

**UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
FACULTY OF BUSINESS STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT**

Juho Käsälä

EXPATRIATE FAMILIES AS EXPAT PERFORMANCE FACILITATORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	Assigned Expatriate
CE	Convenience Expatriate
EP	Expatripreneur
HCN	Host Country National
MNC	Multinational Corporation
PCN	Parent Country National
SIE	Self-Initiated Expatriate
TCN	Third Country National

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
Faculty of Business Studies

Author: Juho Käsälä
Topic of the Thesis: Expatriate Families as Expat Performance Facilitators
Name of the Supervisor: Olivier Wurtz
Degree: Master of Science in Economics and Business Administration
Bachelor's/Master's Programme: Master's Programme in International Business
Year of Entering the University: 2014
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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Recognizing the continuously growing need for corporate foreign workers, the different types of expatriates today as well as the partnerships & family structures of contemporary expatriates, this paper aims to find out the ways in which expatriate partners and other family members facilitate expatriates' performance in work and non-work domains. The facilitation is seen as a product of different partner-based support systems, the influence of which spills over to the work-domain. Based on the expatriate's point of view, this study explores how the expatriates themselves perceive this positive influence.

Theoretical Background and Methodology: The theoretical framework is based on conceptualizations of different expatriate types, partner nationality considerations and spillover & crossover effects which have become keystones of recent expatriate work-life models (Caligiuri, Hyland, & Joshi 1998; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk 2002; Lazarova, Westman, & Shaffer 2010).

Methodology: The support systems and spillover & crossover effects are studied through semi-structured interviews where the subject is a current or former expatriate who, while abroad, was in a relationship and/or had young children. The different forms of support are analyzed thematically. Moreover, the perceived spillover & crossover are discussed.

Findings: Five support themes were identified: bureaucratic assistance, language mentoring, cultural guidance, networking assistance and cross-cultural competence & mobility of the partner. Through these forms of support, expatriates can save time and nerves in the non-work domain, allowing them to shift more focus on performing at work. The strongest forms of support were given by the host country national partners who are completely adjusted in the host country.

Limitations: The volunteer response sample and the dominance of one host country question the reliability of the findings, requiring more research in other countries. Moreover, the cross-sectional approach of the study disregard the change of perceptions throughout the expatriate's time abroad.

Value of the Study: This thesis is an important addition to the expatriate's work-life dynamics discussion. It creates understanding and narratives behind the established models which have tried to explain the connection between partner support and expatriate performance.

KEYWORDS: Expatriation, Family, Adjustment, Performance

1. INTRODUCTION

In its broadest of definitions, expatriation is an ancient act. The Latin origin of the term, ex (out of) patria (homeland), is still applied literally in many definitions today (e.g. Oxford Dictionaries 2015). Throughout times, many occupations with international elements have been described as expatriates – take mercenaries for example. Moving towards today, the concept and the definition have been subject to frequent revisionism. This can be largely attributed to business management studies of the 20th and early 21st century. While the early literature narrowed the expatriate down to a multinational corporation (MNC)-employed individual on a foreign assignment, recent discussions have broadened the view and spawned some new expatriate types. *Self-initiated expatriates* and *expatpreneurs* are terms which diversify discussion and distinction between expatriation and immigration in a world where global mobility is in an all time high. As the findings of this research suggest, such distinctions are important due to the different motives and circumstances under which internationally mobile professionals relocate themselves.

It is not difficult to conceive that balancing international mobility and personal relationships brings its own challenges – be it now or a few thousand years ago. In modern times, family issues have become one of the top reasons for foreign assignment failures in multinational companies (MNCs) (Tung 1987: 117; Lee 2007: 403). With failure rates as high as 40% (Ashamalla 1998: 54), the adverse effects of the family have, indeed, aroused both academic and managerial interest. Moreover, corporations' interest on the issue is not lessened by the notion that expatriation failures are expensive. According to some estimates, the price tag of such individual failure can be north of 1 million US dollars (Griffin & Pustay 2015: 568).

Accordingly, previous research has focused largely on the negative influences which an expatriate's family has on the foreign assignment (Lazarova, Westman & Shaffer 2010: 108). Most authors seem to be focused on overcoming challenges instead of recognizing and reinforcing the positive influences of the family which, to a point, is understandable -

“Why fix what isn’t broken?”. For instance, the interview findings by Yvonne McNulty (2015) present family expatriation as a stressful coping process, first and foremost. Although moving into a new environment can be exciting, at least for a while (the “*honeymoon phase*” of the expatriation cycle), the interviewees describe the foreign assignment process as more of a challenge than an opportunity.

