International Assignments

An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

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Abstract
Although several scholars have argued that the spouses failure to adjust is one of the main reasons expatriate employees return prematurely from international assignments, research about spouse adjustment is scarce, and existing research about the phenomenon was conducted almost two decades ago. Therefore, our research was conducted in order to empirically examine theoretical variables that historically relate to host country adjustment of the spouse in order to see if these variables are still valid today. The present study focused on personality, family characteristics and anticipatory and in-country adjustment variables of the intercultural adjustment of expatriate spouses. Among a sample of 105 expatriate spouses it was shown that the variables measuring time in host-country, positive pre-move opinion held by the spouse, living conditions at least equal to home, cultural novelty, personality traits, and family cohesion were significant moderators of the adjustment to the new country of the spouse. We could also show that the adjustment of the spouse affects the adjustment of the expatriate, thus increasing the relevance for companies to aim more attention to the spouse well-being. An area for future research could be to investigate more closely if there is different effectiveness of different types of training.
Acknowledgements

We would like to greatly thank our participating companies for the help they have given by granting access to their expatriate's spouses. A special thank you here is aimed at Mrs. G. who gave us much help in this process. We would also like to thank all the respondents that have completed the survey that was sent out to them. Our work would not have been possible without you.

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1. Globalization and new demands

Today’s business environment is characterized by an increasing globalization of business activities, where national borders are no longer perceived as an obstacle (Scullion & Brewster, 2001; Crowther & Aras, 2012). Due to a growing acceptance of ideas and products from other cultures, companies are becoming more and more eager in trying to reap the benefits of working across borders (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009). Evidently, companies are becoming more transnational which increases the need for corporations to send their managers on international assignments, as companies seek employees to run their global operations (Olsen & Martins, 2009; Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Black, Mendenhall, Oddou, 1991). Additionally, the demand for expatriates is increasing, and many believe that it will continue to rise in the future (KPMG, 2004; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2005; ERC Worldwide, 2004; Brown, 2008). According to the Financial Times Lexicon an expatriate is an employee who is sent to live abroad for a defined period of time. The expatriate is expected to move abroad, with or without their family, for as short a period as six month but often the assignment spans from two to five years. In this paper we will be focusing on the spouse which is brought along by the expatriate on the international assignment.

These assignments are important for several reasons, one of them being that they promote global competencies and global integration of the corporation (Caligiuri, Hyland & Joshi, 1998). Therefore, employees who are willing to operate within foreign cultures have become a necessity (Black & Stephens, 1989). This entails that employees have to leave their home-country, often together with spouse and children, to start a new life in a different country (Black & Gregersen, 1991b). This has sometimes proven to be a difficult transition for not just the expatriate, but for all family members (Minter, 2008). In this paper the family is defined as any combination of two life partners, on their own or with children, as in the work of Caligiuri et.al., (1998) and we define a spouse to be a male or female accompanying the expatriate on the assignment to live together. The new cultural context often differs from the own familiar culture, and the family has to leave their relatives and friends behind and establish a new social network (Ali, Van der Zee, Zanders, 2003). Often, the spouse has to quit their job or terminate educational or other career-related pursuits to follow the expatriate on the international assignment (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). One also has to remember that in many countries, work permit restrictions make it difficult, sometimes even impossible, for the spouse to continue careers while located abroad (Pellico & Stroh, 1997).
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

Additionally, previous theory (e.g., Black 1988; Tung 1981; Harvey, 1985) suggests that failure of spouse host country adjustment has proven to be a direct and indirect cause of expatriates returning prematurely, assumptions strengthened by empirical support (e.g., Shaffer & Harrison, 1999).

1.1 Failure is Costly

In 2010 it was estimated that there were 200 million expatriate's on expatriate assignments worldwide (Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2005) meaning that there is a huge population that are experiencing issues with adapting to a new culture. The direct costs for a company sending an expatriate on an international assignment ranges from $250,000 to $500,000 (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009; Eschbach, Parker & Stoeberl, 2001) and scholars argue that American firms alone lose $2 billion annually in direct costs stemming from failed expatriate assignments (Copeland & Griggs, 1985). Many American multinational corporations (MNCs) have experienced that the adjustment to the new cultural setting is problematic – with 10% to 50% (Eschbach et al., 2001) of expatriates returning prematurely from the assignment (Baker & Ivancevitch, 1971; Black, 1988b; Misa & Fabricatore, 1979; Tung, 1982). One must also keep in mind the indirect costs that occur with this type of event, such as delayed productivity and damaged relations (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009), potentially losing the returning expat, training a new employee for the same event and lost business opportunities (Punnett, 1997). In spite of this, many American companies are reluctant to including spouses in their training of the expatriate, since they do not believe the reward is bigger than the cost and that the procedure is too time consuming (Black & Gregersen, 1991). In comparison to American data the fail rate of expatriate assignments for European MNCs are lower, in a sample by Brewster (1991) 72% of participating companies stated a fail rate below 5%. Scullion (1991) conducted research that further strengthened the value of lower fail rates in Europe as the author studied UK and Irish multinationals and could show fail rates of less than 5% in 90% of the MNC’s. However, it is argued that these rates are still high enough to justify attention for further study within the subject (Peng, 2009). The number one factor mentioned for failed expatriate assignments in Tung’s (1981) research is the failure of the spouse to adjust to living in the new foreign culture – something that still seems to be a front issue almost three decades later (Minter, 2008; Brown, 2008).
1.2 Differences between the expatriate and the spouse

Compared to the considerable amount of theory that has been accumulated regarding important factors for expatriate adjustment, efforts to understand the spouse have not been well documented (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Bauer & Taylor, 2001). Shaffer & Harrison (2001) argue that even though the adjustment process of the spouse might be similar to that of the expatriate in terms of influencing factors – they contend that current theories of expatriate adjustment do not fully explain spouse adjustment. What differs is that the expatriate usually arrive with a predefined role, an established organizational support system, and a set of responsibilities inherent in the job. In stark contrast, since only 21% of spouses find employment when on assignment (General Motors Acceptance Corporation and National Foreign Trade Council (GMAC and NFTC), 2005), the spouses face a loss of familiarity and continuity and work-related factors may somehow be less relevant in influencing the adjustment (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001). As a consequence, one can assume that the spouse is usually more directly involved with the local environment – meeting more local people, building different relationships than the expatriate and may therefore experience the differences between the countries as more tangible (Albright, Chu & Austin, 1993; Bauer & Taylor, 2001).

A quote that exemplifies the importance of considering spouse adjustment, and specifically that even the smallest things bear large significance, is seen in an article by Black & Gregersen (1991) when a Human Resource Manager is quoted saying the following:

"For 24 years I have seen expatriate spouses come and go; many would fail or be miserable because they didn’t have the split level home on a dead end street, the Jello, the cotton bread, the prepared foods, etc. -or many would have the experience of their life. Whether the family’s experience is miserable or exciting depends on the spouse. When the spouse adjusts, goes, and does, everything else follows…” (Black & Gregersen, 1991)

Surprisingly, most corporations do not consider the ability of the expatriate spouse to adjust to a new cultural setting when they are deciding on who to send abroad (Black & Gregersen, 1991).
1.3 An updated perspective

In general, there has been little research to identify underlying variables that might facilitate or inhibit the success of expatriates e.g., spouse host country adjustment (Minter, 2008). Additionally, research about important variables of spouse host country adjustment (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Caligiuri et al., 1998; De Cieri, Dowling, and Taylor, 1991) was conducted almost two decades ago and one could question whether these factors are still valid today. After having examined a large array of previous research of the subject, we have also found a possibility of combining previously separated areas that all touch upon the subject of expatriate spouse adjustment. The three theoretical constructs we have chosen to combine in order for organizations and individuals to be able to assess which factors are of relevance during international assignments for expatriate spouse host country adjustment today are personal traits (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001), family characteristics (Caligiuri, Hyland & Joshi, 1998) and anticipatory and in-country adjustment factors (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Oberg, 1960). These theoretical constructs will be tested by sending out a survey to expatriate spouses currently, or previously, on expatriate assignments.

1.4 Research Question and Purpose

The questions we wish to answer are the following:

- How does the time spent in the host-country affect the adjustment of the spouse?
- Is the pre-departure opinion of the assignment held by the spouse important for adjustment?
- Do the characteristics of the expatriate family affect the spouse adjustment?
- Do personality characteristics affect adjustment to a new country?
- Can a company take measures to ensure effective spousal adjustment to the new country?
- Does the adjustment of the spouse influence the adjustment of the expatriate?

Hence, the aim of this paper is to empirically examine theoretical variables that historically relate to host country adjustment of the spouse in order to see if these variables are still valid today.
2. Review of literature

The present study departed from a theoretical model (see Fig.1) which is an adaptation of previous work of Multicultural Personality Questionnaire proposed by Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001), the Expatriate’s Family Adjustment proposed by Caligiuri et al (1998), and on the logic of uncertainty reduction (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Oberg, 1960). The model considers three determinants of spouse adjustment, that is (a) anticipatory and in-country adjustment factors, (b) personality characteristics, and (c) family characteristics.

2.1 Cross-Cultural adjustment

The theoretical foundation of cross-cultural adjustment research has to a great extent been based on Oberg’s (1960) work on cultural shock. Oberg conceptualized cultural shock as a consequence of the strain and anxiety that seemed to occur from contact with a dissimilar culture – and the feelings of loss and confusion resulting from losing all, or most, familiar cultural cues and social rules (Black & Gregersen, 1991). In other words, cultural shock is not only a cause of the challenge of a new cultural setting, but also from the loss of one’s familiar cultural environment (Rhinesmith, 1985). Even though cultural shock is mostly associated with negative psychological symptoms such as anxiety, fear, homesickness, anger, and feelings of helplessness, Oberg (1960) claims that international assignees seem to move through various stages when experiencing cultural shock (Ward, Okura, Kennedy & Kojima, 1998). The first phase the individual usually goes through when arriving in a foreign culture is known as the “honeymoon” phase (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Torbiorn, 1982), which usually occurs within the first few weeks after arrival (Black & Gregersen, 1991). The first phase is characterized by interest, positive expectations, enthusiasm, fascination and idealization about the new cultural environment (Rhinesmith, 1985). However, the honeymoon phase is usually followed by a crisis phase, which depends on individual characteristics, preparation and a considerable amount of other factors (Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Black & Gregersen, 1991). There is no consensus in previous research when the crisis phase arises, and the authors use different time frames ranging from 2-3 weeks into the assignment up to 2 months after arriving in the host country (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Winkelman, 1994). Things start to go wrong, cultural differences become irritating, and
feelings such as frustration, helplessness, confusion, and depression are reaching the surface (Winkelman, 1994; Ward et al., 1998; Black & Gregersen; 1991). The third phase is concerned with learning how to effectively adjust to the demands of the new cultural environment. Through trial and error, the individual learns what is perceived as appropriate and inappropriate behavior (Ward et al, 1998). In this phase, the culture begins to make sense, and the individual starts to develop problem-solving skills for managing the new culture (Black & Gregersen, 1991). Finally, the fourth stage is characterized by the development of stable adaption in being successful at resolving problems, and the individual may undergo substantial personal change – which usually ends in the development of a bicultural identity (Winkelman, 1994). Hence, the time in the host country after the crisis phase will most likely have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.

