of how the child manages the different cultural systems, which is why I chose to look at expatriate children via cosmopolitanism. This research project changed the way I understand and perceive myself. It pushed me to think about identity in terms of networks and interactive processes, rather than separate boxes of knowledge and experience.

## **Cosmopolitanism**

The collective imaginary of the twenty-first century conceives of cosmopolitans as exclusively high-class. There is a popular association between cosmopolitanism and Hollywood glamour. The irony is that we assume high culture and cosmopolitanism only apply to people like James Bond, but not to immigrants who have to navigate between two or three languages all the time (Lam 2018).

Anthony Kwame Appiah, author of *Cosmopolitanism, Ethics in a World of Strangers*, alludes to the same misconception of the term cosmopolitan as it

can suggest an unpleasant posture of superiority toward the putative provincial. You imagine a *Comme des Garçons*-clad sophisticate with a platinum frequent-flyer card regarding, with kindly condescension, a ruddy-faced farmer in workman's overalls. And you wince. Maybe, though, the term can be rescued. It has certainly proved a survivor.

(Appiah xiii-xiv)

Anthony Kwame Appiah and Andrew Lam both denounce the misleading connotations of the term by proposing precise, rooted, and realistic definitions of the term.

Andrew Lam, a Vietnamese-American writer who was politically exiled to the United States from Saigon in 1975, is the son of General Lam Quang Thi of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam. Lam was raised in an elite Vietnamese family and attended the French Lycée Yersin in

Da Lat, where he grew up speaking French. He later had to learn English upon his arrival to the United States. Lam is also the author of *Perfume Dreams: Reflections on the Vietnamese Diaspora*, winner of the Beyond Margins Award<sup>2</sup> in 2006, where he discusses his identity as a *Việt Kiều*, a Vietnamese native living overseas. According to Lam, the term cosmopolitan naturally pairs with crossing cultural borders and critically assessing the subsequent self-transformations. He describes the cosmopolite as anyone who actively travels between physical and mental worlds, not just James Bond archetypes (Lam 2018). Traveling between worlds does not solely mean voyaging to far-away lands, like from Vietnam to America as Lam experienced. It also means going from one neighborhood to another, from one occupation to another, from one individual to another. In other words, Lam defines cosmopolitanism as the mental skill that allows you to travel beyond borders without fearing the unknown. It is more omnipresent than we think, and relevant to study in this era of globalization. As our cultural environments increasingly dictate our personal choices and perspectives, it is imperative to reach out to the *other* in order to understand ourselves.

Appiah's approach to cosmopolitanism also stems from the need to detach from mainstream clichés. He addresses the "conceptual questions that lie beneath the facts of globalization" (Appiah xxi). For Appiah, cosmopolitanism means commitment to "*pluralism*" and "*fallibilism*" (144). Cosmopolitans are committed to *pluralism* because they know "there are many values worth living by and that you cannot live by all of them. So we hope and expect that different people and different societies will embody different values" (Appiah 144). Cosmopolitans also abide by "what philosophers call *fallibilism*—the sense that our knowledge is imperfect, provisional, subject to revision in the face of new evidence" (Appiah 144).

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<sup>2</sup> "PEN Open Book Award 2006 Winners." PEN America, [pen.org/pen-open-book-award-winners/](http://pen.org/pen-open-book-award-winners/). Accessed 30 Mar. 2017.

So what exactly happens when you choose to become cosmopolitan? And what happens when you are forced to become cosmopolitan? Both Lam and Appiah show that cosmopolitanism stems from something conceptual. How do we retrieve it from the conceptual world? How can we collect empirical data to study cosmopolitanism?