To pave the way for a smoother expatriate (family) adjustment process, international business managers might approach the challenge by trying to break down the various barriers in the adjustment process. From a managerial perspective, the family of an expatriate might, then, become a burden whose various issues – housing, education, the career of the spouse etc. - are something that needs to be gotten out of the way as quickly as possible. Lazarova et al. (2010: 94) suggest that previous research has viewed the adjustment process as a both prerequisite and a representation of success. In the case of expatriates with families, success (again, from a managerial perspective) could then be the avoidance of whatever family problems might threaten the foreign assignment. Such approach creates a rather cynical view of the families, where they become essentially a non-contributing unit which creates more problems than it solves. However, the focus on the previous research does not necessarily convey the whole story.

As expensive as family-caused expatriate failures are, one might assume that lifetime singles would be the obvious top candidates for foreign assignments. However, that is hardly the case. Individuals with families continue to be sent on foreign assignments, possibly due to availability. There might be other underlying factors as well. For instance, Thomas (1998) suggests that expatriates who bring their spouse and/or children would, in fact, have a smoother adjustment process than those who relocate alone. Such positive perspectives are clearly underrepresented in the discussion surrounding expatriation and family.

The presumption with “traditional” expatriate families seems to be that the partner and the children represent the same nationality as the expatriate him-/herself. However, expatriates

can also be partnered with host country nationals or third country nationals – A perfectly plausible and increasingly common phenomenon which has received surprisingly little attention in the expatriation literature (Davies, Kraeh, & Froese 2015: 170). As can be conceived, the partner-expat dynamics between host country nationals and expatriates can be vastly different from the same relationship status between a parent country national – a convenient example being language barriers. As with many things, these dynamics have their pros and cons.

1.1. The research gap

Despite the imbalance of emphasis on negative and positive influences, the expatriate family's contributions on foreign assignments have been acknowledged (e.g. Thomas 1998; Takeuchi; 2002; Lazarova et al. 2010). A recurring theme is the spillover- effect where engagement in either work or family contributes positively to the other (Grzywacz & Marks 2000; Rothbard 2001). On the other hand, suggestions have been made that, with the scarce personal resources which we all possess, simultaneous positive contributions to work and family life would be difficult to achieve (Edwards & Rothbard 2000: 192-194; Rothbard 2001: 676-677). Again, perhaps a more well known manifestation of the spillover effect is the negative one where adversities in family adjustment process reflect as poor performance in the workplace (Staines 1980: 122).

The main point of this research is not to further validate nor negate either of the positions regarding the spillover effect. Rather, the proposed research presumes the existence of both negative and positive influences and/or contributions. However, the research is, first and foremost, interested in opening up the story behind the positive influences. The research relies on qualitative data, due to its appropriateness in answering “how” and “why”- questions. Firstly, the research intends to find out how the partner influences the expatriate's foreign assignment positively. An answer from an expatriate to such question could be, for instance: “By speaking to me in my native tongue after having to speak

English (non-native) all day at work”. Moreover, the research asks why this has a positive influence. A potential answer could be: “Because speaking my native tongue makes me feel like home, helping me to relax after work”. In other words, connections between the positive contribution and professional performance will be explored.

Such potential explanations open up a research gap to be filled. While there seems to be a general understanding about the genuineness of the positive and negative influences, the tangible and everyday form they take is not as well understood. Moreover, their occurrence in the different “non-traditional” types of expatriates and different types of expatriate partners requires further inquiry. Through this premise and methodological choices, this research should bring interesting additions to the discussion of work-life dynamics in expatriation activities. Therefore, it can be considered as an important addition towards a more holistic understanding of the issue.

1.2. Research question & objectives

The research question should narrow down the research topic into a niche (Maylor & Blackmon 2005: 79). Since the positive influence that family has on expatriation is relatively widely documented in recent publications, its prevalence might not need any more justification, at least on the behalf of the proposed research. However, it can serve as a research topic from which the following research question will be formulated:

“How does the expatriate partner’s perceived support positively influence the adjustment and work performance of expatriates?”

The general assumption is that expatriates indeed do receive positive influence from their partner. Therefore, the aim of the question is to yield answers which describe the forms and ways in which the positive influence takes place. Since the study is focused on the expatriate’s perceptions, the wording “perceived support” is applied.