Hypothesis 1: Time in the host country will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.

Concluding, a lot of symptoms of culture shock originate from the uncertainty created by the host country’s dissimilar behavioral expectations on the individual. Therefore, one could say that the basic cross-cultural adjustment process is all about reducing the uncertainty by learning which behaviors are suitable in the new cultural environment, and which ones are not (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Church, 1982; Black 1988). The degree of cultural shock and the individual reactions depend on a wide array of factors (in figure 1 they are denoted as uncertainty factors) e.g., individual characteristics, cultural novelty, previous international experience, etc. (Winkelman, 1994; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991). Previous theorists, (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black et al, 1991; Oberg, 1960) argues that individuals can, before actually entering a new culture, make anticipatory adjustment that will have a positive effect on the adjustment process once they arrive in the new country.

Anticipatory adjustment

Past theoretical cross-cultural adjustment research (e.g., Church, 1982; Torbiorn, 1982) indicates that one important uncertainty reduction factor for facilitating host country adjustment is previous international experience. It has been argued that previous international experience may help individuals to form abstractions and generalizations, and extrapolate these principles in the upcoming transition, and thereby reduce uncertainty which facilitates the current adjustment (Louis, 1980; Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991).
Hence, accurate expectations will result in fewer negative surprises in the host country and a more appropriate behavior, which will lead to a smoother host country adjustment (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Hypothesis 2: *Previous international experience will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

Research has suggested that another important factor for cross-cultural adjustment is the individual’s own motivation to make the adjustment (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Winkelman, 1994). It is assumed that a higher degree of motivation to make the transition to the new culture will most likely have a positive effect on his/her subsequent effort to adjust (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Rank, 1982). Additionally in order to succeed, it is very important that the individual acknowledges the benefits gained by living in a dissimilar culture and has a positive attitude instead of complaining or comparing it with the prior life at home (Winkelman, 1994). This concept is also raised in the research by Caligiuri et al (1998) as they use the notion that a positive pre-departure opinion will lead to a positive experience when spending time in the country. In a study performed by Munton (1990) the author found that even though 75% of the relocated employees rated the relocation as stressful, the perception of the relocation held by the family preceding the move greatly influences how stressful the relocation subsequently becomes. A positive attitude toward the global assignment will enable the family to worry less about the future and instead spend time on learning what will help them to adjust more easily (Feldman & Thompson, 1993; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). Hence, for an expatriate’s spouse, one would expect that a more favorable opinion about taking the international assignment will most likely be positively related to his/her pre-departure level of motivation and accordingly positively affect the cross-cultural adjustment (Sharda & Nangle, 1981; Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Hypothesis 3: *A favorable pre-departure opinion will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

One resource that has been widely discussed in previous cross-cultural adjustment research is pre-departure training (e.g., Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Torbiorn, 1982; Tung, 1981; Black & Gregersen, 1991). It has been argued that pre-departure training e.g., cognitive-behavior
modification training, cultural awareness training, interaction training, language training, and didactic training (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009) may provide the individual with information about the new cultural environment. This can increase the predictability of unfamiliar situations as well as aiding in how to interact with host country nationals (HCNs) (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Either the expatriate’s firm may provide the spouse with pre-departure culture training, or the spouse can through self-initiated training gain insight into how things work compared to home (Black & Gregersen, 1991). It is also important to be aware that inefficient pre-departure training can be an obstacle instead of an advantage for future expatriate spouses. This is due to the fact that the less accurate expectations an individual can form, the more uncertainty will arise surrounding the upcoming assignment and, in the worst case scenario, will increase the cultural shock experienced by the expatriate spouse. (Black et al., 1991). However, one would expect that pre-departure cross-cultural training will reduce uncertainty and have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.

Hypothesis 4a: *Company provided pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*
Hypothesis 4b: *Self-initiated pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

**In country adjustment**

Once the individual arrives in the new country, there are factors affecting the adjustment process such as the degree of social interaction with HCNs (Black & Gregersen, 1991). As aforementioned, the expatriate usually arrives with a predefined role and an established social network with host nationals at work, while the spouse usually has a harder time establishing a social network with host nationals (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Harvey, 1985). Black & Gregersen (1991) continues by arguing that social support from HCNs may be important for several reasons. HCNs (1) understand the host culture better, (2) can explain differences, and (3) can guide in appropriate behaviors. Further, it is assumed that the aforementioned can reduce novelty regarding the new culture and positively affect adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991). This pre-defined network which is already established for the expatriate can also in some way be true for the spouse. As Copeland & Norell (2002) write, friends in the new country are often expatriate's, or spouses of expatriate's themselves, and the authors stress the importance of joining various associations and support groups. This is further
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

proven by Thompson (1986) who reports that friendships with other expatriate spouses of the same or different nationality made it easier to overcome feelings of boredom and “redundancy” which was experienced after relocation. The knowledge of not being the only one in the particular situation may improve adjustment for the spouse (Martin, 1997) and help against the stress of culture shock (Brislin, 1981).

Hypothesis 5a: *Social interaction with host nationals will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

Hypothesis 5b: *Social interaction with other expatriate spouses will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

Living conditions may also be an important factor for spouse adjustment (Harvey, 1985), since only 21% of spouses find employment when on assignment (GMAC and NFTC, 2005). Instead, they tend to spend a lot of time engaged in activities related to the home. Therefore, the living conditions are assumed to play an important role when it comes to spouse adjustment, because different and inadequate living conditions will most likely increase the uncertainty concerning daily chores such as cleaning, shopping, food etc. (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Hypothesis 6: *Living conditions equal to home will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.*

Another important in-country factor that could affect the perceived uncertainty with the international assignment and possibly influence the adjustment of the spouse is culture novelty (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Torbiorn, 1982; Black, 1988) i.e., the differences between the host country’s and home-country’s national cultures (Church, 1982; Hofstede, 1980). One of the most cited authors of cultural differences is Hofstede’s (1980) work, where the values that distinguishes one country from another could be grouped into five clusters (i.e., dimensions), in order to measure how culturally apart countries were from one another. Hence, a higher degree of culture novelty will most likely enhance the uncertainty concerning appropriate behaviors (Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). As aforementioned, the spouse usually has a more difficult time in establishing a social network and often ends up socially isolated (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Harvey, 1985)
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

– and this lack of adjustment and feelings of isolation is assumed to increase if the host country culture is extremely different from his/her own home culture (Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Hypothesis 7: A higher degree of culture novelty will have a negative impact on spouse adjustment.

2.2 Personality Characteristics

Personality has proven to be an important predictor of how well individuals adjust to dissimilar cultural settings (Huang, Chi & Lawler, 2005; Shaffer et al., 2006). Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001) developed the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) – an instrument aimed at measuring the traits that are of relevance to the multicultural effectiveness of expatriates. They constructed the MPQ by selecting factors that have appeared consistently across studies and has proven to be relevant for the success of international assignees (Van der Zee & Oudenhoven, 2000).

The instrument is broken down into five components: cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability and flexibility (Ali et al, 2003). In contrast to the most commonly known personality model known as the Big Five (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism), the MPQ is tailored to solely focus on those aspects of traits that are relevant in predicting multicultural success (Oudenhoven & Van der Zee, 2000). The first trait which is probably the most frequently mentioned for cultural effectiveness (e.g., Ruben, 1976; Arthur & Bennett, 1995) is cultural empathy, defined as the ability to emphasize with culturally diverse individuals thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Ruben, 1976). Second, open-mindedness is necessary for acquiring the rules and values of a different culture and is commonly defined as having an unprejudiced and open attitude towards outgroup members and culturally diverse value systems (Ali et al., 2003; Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001). Harris (1973) findings indicate that showing an interest in the local population is one predictor of success. The third MPQ-trait is social initiative, which is defined as taking the initiative to actively approach social situations (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001; Caligiuri, 2000), and the ability to establish interpersonal relationships with HCNs (e.g., Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1978; Hawes & Kealey, 1981). Fourth, emotional stability refers to the ability to remain calm in stressful situations instead of showing strong emotional reactions (e.g., Tung, 1981). Hammer et al (1978) argue that a key dimension of intercultural effectiveness is the ability to deal with psychological
stress – which in their definition includes the ability to effectively deal with stress, anxiety, pressure to conform, divergent political systems, frustration, social alienation and interpersonal conflict. Last, flexibility is defined as the tendency to see unknown situations as a positive challenge rather than a threat (e.g., McCall, 1994) – and for individuals to adapt to these situations accordingly since familiar ways of doing things may not be appropriate in the new culture (Ali et al., 2003). The MPQ instrument was developed for evaluating expatriates, not in relation to the adjustment of spouses – however, Ali et al (2003) argue that the aforementioned personality traits are as valid for spouses as they are for expatriates.

Hypothesis 8: Spouses who score high on cultural empathy, open mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability and flexibility will have an easier time adjusting than spouses who score low.

2.3 Family characteristics and spouse adjustment

The nature of relationships among family members is described by the family system theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988; Minuchin, 1974). Family System Theory can be defined as the family being an example of an open, ongoing, goal-seeking, self-regulating, social system, and that it shares these traits with all systems of this type (Broderick, 1993). Families are systems of interdependent and interconnected individuals. This implies that individuals on an expatriate assignment together with their spouse cannot be understood in isolation from one another but instead need to be thought of as a part of a family (Bowen, 2013). An expatriate assignment incurs a change which requires the family to restructure, develop and adapt as a response to the new country’s different demands, in terms of Family System Theory. If the family can adapt sufficiently to the new foreign environment, it will maintain continuity and alleviate each member's mental growth and intercultural adjustment (Caligiuri et al., 1998). In a study made by Ali, Van Der Zee & Sanders (2003) the authors have focused on three family characteristics that they believe will contribute to adjustment among expatriate spouses, which are cohesion, adaptability and communication. These three dimensions were derived from a conceptual clustering of more than 50 concepts which were developed to describe marital and family dynamics by McCubbin & Patterson (1983). The three concepts were chosen with regards to a study performed by Forster (1997) which showed that the family dimensions of adaptability, cohesion and communication clearly correlated with outcomes of international assignments. Cohesion within a family can be defined as the amount of emotional bonding between the members of the family (Bloom,
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

1985; Olson, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1984). Another definition is offered by McCubbin and Patterson (1983) as they define family cohesion as the degree to which an individual is separated or connected to the family system. It has been shown that the relationship of expatriate spouses with their children became closer by the expatriation period as they had been forced to endure trials and tribulations together during the time (De Cieri et al., 1991).