Expatriate children as population manifest cosmopolitan skills with their frequent relocations, which forms the core of this discovery project. Expatriate families, especially their children, live in environments that are conducive to developing cosmopolitan identities. As stated by Andrew Lam, cosmopolitan identities are not exclusive to children of affluent and high-status families. They are actively developed through confrontation and interaction with cultural *others*, regardless of who or where. It takes a high amount of personal will and active self-assessment to build a cosmopolitan identity. Not all individuals, including expatriate children, end up developing globally-oriented identities, which is why it is useful to study how they operate in different individuals that do possess them. Susan Engel's *The Hungry Mind, The Origins of Curiosity in Childhood* helps us understand how children's curiosity can be fostered to build cosmopolitan identity. Individuals with diverse identities can easily explain their different cultural affiliations by breaking down all of their influences, but why are there no appropriate words to express the sum of their identities?

At its core, cosmopolitanism is the universal need to understand others, those unlike ourselves, and to be able to empathize with them. Let's begin to look at the matter from the standpoint of management research. The core purpose of expatriations is to maximize profits by accessing and gaining forms of control over foreign markets (Welch 150). In her article "Globalisation of Staff Movements: Beyond Cultural Adjustment," Denice E. Welch shows that expatriations can foster cosmopolitan identities and behaviors. Welch "developed four different

career archetypes: naturalised, local-oriented, unsettled and cosmopolitan” (154). She helped draw the connection between expatriate careers and cosmopolitanism in the management literature. Expatriations “force expatriates to perceive more than one truth or mindset, which develops their ability to analyze situations from various perspectives,” a valuable tool for international businesses (Osland et al. 110).

However, from the perspective of social and cultural analysis, the model multinational companies (MNCs) use to send expatriate managers overseas is rooted in the traditional conception of the nuclear family (De Leon et al. 198). Companies perceive the father as the main provider for his dependents and as an individual who is highly involved in his work, less so in his family. This partially explains why most expatriate managers are father figures. However, as laid out by De Leon in her research, “there is no evidence to support the corporate view that most expatriate families conform to this traditional model” (197). On the contrary, expatriate fathers are extremely involved in their families. The success of their foreign assignments depends on the stability of their family, most specifically, whether their children adjust well to the new schooling and cultural environment (De Leon et al. 199).

By bringing together the analytical lens of management with socio-cultural, as well as philosophical and psychological studies, we can broaden the notion of cosmopolitanism to provide an up-to-date and contextualized definition. Today, corporations still view expatriate children as “passive participants” of the expatriation assignment (De Leon et al. 197). In a study on expatriate turnover, family-related issues are the third most common factors of expatriate failure (De Leon et al. 197). Therefore, it is useful to explore the role of expatriate children in understanding the cultural impact of corporate expatriation assignments. In the cultural adjustment process, the children and spouse tend to face more hardship than the expatriate manager. They “have no access

to organizational continuity, mainly experiencing disruption of their personal lives. Furthermore, they get very little help in coping with the daily demands of unfamiliar circumstances” (De Leon et al. 199). These are the families at the core of this project.

As national leaders become more divided and hostile toward each other, they increasingly need individuals with cosmopolitan skills to bridge political and cultural gaps, and to create conversations fostering coexistence. As global corporations continue to structure their foreign projects using archaic conceptions of the family, they unintentionally create a population of culturally adaptive and globally minded expatriate children. Through multiple relocations of employees across the world’s major cities, global corporations gradually undermine the concept of homogenous national identity. Expatriate families, especially the children that corporations send abroad as dependents of the employees, develop transformative cosmopolitan skills to operate between cultures and identities, key assets required for global coexistence. Through ethnographic interviews within the expatriate community in Vietnam and detailed case studies, let us demystify the complex role and cosmopolitan characteristics of expatriate children within the context of globalization.

## **Expatriations and Identity in Vietnam**

Expatriate students face the unfamiliar every single day. They are constantly out of their comfort zone and experience culture shock to the point of internalizing it as their new normal. Culturally, linguistically and psychologically, expatriate children operate in cross-cultural realities. At home, they experience cultural continuity from their country of origin. At school, they interact with a mixture of home, host culture, and other foreign students’ cultural practices. In the city, they face diverging perspectives with locals and must acquire phrases of the host culture’s



language to get by. Expatriate children, however, are not the only ones to encounter transformative experiences. Local students in Vietnam, who also take part in these daily interactions, internalize cultural traits of expatriate students reciprocally. Thus, locals too develop cosmopolitan skills. Locals and expatriates influence each other. They forge cosmopolitan identities by actively assessing each other's identities and interactions. These interactions take place daily in French schools throughout Vietnam and foster various forms of cosmopolitan identities.