According to the SMART- breakdown, the research objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-framed (Maylor & Blackmon 2005: 32-33). All in all, the scope outlined by the question is narrow enough to satisfy the criteria. Moreover, the data collection process should be relatively smooth in the sense that most of my research will be done in Finland which presumably has a great deal of repatriated professionals as well as foreign expatriates who might be available for interviews etc. Moreover, technology allows video conferences etc. with expatriates whose foreign assignment is still ongoing or who, for any other reason, would prefer to have the interview conducted online.

The proposed research objectives are listed as follows:

- (1) To analyze family-work dynamics during expatriation activities as a phenomenon.
 - Previous research, frameworks etc.
 - Conceptualizations of positive influences

- (2) To build an understanding on what constitutes support and positive (family-originated) influence in the discussion of expatriates.
 - In order to create a basis for qualitative analysis
 - Important in terms of acknowledging the complexity and relativity of the issue

- (3) To study empirically how expatriates experience the family as a positive contributor
 - Interviews and thematic analysis

1.3. Definitions

The definition of an expatriate is debated, although it mostly includes an international and an occupational element. The more loose definitions might regard the occupational element as optional or omit it altogether; merely stating that residence outside of the country of

one's citizenship constitutes expatriation (Oxford Dictionaries 2015), effectively making expatriate somewhat synonymous with migrant. When discussing expatriation as part of international management studies, the definition tends to be more precise. While the recent discussion has often described expatriates as individuals who are temporarily assigned to work in a foreign subsidiary (Harrison, Shaffer & Bhaskar-Shrinivas 2004: 207), quite similar breeds of border-crossing professionals have been identified, further facilitating the discussion and distinction. *Inpatriates*, for instance, move to the opposite direction as traditional expatriates, coming to the parent country from the foreign subsidiary (McCaughey & Bruning 2005: 22).

The circumstances under which the relocation takes place also play a role in the distinction. For example, self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) are not assigned per se. Rather; they apply for an overseas position on their own initiative and, consequently, are accepted (Jokinen, Brewster & Suutari 2008). Such expatriates and enterprising individuals like expatpreneurs – as described by Vance, McNulty & Paik (2015: 4-6) – blur the line between expatriates and immigrants. Koutonin (2015) asserts a prevalence of racial bias in the distinction, suggesting that the title of an expatriate is mostly reserved for Western individuals while others are regarded as immigrants.

The definition of expatriate in this paper does not preclude any nationality from participating. Instead, the expatriate is delimited to an individual who has found work matching his/her educational background in a country outside of their citizenship. The latter distinction is important since it allows the participation of prototypical expatriates as described by Harrison et al. (2004) - as well as the participation of self-initiated expatriates. At the same time, it precludes the participation of individuals who have migrated to another country with the hope of higher standards of living – but without having clear occupational prospects before moving. It should be noted, that while this definition, in itself, does not entail Western bias, the convenience sampling approach and the consequent availability of interviewees might create a slight lack of diversity in the sampling of this research.

To distinguish self-initiated expatriates from economic immigrants, this paper discusses SIEs as someone who have no significant discontinuity in their occupational situation in terms of industry and position prior to and post-relocation. Moreover, the main driver for relocation does not have to be potential to higher standard of living – as it, by definition, is with economic immigrants. Instead, as Vaiman & Halsberger (2013) differentiate, personal- and career development are paramount for self-initiated expatriates.

As is noted in **Figure 1.**, SIEs can also be divided into “intra-self-initiated expatriates” or “inter-self-initiated expatriates” depending on whether they move within or between organizations (Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann 2014: 2307).

		Organisational mobility	
		Internal mobility (within organisation)	External mobility (between organisation)
Initiative (First key binding activity)	Individual	Intra-Self-initiated Expatriate e.g. Global Career Activists applying to internal vacancies	Inter-Self-initiated Expatriate e.g. Dependent workers: Foreign Recruittees Independent workers: Entrepreneurs
	Organisation	Assigned Expatriate e.g. Traditional Organizational Expatriates	Drawn Expatriate e.g. Global Top-Executives approached by companies

	Current work contract partner		New work contract partner
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Figure 1. Typology of internationally mobile employees (Andresen et al. 2014: 2307)

The length and timeline of a foreign assignment can also narrow down the definition of an expatriate. While occasional business trips abroad might be measured in days or weeks, an expatriate's foreign assignment lasts, on average, from two to three years (Dickmann, Doherty & Johnson 2006). Baker and Ciuk (2015: 138) identify "non-traditional" expatriates such as frequent business travelers (IBTs), international business commuters and rotational assignment employees. Such individuals can also be referred to as *flexpatriates* (McCaughey & Bruning 2005: 22). This research relies on the presumption that – in the vast majority of cases – the spouse and the children do not relocate with the expatriate on short-term assignments. Therefore, no minimum or maximum length of foreign assignment is set to delimit the sampling.