Hypothesis 9: *The amount of cohesion within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse.*

The second family characteristic mentioned by Ali et al (2003) is family adaptability. Family adaptability has been defined as the ability of a family system to change its power structure, role relationships and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress (Olson et al., 1984). We describe it as the extent to which a family is flexible and able to change. The ability to adapt is critical for a family, both in response to stress from within the family and also in response to stress from the external environment (Caligiuri et al, 1998). A person suffering from homesickness, problems adapting to new friends, or feelings of unsafety due to high rates of crime are all examples of stress created in the external environment. According to family system theory (Hill, 1949; McCubbin 1988; Minuchin, 1974), a family capable of changing its internal relations in response to the demands of the foreign situation will better adapt to the new circumstances (Olson et al., 1984).

Hypothesis 10: *The adaptability of the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse.*

Communication is the third family characteristic. Communication can enable a family to create a shared sense of meaning and maintain harmony and balance in the family. (McCubbin, Thompson, & McCubbin, 1996). According to Caligiuri et al (1998) it refers to the family's ability to resolve conflicts by mutual recognition of different opinions. It is also tightly connected to the other aspects of family systems theory as it enables the effectiveness of the two attributes adaptability and cohesion. The essence of this is that effective communication within a family will result in a healthy level of cohesion and efficient adaptability. (Caligiuri et al., 1998.)
Hypothesis 11: The quality of the communication within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse.

Another factor, seen in the work of Caligiuri et al (1998), is the spillover effect which proposes that a working spouse's experiences from their workplace will affect the home situation as well and on the same note, home experience will influence the expatriate's work life (Aldous, 1969; Crouter, 1984; Piotrkowski, 1979). The spillover effect occurs when a person transmit their attitude from work to home and vice versa. (Belsky, Perry-Jenkins, & Crouter, 1985; Crouter, 1984). In the setting of a global assignment, these attitudes can enhance or decrease the performance of the expatriate, depending on if it is a positive or negative attitude that is present (Barnett, Marshall, & Sayer, 1992; Lambert, 1990). This spillover effect becomes especially important to take into consideration when on a global assignment. This due to when being on a global assignment, the lines between home and work blur due to the involvement of the whole family (Harvey, 1985).

Hypothesis 12: The adjustment of the spouse will be positively correlated to the intercultural adjustment of the expatriate.

Table 1 shows the stated hypotheses which we, with insight from previous theory, deem to be important for spouse host country adjustment. Further, we have constructed a model with these hypotheses (figure 1) in order to visualize their theoretical impact on spouse adjustment. The aforementioned hypotheses have been drawn from previous research streams i.e., anticipatory and in-country adjustment variables, personality characteristics, and family characteristics.
Table 1. Summary of hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis (H)</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1:</td>
<td>Time in the host country, after approximately two months, will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>H2:</td>
<td>Previous international experience will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<td>H3:</td>
<td>A favorable pre-departure opinion will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<td>H4a:</td>
<td>Company provided pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<td>H4b:</td>
<td>Self-initiated pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>H5a:</td>
<td>Social interaction with host nationals will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>H5b:</td>
<td>Social interaction with other expatriate spouses will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
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<tr>
<td>H6:</td>
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<td>H9:</td>
<td>The amount of cohesion within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
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<td>H10:</td>
<td>The adaptability of the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>H11:</td>
<td>The quality of the communication within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>H12:</td>
<td>The adjustment of the spouse will be positively correlated to the intercultural adjustment of the expatriate</td>
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Figure 1 - The three-factor model for spousal adjustment.

Figure 1 is an adaptation of the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire proposed by Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001), the Expatriate’s Family Adjustment proposed by Caligiuri et al. (1998), and on the logic of uncertainty reduction (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Oberg, 1960). The +/- signs in the model denote in what way an answer to a question in our survey on the higher range of a 7-point scale will theoretically affect the integration of the expatriate spouse. This means that a high response regarding cultural novelty (-) will negatively affect the spouse host-country adjustment and correspondingly a high answer on favourable opinion (+) will positively affect the spouse host-country adjustment. Regarding the spillover effect (+/-) it can go both ways were a negative answer will yield an expected low host-country adjustment and vice versa for a positive response.
3. Method

This chapter contains an overview of our research methods. Specifically we will be explaining how we have operationalized our theory, stated hypotheses, and the constructed model we have proposed. In short, this has been done by sending out a questionnaire to employees and their spouses, currently or previously, on expatriate assignments. Preceding the questionnaire we performed a pilot study to test our notions acquired from studying the previous research within the area. This section will also discuss how our choices of research method have affected the validity and reliability of the paper and what actions we have taken to minimize these effects.

3.1 Research design

Our research will be done by applying our model (figure 1) which is an adaptation of the MPQ proposed by Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven (2000, 2001), the Expatriate’s Family Adjustment proposed by Caligiuri et al. (1998), and on the logic of uncertainty reduction (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Oberg, 1960). We have adopted a deductive approach where a number of hypotheses, covering an array of factors which may affect spouse adjustment, were deducted from the theoretical framework. These hypotheses, and the survey we constructed to measure them, were then tested in our pilot study when we interviewed three former expatriate couples. Adjustments to the theory employed and the constructed survey were made after having received feedback from the participants of the pilot study. After doing this we set out contacting companies HR-department to attempt to get in contact with expatriate's and their spouses. We contacted many major companies, both in the private and public sector, in Sweden. Out of 30 contacted companies we gained access to 5 of the companies expatriate spouses and one company’s HR-department was especially helpful in giving additional feedback to our constructed questionnaire, mostly shortening it for convenience of the respondents. We later added two organizations to broaden our sample. The reason we discussed our research and survey with this HR-department was partially to test the feasibility and partially to involve them in the process to gain access to the large amount of respondents that the HR-department had contacts to. After having discussed our survey with the HR-department we proceeded by sending out the survey to the participants and HR-departments. Our paper takes on an explanatory form as we are attempting to explain which factors affect spouse integration and the relationship between the variables (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).
Considering that most of the previous work on the subject (e.g., Copeland & Norell, 2002; Eschbach et al, 2001; Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989) had been done via survey we also chose to employ this strategy as it gives us the opportunity to cover the factors we deem most important from previous research. The survey strategy also gives strength to the results as we can show that a factor proved to be statistically significant, and it is also possible to process the data in a systematic way to find the underlying structures affecting the relationship between the chosen factors and integration of the spouse. The surveys were based on questions to be answered on a 7-point scale, in accordance with the previous mentioned authors work within the area and insights from James Sallis, statistical advisor for the Department of Business Studies at Uppsala University. The 7-point scale is deemed more suitable as psychometric literature suggests that having more points is better (with a diminishing return after 11 points) (Nunnally, 1978) as respondents require answers that reflect how they feel. If the survey was to fail in offering enough response choices, measurement errors could occur as the respondents would have been forced to answer either higher or lower than they actually wanted. (Measuring Usability, 2013.)

A survey strategy enables us to collect quantitative data that then can be analyzed quantitatively. This strategy hands us more control over the research process (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, a survey enables future research to be compared to what our research shows if a similar study was to be performed. This means that a survey strategy is beneficial for future research and comparability. Saunders et al (2009) states that surveys can be used to investigate the underlying reasons for relationships between variables and to display models of these relationships. The survey also lets us test how well our stated hypotheses apply to reality. We chose to formulate hypotheses to be able to include the most important parts of the work done by previous authors on the subject.

### 3.2 Pilot study

A pilot study can simply be viewed as a feasibility study, aimed to guide the planning of a larger investigation. A quote that catches the importance of a pilot study well is that “you never test the depth of a river with both feet” (Thabane, Ma, Chu, Cheng, Ismaila, Rios, Robson, Thabane, Giangregorio & Goldsmith, p.1, 2010). The main goal of the pilot study is to assess feasibility in order to avoid future problems when the main study is conducted. Additionally, pilot studies are practically an essential prerequisite, and performing a pilot study prior to the main study will most likely enhance the likelihood of success of the main
study (Thabane et al., 2010). After having examined a wide array of theory, we chose to test our initial notions through a small pilot study where we interviewed three couples, previously on several international assignments. These three couples were granted access to by prior relations of ours and had all repatriated successfully. Through the interviews, we gained a better sense of the validity of the constructed hypotheses, and we also added an additional hypothesis (Hypothesis 5b) since all three couples mentioned that social interaction with other expatriate spouses had a positive impact on their adjustment process. Later on, we had follow up sessions with the three couples when they filled out our constructed questionnaire which gave us a sense of the estimated time it would take for spouses to participate in our research. Based on the participants opinions, we chose to remove parts of the intended theory that was deemed irrelevant. We also chose to remove some questions after receiving complaints from the participants in our pilot study as they thought that the questionnaire was too time consuming. In order for us to construct a shorter version of our initial questionnaire, it was important for us to develop some sort of criteria to reduce the number of items measured. Therefore, we looked up definitions of the independent variables (e.g., cultural empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability, communication, cohesion, adaptability) and only kept questions that reflected the definitions. We are fully aware that the reliability and validity of our paper will decrease by doing so, however, sometimes changes are necessary in order to receive a higher response rate (Hoonakker, Carayon & Loushine, 2010).