The term expatriate, as we know it today, is rooted in the historical concept of *exile*. Although it is seen as a term that is neutral and mostly related to business, its definition remains ambivalent. The online *Merriam-Webster* dictionary, for example, defines the verb "to expatriate" as "to banish/exile" or "to withdraw (oneself) from residence or allegiance to one's native country." The connotation of patriotic loyalty is not present in "expatriate" as a noun, defined as "a person who lives in a foreign country."<sup>3</sup> *Oxford Dictionaries* defines an expatriate as a "person who lives outside of their native country" and also includes its archaic meaning "to be exiled."<sup>4</sup> *Etymonline* traces the history of the term back to 1768, from the French verb *expatrier*, which means "to banish."<sup>5</sup> The *Business Dictionary*, on the other hand, defines an expatriate as a "person who has citizenship in at least one country, but is living in another country. Most expatriates only stay in the foreign country for a certain period of time, and plan to return to their home country eventually."<sup>6</sup> The definitions show that our current zeitgeist perceives the term "expatriate" with some, but not total detachment from its history. From these various dictionary definitions, one can see a certain tension between the historical meaning of the term and the current professional

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<sup>3</sup> "Expatriate." *Merriam-Webster*, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expatriate](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expatriate).

<sup>4</sup> "Expatriate." *Oxford Dictionaries*, [en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/expatriate](http://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/expatriate).

<sup>5</sup> "Expatriate (v.)." *Etymology Online*, [www.etymonline.com/word/expatriate](http://www.etymonline.com/word/expatriate).

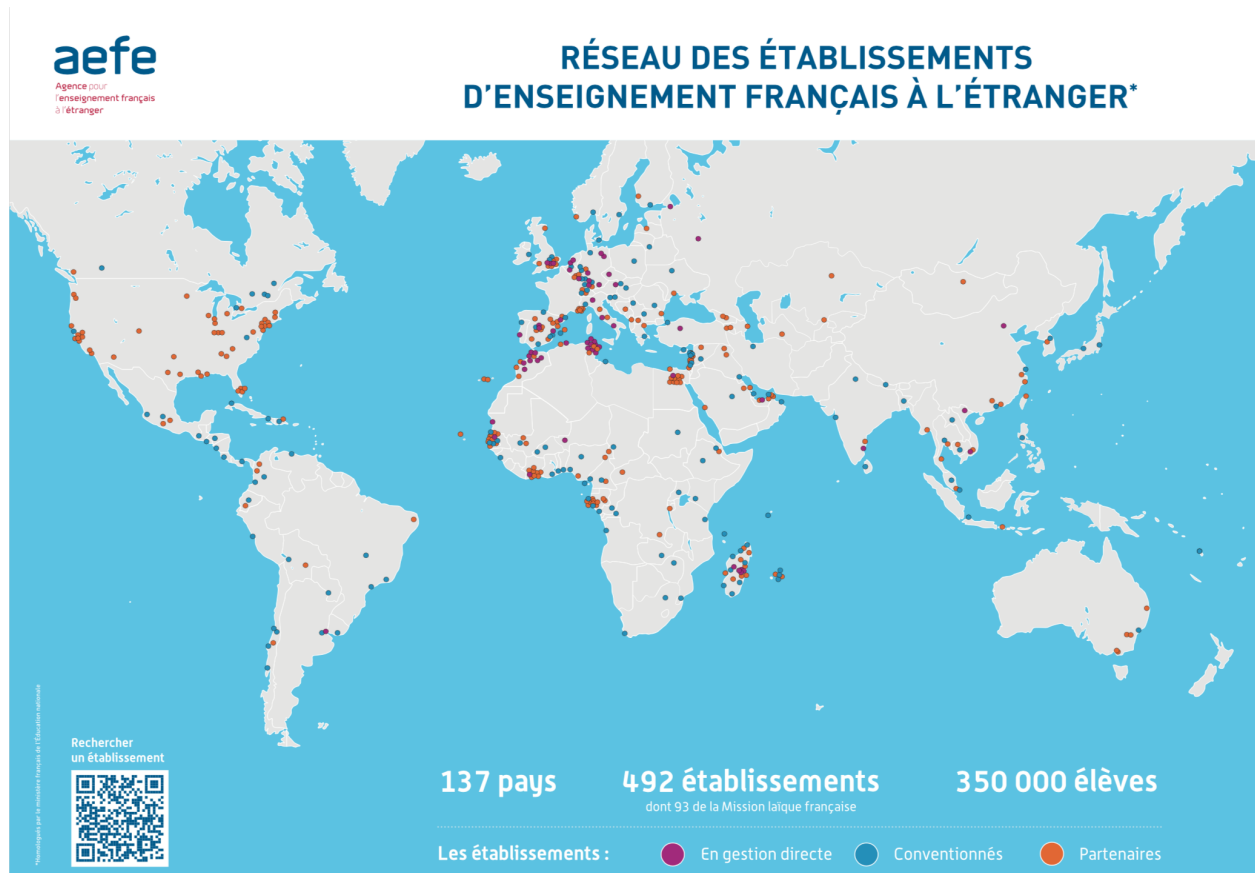
<sup>6</sup> "What Is an Expatriate? Definition and Meaning." *Business Dictionary*, [www.businessdictionary.com/definition/expatriate.html](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/expatriate.html).