Relocation as a family unit seems to be the traditional point of interest in the expatriation studies. In these cases, the spouse who relocates from the parent country might be referred to as e.g. *trailing partner* (Lazarova et al. 2010: 111) or *trailing spouse* (McNulty 2015: 106) while the children are also trailing (Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley & Luk 2001: 108). However, another type of expatriate family type has been studied – one where no trailing needs to take place. *Host country national* (HCN) spouses, as identified by e.g. Davies, Kraeh, & Froese (2015: 170), are already settled in their native country and, therefore, will not undergo similar adjustment hardships as trailing spouses. Moreover, *third country national* (TCN) spouses are a possibility.

Family, in turn, is outlined as the spouse and the children (biological, adopted or stepchildren) – the nuclear family (Haviland, Prins & Walrath 2007: 219). Having children, however, is not a prerequisite for participating in the study. Some couples might identify themselves as *dual-career couples* and/or display some of its fundamental characteristics. A distinction between dual-income couples and dual-career couples is provided by Mumma (2001) - with the former having to do with mere monetary input, while the latter also includes a strong psychological commitment which the two spouses have for their respective careers.

Regarding the factors which are present in the work-family dynamics of expatriate, professional *performance* is the extent to which the individual achieves his/her goals and expectations in the workplace (Lazarova et al. 2010: 96). *Adjustment*, in turn, refers to the extent to which expatriates and their families achieve comfort and adaptation after relocation (Caligiuri, Hyland & Joshi 1998: 598-599). These concepts, along with the previously mentioned, will be reviewed later on in the literature review. More specifically, they will be viewed through the point-of-view which the research objectives have set.

1.4. Thesis structure

While the difficulty of contemporary expat definition was tackled in the section, the literature review – which follows the introduction – should open up the distinction some more. The review starts with the examination of assigned expatriates. The drivers and motivations for assigned expatriation are discussed – as well as the reasons why assignments might end up in failure. More or less, the same is done with self-initiated expatriates as well as expatpreneurs. This review should help the reader to relate to the respective situations of these modern types of expatriates.

As can be interpreted from the text, this thesis seeks to challenge some dominant research trends of the past – one being the previously mentioned traditional focus on assigned expatriates. The next section of the literature review focuses on family and their relevance to the work performance of the expatriate. Although understandable, there is an unfortunate emphasis on negative influences of expatriate families (Lazarova et al. 2010: 108). This paper focuses on the positive aspects of the reviewed literature, while still discussing the negative factors due to their connection with expatriation failure. Such balanced view allows the reader to see the documented impact of expat families in good and bad.

Another relatively underreported factor is the nationality of the partner or, rather, the nationality of the partner in comparison with the partner. The sample of this research leaves

the previously favored PCN partners to the background and gives more attention to HCN partners and, to a lesser extent, TCN partners. The impact of nationality is reviewed and briefly preceded by a discussion about the nature of family-based support.

To give an insight on how the family support systems have been proposed to be a positive influence in the expatriate's workplace, multiple work-life models are reviewed. While Caligiuri et al. (1998) as well as Takeuchi et al. (2002) are open to the idea of positive spillover, Lazarova et al. (2010) specifically call for its further emphasis and exploration – just as this paper does. To refrain from bias towards proponents of positive family-based influences, an opposing view is presented in Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski (2001). However, through critical evaluation, some methodological shortcomings are pointed out and, to a degree, compensated in the course of this research.

After the review of the core literature, the methodology and the data are presented. The reliability and the validity of the data are evaluated critically. The results of the semi-structured interviews are presented and analyzed thematically after which they are discussed in the context of the core theories surrounding the topic. Finally, the research is concluded with its limitations and future implications for academia and managerial interests alike.

2. EXPATRIATION

In order to highlight the differences between the “traditional” assigned expatriates and the recently identified breeds of self-initiated expatriates and expat-preneurs, the characteristics of each type are discussed. This section seeks to ask and answer what drives each type to relocate, what challenges them throughout their time abroad and what might conclude the venture altogether.