3.3 Sample
This study investigates which factors affect the host-country adjustment of the spouse during an expatriate assignment, in order to gain a better understanding of the situation for the expatriate spouse when a company is contemplating such an assignment. To be able to answer this 30 companies were contacted in many different types of business areas regarding the possibility of sending out a questionnaire to their expatriate employees’ spouse. The companies contacted were chosen based on a list of the largest companies active in Sweden (Largest Companies, 2013). From this list we chose to contact the companies we believed to have employees on international assignments, meaning that we have used a sub-set of the original list. Except from these contacted companies we also contacted people that we had personal relations to, working for both Swedish and international companies, to be able to gain access to expatriate spouses within their companies. In the end we secured the participation of expatriate spouses from seven different organizations, active within both the
public and private sector. This type of approach is to be regarded as convenience sampling where subjects have been picked based on availability and convenience of obtaining the data (Saunders et al., 2009). There are many biases that occur when employing this approach due to, as in this case, the subjects do not necessarily constitute a fair generalization of the entire population of expatriate spouses. Additionally, since the participants could choose themselves whether to participate in our study or not, there is also a possibility that our results may be affected due to the risk of differences between individuals who choose to participate and those who choose not to. Further, our sample consists of expatriate spouses from various countries, with the largest portion being Swedish, living in many different countries ranging from Cambodia to USA. Even though our sample is quite broad, the population used in our research may be considered too heterogeneous for our sample to be a fair representation of the full population which will have a negative effect on the generalizability of our results.

25 of the companies that were contacted declined participation in the study stating that the human resource (HR) department, or the expatriate employees spouses, lack the time to answer the survey. By not being able to include these companies and expatriate spouses in our research, it may have affected our results as their decline can be interpreted as a result of numerous reasons e.g. the HR-department believing that there is no interest from the expatriate spouses, it not having direct access to the spouses, it not deeming the potential results of the study worthy of spending time on. This is a limitation we unfortunately cannot adjust for more than being aware of it and using it when discussing the results in the final parts of our paper. Another issue worthy of mentioning is the fact that a portion of the companies participating in the study did not give direct contact with the respondents but instead distributed the survey themselves. This gave the effect that we were not allowed to get rates for response values since the exact amount of expatriate spouses that were exposed to the survey remain unknown. However, in previous research many authors do not report their response rate which leads to the conclusion that the lack of this value must not lead to dismissal of the results we acquire (e.g., Copeland & Norrell, 2002; Eschbach et al, 2001).

Another complicating factor with our sample is that we have only been able to include the people currently on an assignment abroad or that have repatriated successfully. This will make the results of our study true for the people that have been successful. An interesting alternative approach would have been to look at the people that have failed on assignments and see how their answers differ to the ones obtained in this study. This is duly noted by us and will be discussed in the final parts of our paper.
As aforementioned, even though our sample may be considered as too heterogeneous which negatively affects the generalizability of our results, we have intentionally targeted companies within both services and products as well as companies in both the public and private sector, in order to strengthen our results. The fact that this research has been lacking since the early 1990’s gives weight to the argument that even though the sample is of the non-statistical convenience type, the results will still give important focus to this topic and may encourage further investigation. Also, the importance of the results for future expatriate spouses, alone, is significant for practitioners and future research. Additionally, we believe that by combining previous research, we will provide a fuller picture of what factors that may be important for spouse host country adjustment. We hope that this will aid both companies and individuals when contemplating international assignments.

3.4 Ethical issues

Throughout the work of this thesis we have actively worked to bear in mind the different ethical issues that arise when doing this type of work. This was especially important when constructing our survey and we received feedback from both our peers and the HR-department that the questions could be experienced as a bit personal. We therefore took precautions by changing the order of the survey to have the most general questions first and lead down to the more personal ones to gain the trust of the respondent, and by this attempted to minimize the discomfort, embarrassment, and harm for the participating respondents (Saunders, 2009).

When designing our research project we came to the conclusion that the information we were interested in could be classified as sensitive for both the respondents and the company their spouse belongs to. For this reason we ensured full anonymity of the respondents and gave participating companies the option to be nameless in the finished thesis, an option taken by all companies. Another issue when contacting companies to participate was to make sure to include full information of what we intended to research and what we required from them and their expatriate spouses for them not to give consent to anything that they were not fully informed of. Overall we believe that the ethical precautions we have taken are sufficient for our research and the issues have not harmed neither respondents nor the thesis.
3.5 The process

Figure 2 is a graphical illustration of the different stages we have passed through when performing the study at hand. The initial survey has been modified, shortened, and most of all improved in the various stages to better fit the purpose of the paper. The modification and improvement parts are also true for the theory section of the paper as we have modified it to fit the issues raised of both the HR-department and the couples from the pilot study.

3.6 Measures

In this section we review the measuring of the included variables in our study. SPSS, a statistical software package, has been used to be able to employ analysis on the dataset. The main method we have used is to build a regression model around our variables in order to see how well they explain the adjustment of the spouse. We also performed a t-test on the spill-over effect between expatriate and spouse adjustment. Regression analysis is a statistical method employed by several previous researchers within the area (e.g., Black & Gregersen, 1991; Caligiuri et al, 1998) and is used for estimating the relationships between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables (Freedman, 2005). We will also add interaction variables to determine if any of our stated hypotheses are more important than the other. In regards to multiple linear regression, an interaction implies a change in the regression of Y on X from one value of one of our independent variables to another. The change of the slope is quantified at different values and will let us determine if there are interaction effects between the variables. (Burrill, 2002) In layman terms what we will be looking for is if there is any effect that occurs when combining our variables by multiplying
them with each other to create new ones and observe what effect the new variable has on spousal adjustment.

### 3.6.1 Demographic variables

111 responses were collected from spouses located all over the world (e.g., Malaysia, Russia, Sweden, India, Australia, Colombia, France). Out of these 111 responses, 105 were deemed usable for data analysis since the remaining six were not filled out correctly in the questionnaire and could therefore not be used in the following analysis. The participants were located, or had been located, in 30 different countries, the majority in India (22.0%), United States of America (16.2%), and the Netherlands (8.6%). The participants were in majority female 75.2%; 24.8% were male. In terms of age, 17.1% were aged between 20 and 30 years, 43.0% between 31 and 40 years, 30.0% between, 41 and 50 years, 7.7% between 51 and 60 years and 2.9% above 60 years. Of the respondents, the typical family in the sample consisted of 3.5 members and the expatriate spouse had on average been in the host country for 23 months, with extreme values of 1 and 84 months. Due to the large variation of time in host country we chose to transform this data into a dummy variable which was coded as 1 if the spouse had been in the country for three months or less and 0 for any longer period than so. We chose to do this in order to be able to capture the potential cultural shock and the theorised hypothesis of the spouse adjusting better over time.

### 3.6.2 Spouse Adjustment

**Psychological- and General Adjustment**

Cross-cultural adjustment can be defined as the process of adaptation to living in another culture. It is the perceived degree of familiarity and psychological comfort an individual has with the new foreign culture (Black, 1988; Black et al., 1991). One could therefore say that according to this definition, cross-cultural adjustment depends both on psychological adjustment and on general adjustment to the external environment in the host country. We have therefore chosen to combine items drawn from two measures i.e., the satisfaction with life scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) which measures the psychological adjustment, and general adjustment from Black & Stephens (1989). The SWLS refers to general satisfaction with life e.g., “I am satisfied with my life” (+) where participants could respond on a 7-point scale ranging from [1] strongly disagree to [7] strongly agree. Spouse adjustment to the external environment in the host country was measured by asking...
the participants to indicate how well adjusted they were to a number of areas of life in the host country e.g., living conditions, health care facilities etc. The respondents could give their answers on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from [1] not adjusted at all; [7] completely adjusted. Even though there is rich literature supporting the validity of using a single-item to measure life satisfaction (Andrews & Robinson, 1991), we have chosen to use several items to overcome the statistical issues that occur when using ordinal level data to perform calculations. This due to us not knowing the variance of our investigated population and that this population can be expected to display a high variance as they live worldwide and are from many different countries. By combining several different measures of our dependent variable, which is a variable on the ordinal scale, we aim to achieve a variable of normal distribution to be able to perform parametric statistical tests. Parametric statistical tests are to be preferred as they are the more powerful alternative in comparison to non-parametric tests (Allen & Seaman, 2007) These measures were then added and used to obtain an average score. The estimate of the internal reliability of the scale for spouse adjustment suggested that it was reliable (5 items \( \alpha = 0.744 \)). The alpha value is a measure of how closely related the items are as a group and if they are fitted to be grouped together into one measure (Cronbach, 1951). To be able to measure the hypothesized spill-over effect we included a question for the spouse to answer regarding how he/she perceives his/her spouse to be adjusted with the same alternatives as for other questions regarding his/her adjustment.

3.6.3 Multicultural Personality Questionnaire

**Individual factors**

Van Der Zee and Van Oudenhoven (2000) developed the multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) for predicting multicultural effectiveness among expatriates. Van Der Zee et al (2012) later developed a shorter version of this test due to the original 91-item version not always being practical, particularly in studies that incorporate several variables measured. In the new MPQ short form (MPQ-SF) the authors chose to include only 40 items while simultaneously achieving a fit index of 94%. Van Der Zee et al (2012) argue that short versions should be regarded with caution, since long versions are not developed without a reason. However, they conclude that the data from using the MPQ-SF provide enough support for justifying further use in future research settings. From the MPQ-SF we extracted the ten most relevant questions to measure the respondents personality characteristics.
The questionnaire gives data for the respondents’ answers when questioned regarding following subjects; cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, flexibility, and social initiative. An example of a question included in the questionnaire is “Tries to understand other people’s behavior” which a positive answer to will increase the respondent’s score on the cultural empathy scale. An example of a question where a positive answer will lower the cultural empathy scale is “Finds it hard to empathize with others”. A similar example from the social initiative scale is “Takes initiatives” in which a positive answer will increase the social initiative total score and “Is a slow starter” in which a positive answer will decrease the social initiative total score. A similar example from the flexibility scale is “Works according to plan” in which a positive answer will increase the flexibility total score. An example from the emotional stability scale is the question “Is under pressure” where a positive answer will lower the score of emotional stability. An example from the open mindedness scale is the question “Has feeling for what is appropriate in culture” where a positive answer will increase the score of open mindedness. We have chosen to not translate this test into Swedish because of two reasons. First being that all respondents, both expatriate's and spouses, are not fluent in Swedish. Second, that the test has been widely tested (Van Der Zee et al., 2012) and changing the language of it will make it less valid due to misinterpretation by the translators. We also believe that the non-native English speaking respondents know the English language well enough to be able to understand all questions (Special Eurobarometer, 2006).