meaning. The “expatriate” person continues to face the tension between patriotic loyalty and professional demands, as revealed from its etymology and semantic evolution.

As a formal research subject, the “expatriate” has only existed for the past sixty years (McNulty et al. 3). Expatriates first became subjects of research in human resource management studies in the 1950s, in the context of post-World War II repatriations. Organizations began to research expatriate management due to their increasing need for “loyalty and expertise” (Ibid.) in international professions. Scholars began to write about expatriates as American companies began to expand abroad and needed to learn how to manage “overseas executives” (McNulty et al. 4). These studies looked at the expatriate as a pivotal asset that generates valuable return on investment by bridging the gaps between American and foreign business practices (Ibid.).

This article focuses on Vietnamese identity as a framework to study expatriates. Vietnam’s historical narrative, from the remnants of its colonial times, has a strong French cultural presence as evidenced in the prevalence of French schools, for instance. For Vietnamese people, as for most others in the world, learning French and adopting French mannerisms are perceived as coming from a high class or elite family (Nguyen 2018). As native Vietnamese students encounter French expatriates in the *lycées* (high schools) across Vietnam, they begin to form new socio-cultural dynamics of interaction.

## The Agency for French Education Abroad (AEFE)



**Figure 1.** Agency for French Education Abroad Brochure (*Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger -AEFE*). Map of all the French schools managed by the agency, divided by management status: direct management (purple), subsidized (blue) and in partnership (orange). Pamphlet for French Education Abroad by the AEFE (2017-2018), page 17, [www.aefe.fr/sites/default/files/asset/file/2018-02-aeefe-brochure-presentation-format-web.pdf](http://www.aefe.fr/sites/default/files/asset/file/2018-02-aeefe-brochure-presentation-format-web.pdf).



**Figure 2.** The Network: Students (*Agence pour l'enseignement français à l'étranger -AEFE*).

Proportion of foreign students versus French students at the French schools abroad. 224,000 students are foreign and 126,000 students are French. Pamphlet for French Education Abroad by the AEFE (2017-2018), p. 8, [www.aefe.fr/sites/default/files/asset/file/2018-02-ae-fe-brochure-presentation-format-web.pdf](http://www.aefe.fr/sites/default/files/asset/file/2018-02-ae-fe-brochure-presentation-format-web.pdf).