2.1. Assigned expatriation

Global business opportunities drive ambitious companies to foreign markets (Mervosh & McClenahen 1997: 69) and the constantly growing need for employee mobility does not show signs of slowing down in the forthcoming years (Economist Intelligence Unit 2010: Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2015). Having foreign subsidiaries, then, raises questions about the nationality of the managers. Expatriates – i.e. parent country nationals (PCNs) and third country nationals (TCNs) – have an alternative: host country nationals (HCNs) (Griffin & Pustay 2015: 564). HCNs already reside in the country of the foreign unit and, naturally, do not require relocation. While HCNs are presumably familiar with the local culture, they might be severely detached from the corporate culture that the parent country unit represents – partly contributing to the commonplace nature of HCNs in lower managerial levels. Accordingly, expatriates are often needed to facilitate successful international expansion (Carpenter, Sanders, & Gregersen 2000).

PCNs, who share citizenship with the corporate headquarters, generally have the opposite limitations and advantages as HCNs do. A PCN might be deeply immersed in the corporate culture. However, the same manager can be absolutely clueless about the business practices of a foreign subsidiary and the country it is located in. Relocating and training the expatriate is not by any means straightforward or cheap. However, PCNs are vital for knowledge transfers from the headquarters to the foreign subsidiaries (Downes & Thomas

2000: 131; Massingham 2010). The personal drivers of assigned expatriates, in turn, revolve around career improving prospects (Doherty, Dickmann, & Mills 2011: 596). Globally oriented firms might also seek managerial diversity by hiring TCNs (Griffin & Pustay 2015: 564). Obviously, such expatriates are subject to relocation issues as well.

As previously mentioned and illustrated in **Figure 1**, the initiative in assigned expatriation comes from the organization (Andresen et al. 2014: 2307). The source of the initiative entails some responsibility from the organization. Thus, assigned expatriates in MNCs often receive organizational support prior to, during and post-expatriation. Some examples include but are not limited to cross-cultural training, financial support and career development opportunities (Kraimer & Wayne 2004). Support is an important component of expatriate job satisfaction (Shaffer et al. 2001). While ad hoc solutions are always a possibility, many companies choose to write down special foreign assignment & expatriate policies (McCaughey & Bruning 2005: 25).

The academic and practical interest for best practices of expatriate management has often directed towards cross-cultural training (e.g. Schaffer & Riordan 2003). Even then, MNCs have been slow to pick up the recommendations which the academics have given out (Littrell & Salas 2005: 305-306). There seems to be a disconnection between theoretical knowledge, corporate expatriation policies and the implementation of those policies (McCaughey & Bruning 2005: 22). Adding to the complexity of the issue, nearly two thirds of the companies surveyed by Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2015) felt that the pressure to cut down foreign assignment costs has increased. Moreover, the main savings targets were related to expatriate policies and possible exceptions. In other words, more cost-efficient expatriate-management is needed.

2.1.1. Assigned expatriation failure

An everyday risk in business life is the failure of business operations and processes. Formulated strategies fail to be implemented and the competition is ruthless. Despite of the

company support systems and policies, an individual expatriate is not safe from these harsh realities. In fact, given the relatively costly nature of global mobility maintenance (Black & Gregersen 1999), expatriates might stand on a thin line when organizations feel the pressure to do some cost-cutting. The success and failure of a foreign assignment has been discussed in a number of ways. A common indicator for the latter is *premature repatriation* where the expatriate returns from the foreign assignment earlier than intended (Black & Gregersen 1990). In such cases, it is important to acknowledge that the repatriation might have resulted from the initiative of the expatriate or from the initiative of the organization. Moreover, subpar performance during the assignment can constitute failure (Welch 2003). The HR executives studied by Black & Gregersen (1999) expressed dissatisfaction in approximately third of the time-wise completed assignments.

The cost of expatriate failure is presented on a broad scale in the previous literature, potentially depending on how direct and indirect costs are outlined and emphasized. For example, McCaughey & Bruning (2005: 22) suggest that family unit repatriation can set the organization back 250 000 US dollars. On the other hand, the full price tag of an expatriate failure has been estimated as high as 1,2 million USD (Griffin & Pustay 2015: 568). Further, Black & Gregersen (1999) speculate that an individual expatriate - with up to 1 million USD annual costs - is often the organization's most expensive employee after the CEO. Maintaining such a costly employee and having the investment result into a failure is a tough financial blow for any size of company. Caligiuri & Colakoglu (2007: 398) also note that severing established business relationships through expat failure can lead to unpleasant (and more or less indirect) costs when the trust as well as the synergy is lost and attempted to regain. Opportunity costs should be considered as well. After all, the expatriate could have been utilized in another position or location throughout the foreign assignment that ultimately led to failure.