These measures were then added and used to obtain an average score on the MPQ. The estimate of the internal reliability of the scale for the MPQ suggested that it was reliable (10 items \( \alpha = 0.721 \))

### 3.6.4 Family Characteristics

To be able to draw conclusions from the proposed theory regarding family characteristics we have chosen scales for cohesion, adaptability and communication from Olson et al (1992). In line with Ali et al. (2003), we chose items to include that are in line with the type of situation an expatriate and her/his spouse find themselves in when in a new country. Five items were used to measure the amount of bonding between members of the family, in this paper called cohesion. An example of such an item is “Family members ask each other for help”. Five items were also chosen to measure the adaptability of the family. An example of such an item is “Different persons act as the leader in our family”. Five items were used to measure the
communication between members of the family. An example of such an item is “Family members are very good listeners”. These three characteristics results were measured with the 7-point answering scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). For us to be able to measure the spill-over effect within the family we used the spouse answer to the question “How well adjusted do you perceive your expatriate spouse to be to the new country?” and saw how it correlated to the answer to the same question regarding the spouse. The questions regarding the family characteristics of cohesion and adaptability were obtained from the FACES-III, a scale developed by Olson, Portner, and Lavee (1985) to measure the adaptability and cohesion dimensions within a family by assessing how members of the family perceive their family. The FACES-III has proved to have good content and construct validity (Olson et al, 1985). The communication was measured by a subset of the 10-item scale which was also constructed by Olson, this time together with Barnes (1985). These measures were then added and used to obtain an average score on each respective family characteristic. The estimate of the internal reliability of the scale for each respective family characteristic were partially reliable (family communication 5 items alpha=0.772; family adaptability 5 items alpha=0.651; family cohesion 5 items alpha=0.682).

3.6.5 Uncertainty factors

We have, in line with Black & Stephens (1989), used the measurements of Torbjorn (1982) to be able to see which factors are important for spouse adjustment. After our pre-study of expatriate couples we also chose to construct two questions which seemed to be important to those couples. These were “Socializing with other expatriates and their spouses” and “Interacting with other expatriates and their spouses on a day to day basis” which were used to form hypothesis 5b. These were virtually identical to those used by Torbiorn (1982) with the difference of changing HCNs to expatriate and their spouses.

Time in the host country was measured by asking spouses how many months they had been in the country for the expatriate assignment. This factor was used to obtain a dummy variable where respondents answering 3 months or lower were coded as 1 while the other received 0. The data was transformed into a dummy variable due to the fact that the series was skewed with few people being there for a short time (1-2 months) and the majority of respondents being in the country for more than 20 months. This was done as the theory suggests that the respondents being there for a shorter period of time will not yet have adjusted as well as those expatriate spouses that have been present in the country for a longer period of time.
Previous international experience was measured by asking spouses for the total number of months of international experience they had. We also asked the respondent to state (in percent) how much of their previous international experience was of the holiday type.

A favorable pre-departure opinion was measured by asking spouses to indicate to what extent they were in favor of the international assignment prior to leaving the home-country. This was constructed as a single-item question on a 7-point scale ([1] Highly unfavorable; [7] Highly favorable).

Company-provided training was measured by asking spouses of how many hours of company provided pre-departure training they had received, and self-initiated training was measured by asking spouses of how many hours they had spent themselves on pre-departure training prior to the international assignment.

Social interaction with host nationals/Social interaction with other expatriates and their spouses was measured by asking spouses to what extent they were adjusted of socializing with host nationals/other expatriates and their spouses, and if they did so on a day to day basis. These questions were summarized and an average was calculated for both socializing and interacting with other expatriate's and HCNs respectively. The scale showed an acceptable reliability (expatriate interaction and socializing 2 items alpha=0,862; HCNs interaction and socializing 2 items alpha=0,827)

Living conditions was measured by asking spouses to indicate on a 7-point scale whether they thought the living conditions in the host country held a standard equal to what they had prior the assignment ([1] Completely disagree; [7] Completely agree). It is somewhat of a weakness that this question only measures up until at least as satisfied and does not include how much happier the spouse is with their new living conditions. The measurement is from Torbjorn (1982) and is deemed to still be of value for the paper as it still captures valuable information.

Culture Novelty was measured by adopting eight items from Torbiorn (1982), and spouses were asked to indicate, on a 7-point scale, how similar/different the host country culture was from their home country culture ([1] Completely disagree; [7] Completely agree).

These measures were then added and used to obtain an average score of the culture novelty. The estimate of the internal reliability of the scale for the culture novelty suggested that it was reliable (8 items alpha=0,843).

To be able to research if there was any interaction effect between our independent variables we also created interaction variables by multiplying them with each other. This means that we
used each of our 11 independent variables (we also included the spillover effect, thus making it 12) to create 78 new variables.
4. Results

Prior to analyzing our set of data we have assumed that our data is normally distributed. This has been done to be able to run the multiple regression and t-test to test our hypotheses. (Mortkoff, 2013) Even if the data is not normally distributed the results will give an indication of the reality and will be important for future research.

Our first step was to look at the variables and how the responses ranged. The descriptive statistics of the data set can be seen in table 2 where we also can see the variation and standard deviation of the data. We see that the variables mean we have measured using the Likert-scale range from 4,39 (culture novelty) up to 5,7 (positive pre-move opinion). We see that our average spouse has been in the country for 23 months and that he/she has previously had 28 months of international experience, although both of these variables have a high standard deviation (16,3 and 23,3). We also see that the average spouse has received 3,5 hours of company provided training and spent 16,1 hours on self-initiated training, also these measures have a very high standard deviation (8,8 and 20,7). Proceeding from this step we chose to create several scatter plots of the adjustment of the spouse versus our respective independent variables and saw that all relationships appeared to be of linear type and we therefore concluded that there is no violation to the assumption of linearity.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics of the data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range Statistic</th>
<th>Minimum Statistic</th>
<th>Maximum Statistic</th>
<th>Mean Statistic</th>
<th>Std. Deviation Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Spouse adjustment</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,33</td>
<td>,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Months in country of</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>23,07</td>
<td>16,277</td>
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<tr>
<td>assignment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Months of previous int.</td>
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<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>27,98</td>
<td>23,256</td>
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<tr>
<td>exp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Positive pre-move opinion</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,70</td>
<td>1,270</td>
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<td>5. Company training</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3,50</td>
<td>8,814</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Self-initiated training</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>16,16</td>
<td>20,742</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Interaction with HCN</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,32</td>
<td>1,574</td>
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<td>8. Interaction with expats</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,38</td>
<td>1,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Living conditions</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5,38</td>
<td>1,450</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Culture novelty</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4,39</td>
<td>1,236</td>
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<td>11. MPQ</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4,84</td>
<td>1,666</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Family cohesion</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>13. Family flexibility</td>
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<td>14. Family communication</td>
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<td>15. Spill-over effect</td>
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<td>1,323</td>
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</table>
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

Our second step was to insert all variables into a correlation matrix (see table 3) to be able to examine the correlations among the variables. The results obtained from this matrix pointed to several relationships of interest. Pre-departure opinion, interaction with HCNs, interaction with other expats, living conditions, MPQ, family cohesion, and communication were all positively and significantly related to spouse adjustment (7 of the 13 variables, which are the ones that are noted with a * or ** depending on if they are significant on the 5 % or 1 % significance level). Cultural Novelty and time in host country were significantly negatively correlated to spouse adjustment (2 of the 13 variables). Only the number of months of previous international experience, company training, self-initiated training, and family adaptability were not significantly correlated to spouse adjustment. As can be seen in table 3 we have some independent variables that correlate to each other (the correlation numbers noted with a * or two **) which potentially could be a problem when running regression procedures on the data set. This is duly noted and to ensure our multiple regression model is not affected by this we performed a test for multicollinearity by looking at the variance inflation factor (VIF) which all gave values lower than the cut off value of 2.5 (Allison, 2012), thus ensuring the validity of our data for further analysis. The results of the VIF-statistic can be seen in table 4 in the column named VIF.

Table 3 Correlation matrix

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<tbody>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dummy for months in host country</td>
<td>-0.261**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Months of previous int. exp.</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Positive pre-move perception</td>
<td>0.537*</td>
<td>-0.587**</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Company training</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.125</td>
<td>-0.262</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-initiated training</td>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>-0.200</td>
<td>0.014*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interaction with HCN</td>
<td>0.294*</td>
<td>-0.297*</td>
<td>0.361*</td>
<td>0.346*</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Interaction with expats</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>-0.377*</td>
<td>0.301*</td>
<td>0.346*</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Living conditions</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>-0.176</td>
<td>-0.141</td>
<td>-0.277</td>
<td>0.003</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Culture novelty</td>
<td>-0.251</td>
<td>0.149</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>-0.262</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. MPQ</td>
<td>0.107</td>
<td>-0.494**</td>
<td>0.541*</td>
<td>0.507</td>
<td>0.147</td>
<td>0.445</td>
<td>0.459*</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Family cohesion</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>-0.175</td>
<td>0.303</td>
<td>0.444</td>
<td>-0.108</td>
<td>-0.150</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>0.407*</td>
<td>0.135</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.158</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Family flexibility</td>
<td>0.094</td>
<td>-0.189</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>-0.754</td>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>-0.207</td>
<td>0.155</td>
<td>0.417</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0.284*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Family</td>
<td>0.232</td>
<td>-0.249</td>
<td>-0.322</td>
<td>0.281</td>
<td>-0.016</td>
<td>-0.168</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.442*</td>
<td>0.204</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
<td>0.114</td>
<td>0.284*</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
To further investigate the strength of the relationship between our hypothesized independent variables and the adjustment of the expatriate spouse we conducted a regression analysis. The results of this regression analysis are available in table 4 and 5. The 13 independent variables (12 measuring the spouse adjustment and 1 for the spill-over effect) accounted for a large and significant portion of the variance for expatriate spouse adjustment (Adjusted R²=0.541, p<0.001), visible in table 5.