The AEFE, *Agence pour l'Enseignement Français à l'Etranger* (Agency for French Education Abroad) manages all French schools abroad, from kindergarten to the baccalaureate (high school diploma). The main purpose of this French government agency is to provide a continuous curriculum to the children of French expatriates abroad, as curated by the National Ministry of French Education in the metropole (Mazières 111). The AEFE runs 492 French schools in 137 countries (Figure 1). Among a total of 350,000 students, only thirty-six percent are French students and sixty-four percent are foreign students (Figure 2). This shows that despite the initial purpose of the AEFE to provide education for French nationals abroad, more non-French students are in the system, creating a new landscape for education. The imbalance is a result of increased

cultural exchange and multinational business operations among France and the host countries. It is also a result of increased enrollment from local students in French schools. This new dynamic adds complexity to the analysis of the institution in terms of language, nationality, and cultural standing. Frédéric Mazières, who has a Ph.D. in Linguistic Sciences at Sorbonne University, uses the example of the Lycée Français (LF) de Bogotà, Colombia to illustrate these recent developments. In the LF of Bogotà, French nationals and Franco-Colombians form about twenty-one percent of the student body, while Colombian nationals form around seventy-seven percent of that total count. Mazières points out that students from other nationalities also attend the school for other expatriation reasons not cited in the text (113).

In this context, nationality is no longer a primary or even useful criterion for characterizing a student's social habitus. No matter their roots, all students are compelled to use French as a sociolinguistic tool in the academic environment. Outside of school, however, students speak the language of their family, whatever it may be (Spanish, French or whatever language their parents speak). In the French education system, students must learn at least two foreign languages, an LV1 (*Langue Vivante*, living language 1), LV2 or even an optional LV3. The linguistic requirements of the curriculum are the same for all students.

In Vietnam, two main French schools offer education from kindergarten to twelfth grade, including the baccalaureate exams for graduation. The French National Ministry of Education directly manages both schools (Figure 1, “under direct management” is marked purple on the map) and provides the same curriculum as offered in French schools within France. The *lycées* are located in the two biggest Vietnamese cities: Lycée Français (LF) Alexandre Yersin in Hanoi and Lycée Français (LF) International Marguerite-Duras in Ho Chi Minh City. For the purpose of this

thesis, the Lycée Français Alexandre Yersin will serve as the case study to explore the experience of expatriate children.

At the LF of Hanoi there are a total of 1,210 students. Among them, only 308 are French.<sup>7</sup> Similarly to the LF of Bogotá, the LF of Hanoi student body is predominantly non-French, with seventy-five percent non-French students and only twenty-five percent French nationals.<sup>8</sup> The students from various backgrounds are united via the French language, but not necessarily via the French national identity and subsequent cultural meanings. The dominance of local and non-French students presents a much more challenging environment as every student is exposed to multiple non-native cultures on an intimate and intensive scale. The culture of the schooling system is thus “diffused” and rendered more complex (Mazières 122). The children, regardless of their upbringing, have to assess their daily interactions much more critically to make sense of their unique cultural habitat, perhaps more than their parents do. Mazières points out that students in French schools abroad possess a “strange form of bilingualism” (117-118). The local students, most of whom are bilingual, take an active part in learning the material prepared by the French National Ministry of Education which does not design curricula meant for bilingual learners. So how do students make sense of their education when their programs are not designed or contextualized according to their profile?

## **Ethnographic Interview: Students from the French Lycée of Hanoi**

Nguyen Bui Binh Nguyen and John Laird, two students from the Alexandre Yersin French lycée of Hanoi both experience feelings of cultural ambiguity. Born in Hanoi, Nguyen is

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<sup>7</sup> AEFÉ. “Lycée Français Alexandre-Yersin.” Agence Pour L'Enseignement Français à L'Etranger, [www.aefe.fr/reseau-scolaire-mondial/rechercher-un-etablissement/viet-nam-hanoi-lycee-francais-alexandre-yersin](http://www.aefe.fr/reseau-scolaire-mondial/rechercher-un-etablissement/viet-nam-hanoi-lycee-francais-alexandre-yersin).