HR managers have reported Around 5% annual failure rates regarding the expatriate who they manage (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2015) although earlier reports with different methodology have given rates as high as 40% (Froster 1997: 415; Sanchez,

Spector, & Cooper 2000: 103) – demonstrating that what is considered failure is highly dependent on expectations and perceptions of the organization (Black & Gregersen 1999; Harzing & Christensen 2004). Keeping in mind the early literature (e.g. Tung 1987) which highlighted the relevance of family in expatriate failures, it is surprising how little consideration MNCs seem to give to the idea of crossover and spillover effects which expatriates accompanied by a partner and/or children experience. This discrepancy between academic suggestions and practical implementation in MNCs is noted by e.g. Littrell & Salas (2005); Lazarova, McNulty & Semeniuk (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-51).

2.1.2. Personal Challenges of Assigned Expatriates

As discussed in the previous sections, the benefits of assigning a key employee to a foreign assignment come with a price. Therefore, managing complex global mobility schemes can cause headaches even to the most seasoned of multinational HR managers. Foreign assignments are not painless to the departing individual either. As the reviewed literature in the following paragraphs conveys, the potential excitement of a foreign culture as well as the foreign assignment as an attractive way to climb the corporate ladder is often accompanied with dissatisfaction at work, cultural clashes and adversity in personal relationships.

The discussion regarding the challenges expatriates face often revolves around the concept of cross-cultural adjustment – i.e. the extent to which the expatriate is able to allow and perform changes which facilitate his/her everyday life & work in the foreign culture. Although the prospect of working abroad might intrigue the individual, departing on a foreign assignment can have significant and often adverse effect on job satisfaction (McCaughey & Bruning 2005) which, then, might contribute to early repatriation (Black & Gregersen 1999). The reasons for the dissatisfaction can be numerous. Take, for instance, Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou (1987: 331), who list “culture shock, differences in work-related norms, isolation, homesickness, differences in health care, housing, schooling, cuisine, customs, sex roles and the cost of living” as examples.

As mentioned previously, PCN executives tend to go through a humbling experience as the always effective practices of the HQ appear to be ineffective in the new culture. In addition, the workload might increase overall and the foreign assignment itself might be filled with travel – leaving less time with the family (Shaffer & Harrison 2001). Moreover, the fundamental reasons for why the assignment happened the first place might be unclear – an issue referred as *role ambiguity* by Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk (2002: 660). While experiencing a new culture, expatriates face challenges not only in the workplace, but also on free-time (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou 1991). Partly due to having less time with the family (Shaffer et al., 2001), the dynamics of the family will change, fundamentally changing the family-role of the expatriate (Caligiuri et al. 1998).

2.2. Self-initiated expatriation

As opposed to assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates take it upon themselves to relocate to a foreign country (Jokinen, Brewster, & Suutari 2008; Andresen et al. 2014). In terms of everyday challenges, their life abroad is somewhat similar to assigned expatriates but the relationship with the hosting organization is vastly different. Also, they seem to be slightly different in the average representative; A sample consisting of Finnish self-initiated expatriates implies that, in comparison with their assigned counterparts, SIEs tend to be younger and more often single or having a partner abroad (Suutari & Brewster 2001).

As mentioned previously, hiring PCN expatriates usually has a strategic driver behind it. They are familiar with the headquarters' corporate culture and philosophy. They are aware of the formulated strategies and, thus, are competent to implement them effectively. In this regard, SIEs share some of the same advantages and limitations with HCN employees. SIEs are generally cheaper to acquire and employ; their salary is mostly in the same bracket as HCNs' and SIEs generally do not require a financial incentives which are offered to AEs as a push towards relocation (Hanson 2010). As with HCNs, self-initiated expatriates usually lack the long-term connection with the hiring organization, resulting to more

comprehensive orientation and, consequently, increased orientation costs (Mayrhofer, Sparrow & Zimmermann in Dickmann, Brewster & Sparrow 2008; 219-239).

However, the demand for SIEs seems to be on the rise (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2012). Due to their special profile, these cosmopolitan individuals have become an intriguing source of MNC human capital (Cappellen & Janssens 2010; Baruch, Dickmann, Altman & Bournois 2013). SIEs can be very competent cross-culturally due to their interest and drive towards living in the host country (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, & Barry 1997; Doherty et al. 2011). Similarly, some SIEs may be well-versed in dealing with certain cultures and operating in distinct locations, thus making them a sought-after asset (Edwards, Jalette & Tregaskis 2012). Some companies operated from emerging markets target SIEs specifically and strive to bring them to work for the headquarters as inpatriates – also referred to as foreign executives in local organizations (FELOs) on higher organizational levels (Arp, Hutchings, & Smith 2013: 313).