The results indicated that living conditions, culture novelty, MPQ, and family cohesions all had a positive impact on expatriate spouse adjustment, as can be seen in the column named ”Sig.” in table 5. A number lower than 0.1 indicates that the variable is significant for the model. Also, table 4 indicates that the dummy variable for time in host country shows a negative correlation which implies that having spent shorter time than 4 months will affect spouse adjustment negatively which can be seen in the first column named ”B”. Additionally, culture novelty also predicts negative effects on spouse adjustment due to the negative coefficient in column ”B”, indicating that the more novel a culture is, the harder it will be to adjust. Family adaptability gives a negative coefficient which is not in line with our assumptions and is therefore removed from the next part of the regression analysis. However, previous international experience, company training, self-initiated training, interaction with HCNs, interaction with expats, and family communication were not significant in the multiple regression model as they had significance level larger than 0.1. It is also worth to be aware of the fact that we could not see any significant difference to the degree of explanation when including a variable dividing the respondents gender. This was the case for both the full model and the slimmed one including only the significant variables.
Table 4 Multiple regression model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>.220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dummy for months</td>
<td>-.990</td>
<td>.372</td>
<td>-.259</td>
<td>-2.057</td>
<td>.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Months of prev. int. exp.</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>-.049</td>
<td>-.671</td>
<td>.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Positive pre-move</td>
<td>.130</td>
<td>.074</td>
<td>.163</td>
<td>1.766</td>
<td>.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Company training</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.430</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-initiated training</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>.089</td>
<td>1.152</td>
<td>.252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Interaction with HCN</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.363</td>
<td>.725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Interaction with expats</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.018</td>
<td>.190</td>
<td>.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Living conditions</td>
<td>.141</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>.201</td>
<td>2.811</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Culture novelty</td>
<td>-.159</td>
<td>.050</td>
<td>-.198</td>
<td>-2.742</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. MPG</td>
<td>.283</td>
<td>.014</td>
<td>.185</td>
<td>2.111</td>
<td>.037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Family cohesion</td>
<td>.042</td>
<td>.019</td>
<td>.264</td>
<td>2.800</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Family flexibility</td>
<td>-.164</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>-.172</td>
<td>-2.261</td>
<td>.026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Family communication</td>
<td>.132</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>1.406</td>
<td>.163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Dependent Variable: Avg/AI

Table 5 Summary of multiple regression model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.774²</td>
<td>.598</td>
<td>.541</td>
<td>.059</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Proceeding from this we performed another multiple regression analysis, only including the variables that were deemed significant in the first run to see what portion of the variance we could explain by doing this. The results for this regression are visible in table 6 and 7 where we see that all but one variable, positive pre-move opinion which is on the verge of significance, are significant, visible in the column named "Sig." in table 6. We also see in table 7 that the model explains 52.9% of the variance in the dataset. Comparing this degree of explanation to that of previous research we see that this model holds up well to previous research (Black & Gregersen, 1991, R2 of 30%, Stroh et al., 1994, could explain 46% of the variance in their data set).
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

Table 6 Multiple regression model including only significant variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Coefficientsa</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Collinearity Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>1,610</td>
<td>0,860</td>
<td>1,872</td>
<td>0,084</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dummy for months</td>
<td>-1,164</td>
<td>0,343</td>
<td>-3,395</td>
<td>0,001</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Positive pre-move opinion</td>
<td>0,118</td>
<td>0,073</td>
<td>0,147</td>
<td>1,823</td>
<td>0,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Living conditions</td>
<td>0,138</td>
<td>0,050</td>
<td>0,197</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>0,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Culture novelty</td>
<td>-0,154</td>
<td>0,057</td>
<td>-0,192</td>
<td>-2,720</td>
<td>0,006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>MPA</td>
<td>0,269</td>
<td>0,124</td>
<td>0,196</td>
<td>2,409</td>
<td>0,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Family cohesion</td>
<td>0,300</td>
<td>0,098</td>
<td>0,231</td>
<td>3,041</td>
<td>0,003</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Summary of multiple regression model in table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model Summary</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0,740a</td>
<td>0,556</td>
<td>0,529</td>
<td>0,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To be able to test whether there was a spillover effect between spouse adjustment and perception of expatriate adjustment we tested the correlation between the two variables and also performed a paired sample test to see if there was a significant difference between the means of the two variables. The correlation is seen in the top half of table 8 where we conclude that the variables are significantly correlated (correlation=0,434, p<0,001). The paired sample test is seen in the bottom half of table 8 where we see that we cannot reject that there is a difference between the variables (p=0,128) and can therefore not say that there is a difference between the means of expatriate spouse adjustment and perception of expatriate adjustment.
To be able to investigate if there were any interaction effects between the variables we also constructed numerous different models attempting to include our constructed interaction factors. When doing this we succeeded in achieving significance for two of our variables coefficients when using family cohesion as the interaction variable. The results of the regression can be seen in table 9 where we see that the coefficients for the interaction effect between family cohesion and positive pre-move opinion and between family cohesion and living conditions are statistically significant for our model (seen in the column named “Sig.” to the far right, 0,4 % and 2,8 % respectively). The coefficients in this model should not be interpreted as how they change our dependent variable, adjustment of the spouse. They should instead be interpreted as conditional relationships. The betas for all variables except the interaction effects reflect what a one unit increase or decrease will do to the adjustment level if all else is zero. The betas for the interaction between cohesion and positive pre-move perception and living conditions respectively represent the effect in that it estimates the change in the slope of adjustment on cohesion given a one unit change in positive pre-move perception/living conditions (or, conversely, the change in the slope of adjustment on positive pre-move perception/living conditions given a one unit change of cohesion). The summary of this regression model is available in table 10 where we can see that we have increased our degree of explanation to 58 % (seen in the column named “Adjusted R Square”).
Table 9 Regression model including interaction effect

Table 10 Summary of regression model including interaction effect

In table 11 we have gathered the stated hypotheses and added whether the data supported or did not support them.
### Table 11. Summary of the results of data analysis on our hypothesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Supported/Not supported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1:</td>
<td>Time in the host country, after approximately two months, will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2:</td>
<td>Previous international experience will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3:</td>
<td>A favorable pre-departure opinion will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment.</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4a:</td>
<td>Company provided pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4b:</td>
<td>Self-initiated pre-departure training will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5a:</td>
<td>Social interaction with host nationals will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5b:</td>
<td>Social interaction with other expatriate spouses will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6:</td>
<td>Living conditions equal to home will have a positive impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7:</td>
<td>A higher degree of culture novelty will have a negative impact on spouse adjustment</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8:</td>
<td>Spouses who score high on cultural empathy, open mindedness, social initiative, emotional stability and flexibility will have an easier time adjusting than spouses who score low</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9:</td>
<td>The amount of cohesion within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10:</td>
<td>The adaptability of the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11:</td>
<td>The quality of the communication within the expatriate family will be positively related to the intercultural adjustment of the spouse</td>
<td>Not supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12:</td>
<td>The adjustment of the spouse will be positively correlated to the intercultural adjustment of the expatriate</td>
<td>Supported</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. Analysis

This study was conducted in order to empirically examine theoretical variables that historically relate to spouse host country adjustment, and to see if these variables are still valid today. The results suggest that factors related to anticipatory and in-country factors, personality traits, and family characteristics are relevant with regards to spouse host country adjustment.

5.1 Time in host country

As stated in the theory section of the paper, Oberg (1960) conceptualized cultural shock as a consequence of the strain and anxiety that seemed to occur from contact with an unfamiliar culture – and the feelings of loss and confusion resulting from losing all, or most, familiar cultural cues and social rules (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Rhinesmith, 1985). Oberg (1960) claims that individuals on international assignments seem to move through various stages when experiencing cultural shock, typically depicted as a “U” shaped curve where the most difficult period (i.e., crisis phase) for the individual occurs after an initial period characterized by enthusiasm, fascination, and idealization about the new culture i.e., “honeymoon” phase (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963; Torbiorn, 1982). Initially, our results did not portray a “U” curve pattern neither was hypothesis 1 supported when we used the total number of months the spouse had been located in the host country as measurement. One potential explanation may be that the the honeymoon stage was not highly represented in the current sample. Our study did not provide support for the “U” curve, but it did provide support for the notion that spouse adjustment will enhance after approximately three months. Simply, an expatriate spouse that has stayed in the host country for more time than three months will have improved their skills to be able to handle and navigate through the uncertainties of the new culture. Another potential reason why our initial results did not portray a “U” curve pattern may be that the majority of our respondents were Swedes, and in this subset, a majority were located in India and The United States – two quite different countries compared to Sweden (Hofstede, 1980). Our results indicate that there is a significant negative correlation between spouse host country adjustment and culture novelty. Black & Stephens (1989) and Black & Gregersen (1991) argue that a higher degree of culture novelty will most likely enhance the uncertainty concerning appropriate behaviors, and the lack of spouse host country adjustment might therefore enhance if the host country culture is extremely different from the home country of
the spouse. It is possible that the effects of the first phase, often characterized by idealization and fascination of the new culture since the individual has not yet had time to cope with the local culture in a substantial way and on its own terms, might diminish considerably when the host country culture is extremely different from the home country culture. Hence, the individual might skip the initial phase, and instead experience the “crisis” phase when entering the new culture.

5.2 Previous International experience

It has been argued that the more accurate expectations individuals can form of the host country prior to the move, the better the individuals adjustment will be once entering the new culture (Church, 1982; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991). Hence, accurate expectations will result in fewer negative surprises in the host country and more appropriate behaviors, which will lead to a smoother host country adjustment (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Black & Gregersen, 1991). In neither the correlation matrix or the regression model proposed could we find any significant relationship between spouse adjustment and months of previous international experience. Previous authors (Black & Gregersen, 1991) also experienced a lack of significance when testing the relevance of previous international experience for host-country adjustment and suggested that it could be of value to differentiate if the previous experience was work related, or if it was not work related e.g., holiday. Therefore, we asked the respondents to state (in percent) how much of their earlier experience was of the holiday type. Even when dividing this variable between previous international experience of the holiday type and other types of international experience we could not find any significant correlation to the adjustment of the spouse. A potential explanation for this non-results could for example be that spouses from Sweden living and working in e.g. Norway might not be able to extrapolate from this experience when moving to e.g. India where the cultural differences may be perceived as larger (Hofstede, 1980). Simply, one could argue that for the previous experience to be relevant, it must derive from the same, or at least a similar, culture to the one the spouse will enter.

The lack of significance could also stem from the fact that in the dataset there was a large variation of responses regarding how much time had previously been spent abroad, from none at all up to 10 years. This largely complicates the possibility of drawing any conclusions from the data and it could be that there is a relationship there but that we simply do not have enough observations to illustrate it.
5.3 Favourable pre-departure opinion

In our theory research we found that an important factor for cross-cultural adjustment is an individual’s own motivation to proceed and move abroad (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Winkelman, 1994). A positive attitude towards an international assignment is said to enable the family to worry less about the future and instead enable them to spend time on learning how to adjust (Feldman & Thompson, 1993; Wiggins-Frame & Shehan, 1994). When testing this factor we found that it correlates significantly to spouse host country adjustment, and that it is a significant variable in the proposed regression model. This result is in line with what was hypothesised, that a favorable pre-departure opinion will increase the adjustment of the spouse when located in the new country. This is another important result for both companies and spouses to be aware of, that a positive mind-set will increase the chances of a successful integration. However, it is also important to give the spouse realistic expectations. Previous research (Black et al., 1991) has shown that an over-optimistic pre-departure opinion which is not fulfilled when present in the new country, will lead to a disappointed spouse which feels cheated and will lose motivation to adjust to the new country. Another important fact to take notice to is that the pre-departure opinion correlated to both interaction with other expatriate's and HCNs, and to the MPQ. This could be interpreted in many ways. One would be that a spouse that is motivated to move is also motivated to interact with other people in the new country and by that will more quickly learn how to act in the new culture. Interacting with HCNs will, according to Black & Gregersen (1991), lead to better understanding of the host culture and act as guidance for appropriate behaviours and differences in culture. Regarding the MPQ it could be that a person that scores highly on the test, especially on the parts regarding social initiative, open mindedness, and cultural empathy, is the positive type of person who takes new challenges as an opportunity to excel and learn something new. These traits are important for different reasons, open mindedness regards the ability to learn the rules and values of a different culture, social initiative is important to establish personal relationships with both HCNs and other expatriate's, and cultural empathy is a necessity to emphasize with people from other cultures (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001). The most problematic fact with this measure is that it is not measured preceding the move, instead we had to ask how they remembered their feeling before they made the move. Their answers can thus be influenced by their current state of mind, which has the effect that a currently happy spouse will most likely reminisce their
pre-departure feelings as positive. Therefore, it would have been better to ask for the spouse’s pre-move opinion before moving abroad.