<sup>8</sup> AEFÉ. “Lycée Français Alexandre-Yersin.” Agence Pour L'Enseignement Français à L'Etranger, [www.aefe.fr/reseau-scolaire-mondial/rechercher-un-etablissement/viet-nam-hanoi-lycee-francais-alexandre-yersin](http://www.aefe.fr/reseau-scolaire-mondial/rechercher-un-etablissement/viet-nam-hanoi-lycee-francais-alexandre-yersin).

Vietnamese and lived for two years in Canada from 2010 to 2012. Nguyen currently attends the LF of Hanoi and is in eleventh grade. Born in Morocco, John is half Scottish half Moroccan. John had moved to Beijing and Hanoi when he was younger and is now back in Morocco, still under the French education system. He attended the LF of Hanoi in fifth grade as a result of his father's expatriation assignment in Hanoi. Nguyen is in Hanoi for the summer and John came back to visit the city he once lived in.

In a personal interview with Nguyen and John, they discussed the socio-cultural divisions and their understanding of identity at the LF of Hanoi. Through a conversation with the two students, the statistical situation of French and non-French students began to make more sense. Cultural divides did exist, but the students actively worked through them. Both students demonstrate their critical understanding of cosmopolitanism through a great sense of empathy, open-mindedness and pacifism toward others. They both propose to travel and read further to reduce cultural misconceptions.

*Q: Are there cultural divides at the lycée?*

A: (Nguyen) Some groups only speak English, some only Vietnamese, and some only French. Their specific behaviors also reflect the cultural groups they are in. Vietnamese kids behave like Vietnamese kids; French kids behave very French.

A: (John) I think that... everyone was a bit separated into cultural groups. Me, I'm Moroccan. [nods with pride and laughs] I was with the French kids no? [turns to Nyugen for confirmation]. I was often with the French kids. Yeah. But they were mean! [everyone laughs]

*Q: Do you struggle to explain your identity?*

A: (John) Yes at the beginning, I think. But then I met my friends.

A: (Nguyen) I've also had this happen to me. My friends that play rugby, they're Anglophones: they only speak one language: English. And when they hear me speak French,

they're like: 'Why does this Vietnamese guy speak French? What is this?' I actually find this funny.

*Q: Does culture affect your decisions?*

A: (Nguyen) I mean they do, hmm, I would say my personality does not correspond a lot to the Vietnamese culture. So sometimes there are some clashes. But I don't mind. I will do what's best for me and sometimes doing what Vietnamese culture wants is contrary to who I am, so it won't work.

A: (John) Hmm. Good question. I don't know, I'm open-minded, you can say anything you know. I'm... like him [points to Nguyen].

A: (Nguyen) For example, my grandma does this to me. Every time I go to visit her, she always asks me, 'Do you want to stay here and eat with us?' And I respond, 'I have to go eat at home.' She always goes, 'Oh of course... you only eat Western food don't you! You have forgotten your culture!' Honestly, these are small nuisances and I don't mind them much.

*Q: How would you prevent these misconceptions?*

A: (John) To travel!

A: (Nguyen) Travel.

A: (John) To read!

A: (Nguyen) To read and to travel. Read more non-fiction and look more into other people's ideas. I also understand where they're coming from though. I am empathetic towards them. I've seen and know my country's history so I understand how they feel. I really don't have issues with them because I see their problems too. There are obviously struggles but I let it go because I understand (John and Nguyen 2017).

In this conversation, John and Nguyen expressed their conflicted sense of identity as they experience daily instances of cultural clashes. Both of them live in a social context that does not correspond to their felt identity, which pushes them to empathize and make peace with continuously diverging values. John and Nguyen are observant. They see the differences within



their environment and are not offended by them. Their attitudes toward clashing perspectives are cosmopolitan in Appiah's sense. For example, both of them are accepting of other points of view, even if they are not their own. They know that other truths exist and they are curious to learn more, as they fervently point out the importance of reading and traveling.