From an occupational point of view, SIEs are driven abroad partly from the same reasons as AEs. While both are, in general, interested in career development opportunities, SIEs seem to be more protean and willing to make transfers between organizations (Doherty et al. 2011: 607-608). Differences in non-work forces highlight the respective circumstances as well. From a New Zealand- based sample, lifestyle and personal connections seemed to pull SIEs abroad (Jackson, Carr, Edwards, Thorn, Allfree, Hooks & Inkson 2005). On the other hand, such forces may vary greatly between different countries.

When the initiative is on the expatriate, the nature of organizational support is different. This is the case especially with inter-self-initiated expatriates who don't have a "sending" institution. The cross-cultural, financial and career boosting support systems need to be acquired by the inter-self-initiated expatriates as well. This might not be a problem for many SIEs, due to their motivational reasoning for relocation. For example, Doherty et al. (2011: 607-608) suggest that SIEs are more open and able to change as opposed to their AE counterparts.

2.2.1. Challenges and failure in SIEs

It should come as no surprise that SIEs share many relocation issues with AEs. Although desire to live in a certain country certainly helps, it does not guarantee complete immunity from cross-cultural adversities. Referring back to Mendenhall, Dunbar, & Oddou (1987: 331), the examples of “culture shock, differences in work-related norms, isolation, homesickness, differences in health care, housing, schooling, cuisine, customs, sex roles and the cost of living” in AE relocation symptoms could all apply to SIEs as well.

Perhaps due to the voluntary nature of self-initiated expatriation, the repatriation of SIEs seems to be relatively under-researched. However, Tharenou & Caulfield (2010) provide multiple theoretical perspectives on the basis of an Australian sample which, like the New-Zealand- based sample, is potentially distinct from the phenomena in the more culturally diverse populations of larger continents. As can be expected on a general level, SIE repatriation occurs when the parent or “home” country pull becomes stronger than the host country pull. The home country pull can stem, among other things, from interpersonal ties, familiar home country lifestyle and the way in which the expatriate identifies him-/herself in association with the home country. Consequently, SIEs direct their job searching efforts more towards their parent country. SIEs might also be generally disconnected from the host country, resulting to a low host country pull and making the repatriation process much easier. In situations where a dramatic home country event, such as illness to a loved one, takes place, the decision to repatriate may be triggered rapidly. (Tharenou & Caulfield 2010)

2.3. Expat-preneurs

Entrepreneurial activities have also entered the expatriation discussion, breeding a new expatriate term what could be considered as a subcategory for self-initiated expatriates. Vance & McNulty (2014) have identified expat-preneurs – i.e. expatriate entrepreneurs.

Some expatpreneurs have been employed into an entrepreneurial position. Others have started a new business venture alone or with business partners. Interestingly, many expatpreneurs have started out as PCN expatriates or non-entrepreneurial SIEs who have started or joined a business venture when an opportunity arose.

As new as the term is, there is a shortage of literature regarding the ups and downs of expatpreneurs specifically. However, it can be presumed that expatpreneurs experience roughly the same relocation issues as other SIEs while dealing with the everyday risks and rewards of entrepreneurial life. Moreover, expatpreneurs are presumed to have advanced knowledge of host country business practices, potentially explaining the commonplace nature of local business partners in expatpreneurial ventures.

2.4. Gender considerations

The typical individual on a foreign assignment is a 30 to 50 year-old married male (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2015) presumably being the main cause to the relatively small measure of attention that female expatriation studies have received (Janssens, Cappellen, & Zanoni 2006). Historically, MNCs have shown reluctance in assigning females to foreign subsidiaries (Adler 1984). However, the percentage of female expatriates is significant, nowadays hovering around 20% (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2012; 2015). As mentioned, the self-initiated expatriate population may include a higher percentage of women (Suutari & Brewster 2001).

While it is widely accepted that female expatriates face, to an extent, different kinds of expectations than their male counterparts (Janssens et al. 2006) – especially in cultures where traditional gender roles are prevalent (Adler 1984; Taylor & Napier 1996), the work-life balance of female expatriates has been left with relatively little attention – especially in terms of positive spillover and crossover effects. Mäkelä, Suutari, & Mayerhofer (2011: 269) did, however, find glimpses of positive home-to-work spillover where some female

expatriates experienced home and family as sort of a relaxing haven outside of turbulent business life.