5.4 Company provided and self initiated training

It has been argued that pre-departure training e.g., attribution training, cultural awareness training, interaction training, language training, and didactic training (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009) may provide the individual with information about the new cultural environment – which is assumed to increase the predictability of unfamiliar situations as well as aiding in how to interact with HCNs (Black & Mendenhall, 1990).

Pre-departure training, both company provided and self-initiated, were hypothesised to facilitate spouse adjustment by decreasing the pre-move uncertainty about the new country. An insufficient amount was also believed to be damaging instead of helping as it creates unrealistic expectations, which may increase the cultural shock experienced by expatriate spouses (Black et al., 1991). In the data set that we obtained, we could neither find significant correlations between spouse adjustment and company provided training nor self-initiated training. These variables also did not provide significant coefficients in the proposed regression model. It seems that training does not matter for the success of the expatriate spouses in our data set, however, only 20% of our respondents received any type of training from companies, and they only received an average of 3.5 hours of training. We are aware that drawing conclusions from this limited sub-set (21 respondents) is not statistically plausible but we believe that a discussion of the result is still of interest. One possible explanation could therefore be that the training they did receive was simply not enough for host country preparation, which therefore gave an insignificant result. Another possible explanation could be that the effectiveness of various types of training e.g., cognitive-behavior modification training, cultural awareness training, and language training (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009) might vary depending on the country of the international assignment, individual characteristics, and situational factors. For example, cognitive behavior modification training where an individual receives training in developing the desired habitual behaviors of the host culture and to identify the behaviors which needs to be avoided, might be more important when the international assignment is located in China than for example England.
5.5 Interaction with others in country

Once the individual arrives in the new country, the degree of social interaction with HCNs is argued to positively affect the adjustment process of the spouse (Black & Gregersen, 1991). The expatriate usually arrives with a predefined role and an established social network with host nationals at work, while the spouse usually has a harder time establishing a social network with host nationals – and as a consequence often ends up socially isolated (Shaffer & Harrison, 2001; Harvey, 1985). Interaction with both HCNs and other expatriates was hypothesised to enable more efficient spouse adjustment to the new country. This as it enables the spouse to better understand the host culture as HCNs/other expatriate's act as guides to the cultural differences and appropriate behaviors (Black & Gregersen, 1991). It was also thought to enable the feeling of being in the same situation as others, and not being alone, by spending time together with other people in the same situation (e.g., Thompson, 1986; Martin, 1997).

When testing whether our stated hypotheses were valid in our data set we could not find a significant coefficient for them in the proposed regression model but they did correlate significantly to spouse adjustment in our correlation matrix. When looking at the correlation matrix in table 2 one can see that these variables also correlate to that of the MPQ. One possible explanation might be that the score on the MPQ better explains the adjustment of the expatriate spouse. Hence, spouses that score high on the MPQ, especially on the social initiative which is defined as taking the initiative to actively approach social situations (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001), will, besides from adjusting to the new country easily, also be the type of person that interacts with HCNs and other expatriates.

5.6 Living conditions

In our theory section, and after having interviewed former expatriate couples, we were made aware of the fact that living conditions of at least the same standard as preceding the expatriate assignment were of large importance and affect the spouse adjustment, especially considering the previously mentioned fact that only 21% of spouses find employment (GMAC and NFTC, 2005). Instead, the spouse tends to spend more time engaged in activities related to the home (Harvey, 1985). In the responses from the expatriate spouses we could find that this factor correlates significantly to the adjustment of the spouse and is a significant variable in the proposed regression model.

This is an important implication for both companies and spouses to be aware of for effective expatriation. If a sending company is to make the investment it requires to send an employee with family on an assignment abroad, it is important to investigate what living conditions the
family is currently accustomed to and ensure that the living conditions in their new country are at least up to par. This as inadequate living conditions may increase the uncertainty regarding daily chores such as cleaning, shopping, food etc. (Black & Gregersen, 1991) and potentially lead to a failed adjustment which, as we have hypothesized, leads to an unhappy and unproductive employee.

5.7 MPQ

The MPQ was developed in order to measure the personality traits that are important to the multicultural effectiveness of expatriates. However, Ali et al (2003) argue that the personality traits are as valid for spouses as they are for expatriates. Our results indicate that there is a significant positive correlation between personality characteristics and spouse host country adjustment. The present study provides support for the notion that these personality traits are of importance when it comes to the level of spouse host country adjustment. The MPQ could be used by companies when contemplating on who to send on international assignment in order to decrease potential negative side effects of prematurely returning expatriates, such as delayed productivity and damaged relations (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009), training a new employee for the same event, and lost business opportunities (Punnett, 1997). Additionally, we also believe that the MPQ could be used in order to detect spouses who are in need of additional support during the international assignment period. Another interesting observation seen in table 2 is that MPQ significantly correlates with HCN interaction. Therefore, companies should encourage spouses who scores low on the MPQ to interact with HCNs, since they may be reluctant to do so themselves. Interacting with HCNs facilitates an understanding of the host culture better, and can guide spouses in appropriate behaviors (Black & Gregersen, 1991), as our data set indicates that increased interaction with HCNs will positively affect spouse host country adjustment.

5.8 Family characteristics

The expatriate spouse can not only be seen by itself as it is a part of a family. The spouse is by that a part of a system of interdependent and interconnected individuals. To better understand individuals on an expatriate assignment we must therefore look at the characteristics of the family that they are a part of and see how these factors affect their adjustment to the new country. (Bowen, 2013) In the following section we analyze the results of the responses regarding cohesion, adaptability, and communication within the family.
5.8.1 Cohesion

When testing the responses regarding the family cohesion the data showed that family cohesion significantly correlates to the adjustment of the spouse and also that the cohesion is a significant factor in our regression model. This implies that the emotional bonding within a family will positively affect the adjustment of the spouse. This is also a factor that could grow over time, also affecting how the time in country will affect the spouse adjustment, as the findings of Di Cieri et al (1991) showed that family cohesion will grow over time as the family together is forced to endure trials and overcome challenges, thus increasing the bonding between family members.

This is another fact that implies the relevance for companies to include the family when evaluating whether to send an employee out on an international assignment. To have the family of the employee answer a questionnaire including questions regarding the cohesion of the family can serve as an effective indicator of the level of support which will be required by the family when in place in the new country. It should also be noted that the variable for family cohesion correlates significantly with the other family characteristics which does not come as a surprise due to the concepts being tightly intertwined. The most interesting correlation connected to the family cohesion variable is that it correlates to the positive pre-move opinion. We have no perfect explanation to this but believe it stems from the fact that, as previously mentioned, the pre-move opinion can be affected by the current state of mind and this also affects the respondents responses regarding how close they are as a family.

5.8.2 Adaptability

The next family characteristic we tested was the adaptability of the family, which is defined as the ability of the family to change its nature in response external stressors (Olson et al., 1984). In our data we could not see a correlation between the data gathered regarding the relationship between adaptability and spouse adjustment. In the proposed regression model we obtained a negative coefficient for the adaptability of the family which means that a spouse that regards his/her family as highly adaptable will be less likely to adjust efficiently and is the opposite of what has been hypothesized about. We regard this as an abnormality in our dataset and believe that the fact that adaptability correlates to cohesion and communication means that it is important for the adjustment of the spouse but not in the same degree as the other proposed variables. It could also be the case that we have not measured the
adaptability in an efficient way and have instead measured something which we did not intend, leading us to this nonsense result.

5.8.3 Communication

The last family characteristic we tested was communication which enables a family to create a shared sense of meaning and balance in the family (McCubbin, Thompson, & McCubbin, 1996). When testing this variable we saw that it correlates significantly to spouse adjustment but was not a significant variable in the regression model. This is in line with what was extracted from the work of previous research. Caligiuri et al (1998) stated that communication will enable efficient adaptability within the family and ensure effective integration. This was not the case among our responses which we interpret as the integration effect of a high level of communication is better explained by the cohesion within the family as these variables were significantly correlated. Another observation regarding the communication variable is that it correlates significantly with the measurement of interaction with other expatriate's implying that there is a relationship between these. A potential explanation of this could be that a family with a healthy degree of communication also easily communicates and builds relationships to other people outside their immediate family, thus increase the level of spousal adjustment.

5.9 Spill-over effect

After having analyzed our data set concerning important factors for spouse adjustment we also investigated the potential spillover effect of the spouse adjustment to that of the expatriate. The theory regarding the spillover effect was found in the work of Caligiuri et al (1998) where they propose that the working life is tightly intertwined with the home life and experiences in one place will affect the other. In our dataset we could show that the adjustment of the spouse was highly correlated to the way the spouse perceived their working partner to be adjusted and we could not prove that there was any difference between these two variables means. This implies that a well adjusted spouse will have a well adjusted working partner, which is of large importance for the company that has sent their employee out on the assignment. A spouse which is happy on the assignment abroad will make their working spouse happy as well which implies that the company has an employee which is happier at their workplace and by that also more productive (Barnett, Marshall, & Sayer, 1992; Lambert, 1990) and likely to stay. This reduces the risk of a failed expatriation which costs the company up to 500,000 $ (Nandan & Dhariyal, 2009; Eschbach, Parker & Stoeberl, 2001).
The way we have chosen to measure this variable is not perfect as a happy spouse will most likely perceive his/her partner as happy as well but, it is an important indication that the adjustment of the spouse is of large relevance. A more effective way had been to ask both the spouse and their partner to answer separately. An interesting proposition for future researchers to take into consideration, which may further prove the importance of considering spouse adjustment when sending a family on an expatriate assignment.