## **Discussion: Expatriate Family Management and Compensation**

The friendship shared by Nguyen and John illustrates the growing interaction between native Vietnamese students and their expatriate peers. They influence each other's views and behavior, which transforms their understanding of the *other*. Joyce Osland and Asbjorn Osland conducted an exploratory study in 2006, titled "Expatriate Paradoxes and Cultural Involvement" and published in *International Studies of Management & Organization*. They specifically studied the "paradoxes inherent in the expatriate experience based on data from a sample of 35 repatriated businesspeople. Their analysis produced four factors: bridging cultures, self-identity, cautious optimism, and cultural intelligence" (Osland et al. 91). Their research is based on interviews with returned expatriates; and they developed numerical data from a sample that conforms to the following criteria:

- (1) a U.S. businessperson, (2) abroad for at least eighteen months, and (3) repatriated within the previous seven years. The subjects represented 16 companies in a wide variety of industries: chemicals, oil and mining, banks, accounting, law, electronics, tires, automotive, and defense. (Osland et al. 97)

Their sample provides a balanced amount of quantitative and qualitative data. Among these subjects, fifty-one percent worked in services, thirty-five percent in sales or manufacturing, and fourteen percent in research:

General managers (37 percent) comprised the largest occupational group; other occupations included engineers, chemists, auditors, bankers, accountants, and lawyers.

(Osland et al. 97)

As expatriate families adapt to the host country, they have to face many challenges. They are confronted with a constant state of paradoxes. A paradox, as defined by the researchers, is “a situation involving the presence of contradictory, mutually exclusive elements that operate equally at the same time (Quinn and Cameron 1988)” (Osland et al. 92). In the case of expatriates, these elements consist of cultural practices. When introduced to the host culture, expatriate families must learn to see beyond their original cultural practices and adapt to the culture of their host country. They must develop intercultural competency.

In his article “Intercultural Competency: A Transformative Learning Process,” Edward W. Taylor frames the current state of affairs as a “precarious new world order, precipitated by shrinking global resources and an increase in international communication” (154). This new context “has resulted in the need for many Americans to live and work outside of the United States” (Ibid.). Taylor puts the emphasis on the learning process and not the outcomes of these expatriations. While the Oslands focus on the outcomes of the expatriation experience after the foreign assignment, Taylor highlights the need to study the process of adaptation itself. When individuals first come into contact with a host culture, what happens on the psychological and cognitive levels? How do individuals improve their intercultural competencies? How do individuals learn to transform their prevailing cultural perspectives?

The process of adaptation takes place differently for expatriate parents versus expatriate children. For expatriate parents, the transformative learning process is directly tied to the job assignments. They experience paradoxes in their roles as “boundary spanners” (Osland et al. 95)

for their company headquarters. Their job is to act as an intermediary between two cultures, the culture of the host country versus the culture of the headquarter. The demands from the host culture and the headquarter are often contradictory or difficult to meet. In order to reach compromise, “expatriates must foresee possible causes of conflict and be able to integrate attitudes and points of view from the two cultures (Shetty 1971). To do so, they must be capable of acting independently of both sides” (Osland et al. 96). In the interviews, sixty-three percent of the respondents report experiencing “mediation paradoxes” (Osland et al. 98). One of the respondents who worked as an expatriate accountant in London says, “[...] there is something very appealing to me not to have a label on” (Ibid.). This response exemplifies the mediation paradox of being “freed from many of your own cultural rules and even from some of the host culture’s norms but not being free at all from certain host-country customs that you must observe in order to be effective” (Ibid.). The paradox here becomes clear. When confronted with a local culture, expatriates feel part of their native identity reinforced. However, when it comes to mediating between the host culture and headquarter demands, the expatriate experiences a certain degree of freedom from cultural demands. The expatriate must learn to separate from both cultural perspectives and select what is productive and compatible. The interviews conducted by Osland et al. show that not every expatriate parent experience these paradoxes. The interviews and resulting data also show that these paradoxes do not always trickle down to the identity level. Among the respondents, sixty percent of repatriates experienced “self-identity paradoxes” which led them to “giving up some of [their] American values in order to be accepted or successful in the other culture while at the same time finding some of [their] core American values becoming stronger as a result of exposure to another culture” (Osland et al. 99). The other forty percent, not mentioned in the interview report, most likely were not affected by these cultural conditions.