5.10 Interaction effect of cohesion

When using cohesion as a variable for the interaction effect, we could find statistically significant coefficients for some of the variables. When family cohesion interacted with the pre-move perception held by the spouse and that the living conditions were at least up to par with what the spouse had in its home-country we found significant coefficients for the effects. Regarding the interaction between cohesion and pre-move perception we were somewhat surprised of the results. Family cohesion as a single variable in the regression model predicts that a high level of cohesion within the family will positively affect the adjustment of the spouse to the new culture. This is also true for the pre-move perception held by the spouse but when combining them we received a new variable, the interaction variable, which predicted that a spouse that is a member of a family with a high level of cohesion and holds a positive perception of the move will not adjust as effectively as others. We believe that this stems from a family being close to each other and holds a positive perception of the move will affect each other and raise each others expectations of the move by influencing each other and by this risk an increase of the cultural shock. When the family arrives in the country the reality may not live up to their highly held expectations and by that increase the difficulty of adjusting to a new culture.

When using the cohesion variable together with the living conditions we again received a surprising result. A high score on the measure of family cohesion will predict an adjusted spouse which is also true for the spouse that states that the family’s living conditions are as good, or better, than in their home country. However, when combining these two into an interaction variable it predicts that a spouse that has answered on the higher end of the scale of the two measurements will not adjust as effectively as one that has not stated these answers. We believe that this is a result of a family being very close to each other and that enjoy to spend time together, living in a home that they are satisfied with. They do not feel the urge to go out and socialize with other expatriates and their families, and also do not take the same steps to interact with HCN’s. This will affect the time it takes for them to adjust into the
new society and by not interacting with people with knowledge of the culture and social codes of the country it may increase the time it takes to adjust to the culture thus lowering the adjustment of the spouse.
6. Conclusions

In general, there has been little research to identify underlying variables that might facilitate or inhibit the success of spouse host-country adjustment. Additionally, most research about important variables of spouse host country adjustment was conducted almost two decades ago and one could question whether previously identified factors are still valid today. Therefore the aim of this paper has been to examine theoretical variables that historically relate to host country adjustment of the spouse in order to see if these variables are still valid today. Our results indicate that the most significant factors, and thereby the most important, were time in host country, living conditions, cultural novelty, MPQ, family cohesion, and the spillover effect. This implies that companies should take extra notice to these factors when sending out an expatriate, and his/her family, on an international assignment.

First, it is important for spouses to acknowledge that host country adjustment takes time, and at first, feelings of anxiety, homesickness, and fear may rise to the surface. However, after spending more time in the host country the individual will learn about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, and also start to develop problem-solving skills for managing the new culture which usually ends in the development of a bicultural identity. This bicultural identity may take longer time to develop if the culture is very different compared to that of the spouses home country. This due to that our results showed that the more different the culture is, the tougher it will be to adjust to.

Second, a positive pre-move perception is important for several reasons, partially for the spouse being excited about the relocation and also having the motivation to take steps necessary to adjust to the new culture. It is also important that this pre-move perception is not overly-optimistic which may lead to a disappointed spouse and potentially worsen the cultural shock. Third, our results also indicate that living conditions in the new country must be at least as good as the living conditions the expatriate spouse is currently accustomed to. It is therefore of necessity for the company to investigate what is of importance for the spouse and take precautions for these demands to be fulfilled and by that have a more satisfied spouse and also a happier employee. Fourth, spouses personal characteristics, measured by the MPQ, are of utmost importance and our results show that spouses that score higher on the MPQ will be better adjusted to the culture. It is difficult, if not impossible, for a company to change a persons individual traits but the MPQ could serve as an indicator of how much in-country support the spouse and his/her family will require. This is also true for the family characteristic of cohesion where we find that it significantly affects the level of adjustment.
experienced by the spouses in our sample. A company can not affect this factor but it can, just as in the case of the MPQ indicator, use it as a predictor of what level of attention to use for the spouse and its family. Fifth, the results in this paper regarding the spillover effect between spousal adjustment and expatriate adjustment indicate that this effect may be valid in our data set. As expected, because families consist of tightly intertwined and interdependent relationships between its members, the well being of one member affects the well being of the others. However, most corporations consider the spouse of an expatriate candidate as an irrelevant factor in the selection and adjustment process. Given (1) that a positive pre-move spouse opinion is important for host-country adjustment, (2) that spouse adjustment affects expatriate adjustment and (3) that failed assignments are costly for firms, our results suggests that companies could benefit from paying closer attention to the spouse when contemplating international assignments. Thus, it gives weight to the argument that companies need to ensure the wellbeing of not only their expatriate employee but also to his/her accompanying spouse and family. Finally, our research indicates that cohesion, when combined with living conditions and with pre-move perception, lowers the adjustment of the spouse. It is therefore important for a family of the type that will score high on the cohesion measure to not raise their expectations too highly and also to make an effort and socialize with other expatriate's and HCN’s.
7. Limitations

One important limitation of our study is the cross sectional design which limits the ability to draw any conclusions regarding cause and effect of the variables. There is a risk that the time spent in the host country is the result, rather than the cause, of a high level of spouse adjustment. Future research should instead elaborate using a longitudinal design in order to draw more accurate conclusions regarding cause and effect relationships between the variables. Additionally, even though our sample is quite broad, the population used in our research may be considered too heterogeneous for our sample to be a fair representation of the full population which will have a negative effect on the generalizability of our results. Another limitation of our paper is that we used shortened versions of previously designed questionnaires, and even though our tests showed high reliability, the overall reliability and validity of our paper decreases by doing so. The fact that we could only include expatriate spouses that currently are on an assignment or had repatriated successfully is also seen as a limitation. To be able to instead include the people who had been on an assignment and failed may have affected our results. We view this as we have presented the variables that are important for success while a study of the people that have failed would instead have resulted in which factors are important to lessen the risk of failure. However, despite the aforementioned limitations, we believe that our study sheds light on important variables that clearly affect the success of spouse host country adjustment.

8. Future research and managerial implications

One area of interest for future research would be to deeper investigate the effectiveness of different types of training. Companies should try to investigate which type of cross cultural training e.g., attribution training, cultural awareness training, interaction training, and language training might be better in specific countries, and under specific situations. Additionally, we also believe that the effectiveness of the training could vary depending on the personal characteristics of the individual, and the cross cultural training should therefore be customized in order to meet the individuals need. Combining this fact with what we learned regarding the MPQ a company would benefit from basing their cross cultural training on the individual’s results on the various personality characteristics.

Further investigation of the spillover effect between expatriate spouses and their working partner will, if the results are in line with the results found in this paper, grant greater strength to the notion of the sending company needing to aim more attention at the well being of the
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

spouse. Another interesting finding is that the time spent in the host country did not portray the typical “U”-curve pattern. Therefore, a future research question could be to investigate how countries very dissimilar from the home country affect the previously identified four phases of cultural shock. Maybe the individual skips the first phase, which is usually characterized by excitement and idealization, and experiences the crisis phase immediately at arrival. In summarization, we believe that the identified factors in this paper could act as a more complete framework of what factors to consider for future research of spouse adjustment when accompanying on international assignments.
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Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, Trends in total migrant stock, 2005


An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment


Appendix

Dear spouses, in the following survey you will find the questions we wish to receive answers on for our master thesis at Uppsala University. We are extremely appreciative of the answers you give us as they provide us the information needed to better cast light on the issues that spouses encounter on expatriate assignments. We aim to be able to better educate both the academic world and multinational corporations on these issues. The questions cover a range of subjects, such as general information, individual traits and family characteristics. Remember that you are guaranteed anonymity, both in the academic world and towards your parent company. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me, Martin Eriksson, on MartinEriksson44@gmail.com. We are very thankful that you take the time to give us these very important insights.

Many thanks in advance!

What gender are you?
Male, female

In what age span do you belong?
20-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 60+

How many members are there in you family?

If there are children in your family, in what age span do they belong?
0-1, 2-4, 5-7, 8-10, older than 10.

What country are you in for your expatriate assignment?

What is your home country?

How many months have you been in the country for the expatriate assignment? (If you have returned from the foreign country please state number of months you spent in the country)

How well adjusted are you to your new country? (If the expatriate assignment is over, please answer to what extent the following statements apply when spending time in the foreign country)

I am satisfied with my life

I am satisfied with my living conditions in general

How adjusted are you to the food, shopping, healthcare facilities, and housing conditions of your new country?
An updated picture of important factors for expatriate spouse adjustment

How adjusted are you to the cost of living?

How well adjusted do you perceive your expatriate partner to be?

Previous international experience How much previous international experience have you had? (Answer in number of months)

In what proportion has this experience been of the holiday type? (Answer in percentage)

Please state to what extent following statement applies to you. How positive was your opinion on the international assignment preceding the move?

Is the standard of living at least equal to what you had before the assignment?

Training How many hours of company provided predeparture training did you receive? (Answer in hours)

How many hours did you spend on self-initiated predeparture training? (Answer in hours)

How adjusted or unadjusted are you to the following statements? (If the expatriate assignment is over, please answer to what extent the following statements apply when spending time in the foreign country)

Socializing with host nationals?

Interacting with host nationals on a day to day basis?

Socializing with other expatriates and their spouses?

Interacting with other expatriates and their spouses on a day to day basis?

How similar or different are the following statements from home? (If the expatriate assignment is over, please answer to what extent the following statements apply when spending time in the foreign country)

Everyday customs that must be followed

General living conditions

Using health care facilities

General living costs
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Available quality and types of food

Climate

General housing conditions

Equality among men and women

Please state to what extent following statements apply to you and your family. Family members ask each other for help.

Different persons act as leaders in our family.

Our family changes its way of handling tasks.

Family members feel very close to each other.

We can easily think of things to do together as a family.

We shift household responsibilities from person to person.

Family members consult other family members on their decisions.

It is hard to identify the leader(s) in our family.

Family togetherness is very important.

It is hard to tell who does which household chores.

Family members are happy with how they communicate with each other.

Family members are very good listeners.

Family members can calmly discuss problems with each other.
Family members discuss their ideas and beliefs with each other.

Family members try to understand each other’s feelings

Please state to what extent following statements apply to your personality. Pays attention to the emotions of others

Sympathizes with others

Likes routine

Functions best in a familiar setting

Takes the lead

Leaves initiative to others to make contacts

Keeps calm when things don’t go well

Is nervous

Tries out various approaches

Has feeling for what’s appropriate in culture