These differences in identity self-awareness and management resonate well with Appiah's concept of cosmopolitanism, in which all cultures and values are valid, not just your own.

In terms of transformative learning, Taylor points out that challenging experiences are sometimes denied or ignored. He writes, "When an individual has an experience that cannot be assimilated into his or her perspective, either the experience is rejected or the perspective changes to accommodate the new experience" (Taylor 158). These difficulties and the wide range of answers from the expatriate paradox interviews suggest that there is a lack of resources, training, and awareness regarding expatriate mediation paradoxes. They are intangible and difficult to assess quantitatively.

Exploring expatriate identities from the parents' perspectives does not paint the full picture. Issues revolving around culture and identity get passed down to the children of these families. These issues are also influenced by the decision-making process of human resource management. When a company assigns an international project to an employee for doing business abroad, the employee obtains a new role that comes with increased responsibilities. This also comes with an increased compensation package. In order to understand how the children are affected by the expatriation, the company's compensation system is a resourceful way to begin. Robert H. Sims, from the Department of Management at Western Kentucky University and Mike Schraeder from the Center for Technology Management at Auburn University conducted a study on expatriate compensation. Their research article "Expatriate Compensation: An Exploratory View of Salient Contextual Factors and Common Practices" examines how and why companies put together the expatriate compensation package.

On the organizational and management level, the need to create a specialized expatriate compensation package stems from the company's desire to have its employees do well in foreign

assignments. This allows the company to subsequently do well in foreign markets. Sims and Schraeder cite “Dwyer’s (1999) research arguing that without expatriate professionals who know the business, professionals who are motivated to perform at the highest level, companies may not be able to compete adequately in distant markets” (Sims et al. 100). Therefore, according to Dwyer, the expatriate’s compensation package is a key factor in the success of foreign operations.

Sims and Schraeder also explored the international human resource professional’s perspective. “Ask any international human resource executive about the goal of expatriate compensation packages and they will probably use the word “whole” or the concept of wholeness in their answer” (Sims et al. 103-104). The human resource expert designs the package for the expatriate employee to transition to the host country as fluidly as possible. Among the transitional factors, the children’s education is a major component of the compensation deal. The company often covers a large part or the entirety of living costs for the expatriate and dependents. Companies also provide an education allowance for the employee’s children or sometimes cover it all. The company sees it as a crucial element within the package as it is necessary to ensure “some form of continuity in curriculum and language” for the children (Ibid.). Despite the high cost of education in the host countries, companies regard it as a “non-negotiable” in the compensation package (Ibid.). However, these conditions of continuity and adaptation, designed to smooth out cultural differences, tend to have the opposite effect for the children. Instead of cultural and educational continuity, the French expatriate children get placed into a system where they are the minority. The case studies above show how the French *lycées* in Bogota and Hanoi only have twenty-one percent (Mazières 113) and twenty-five percent (AEFE) French national students respectively. The French international schooling system, managed by the AEFE, shows that in cities like Hanoi or Bogota there are by far more local students than French or other

nationality students. Human resource departments, just like the AEFÉ headquarter, are removed enough from the host countries that they may not be aware of the extensive levels of cultural interaction that are taking place in the schools. The expatriate children may follow a curriculum that is similar to that of their home country but are learning on a daily basis with children of different nationalities and cultural expressions.

As a result, the levels of cultural interaction are much more intimate, complex, and interdependent. The expatriate children and the local students learn from each other as new hybrid communities form.

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