3. EXPAT FAMILIES & SUPPORT

Work-related relocation can alter personal relationships greatly. Some expatriates might have to leave beloved members behind, causing longing and amplified homesickness. Some expatriates might relocate with the family, predisposing the entire family to relocation issues. Others might find romantic relationships during the time abroad or, alternatively, be acquainted with a foreign love-interest prior to relocation, providing a strong host-country “pull” for self-initiated expatriates (Jackson et al. 2005). In either case, the partner and other family members can be the source of challenges, but also support. In the following paragraphs, both points of view are discussed.

3.1. The relevance of family

Expatriates have been reported to perceive company support systems for the trailing spouse as inadequate (Selmer & Leung 2003), hinting that many international businesses are reluctant to see expatriate families worthy investment as a whole. This is especially surprising when reviewing some of the recent expatriate statistics provided by Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2015): Around three quarters of the expatriates are married or partnered. Out of that group, 80% of the expatriates are accompanied by a trailing spouse. Nearly half of the trailing spouses worked prior to relocation but not after. In other words, around third of the expatriates will be accompanied by a previously employed, now unemployed spouse, effectively making the expatriate the sole moneymaker in the relationship. Also, more than half of the expatriates are accompanied by children.

The difficult challenges of expatriate families have been widely recognized (Black & Gregersen 1991; Haslberger & Brewster 2008; Lazarova et al. 2010). Losing the familiar infrastructure and parent country support systems are often a hard blow to each member of the expatriate unit. Yvonne McNulty (2015) argues, on the basis of her cases studies, that the pre-departure marriage issues will be amplified and manifested in new ways during the

foreign assignment. For example, the expatriate might have previously suffered from alcoholism and displayed worsened condition after relocation. Moreover, the local context of the host-country might bring about some unexpected and previously nonexistent behavior such as infidelity (McNulty 2015: 108).

Since many of the expatriate partners do not become employed during the foreign assignment (Lazarova et al. 2010: 93), the working expatriate often becomes the sole breadwinner of the family, effectively making the spouse completely dependable on his/her finances. McNulty (2015: 126) suggests that such feeling of captivity might, in worst cases, result in the spouse's depression, illness or even suicide. While such outcomes are extreme examples, the role of a stay-at-home spouse often causes at least some kind of adverse psychological symptoms such as resentment and anxiety (Lazarova, McNulty & Semeniuk in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-51). Even when practical assistance such as housekeeping is offered, the solitary role might not be all that pleasant. For example, some of the 264 trailing spouses surveyed by McNulty (2012) felt that their concerns were being belittled by the expatriate - since the trailing spouse was the one with less practical responsibilities.

While not necessarily in such dramatic manner, expatriate children experience adjustment issues. Children who are part of an in-cohesive expatriate unit are especially prone to problems during the foreign assignment (Van Der Zee, Ali & Haaksma 2007). Some notable issues are inconsistency and potential discontinuity in education (Fukuda & Chu 1994) as well as identity issues and losing one's circle of friends (Borstoff, Harris, Feild, & Giles 1997)

3.2. Relationship between companies and expat families

While some of the expatriate databases – e.g. Brookfield Global Relocation Services (2012; 2015) offer substantial amount of data, they are largely based on managerial perception – i.e. perceptions of the HR professional responsible of global mobility. Thus, some

discrepancy might exist between managerial perceptions and expatriate perceptions. Referring back to the expatriate failure rates, the wide range (5-40%) reported in the literature (Froster 1997: 415; Sanchez et al. 2000: 103; Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2015) could be partly attributed to the perspective-based differences. The views of Lazarova et al. (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015:29-52) seem to support this sentiment; Whatever the reason may be, HR managers seem to report more positive experiences than expatriate family units. For example, HR managers might simply be biased to submit embellished reports in the hopes of appearing above industry average in expatriate management.

Communication issues also result to inconsistent findings between managerial and subordinate reports – not to mention the experiences of entire expatriate families. Lazarova et al. (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-52) point out that, in many cases, company policies failed to be communicated to the expatriate partner. The information, which might be insufficient to begin with, often gets communicated through the busy expatriate. Consequently, expatriate partners are, in many cases, left clueless amidst their adjustment process – even though the information could be provided on the behalf of the organization. Many expatriate partners find assistance through social expat networks which, to an extent, serve the same purposes as organization-provided assistance. On the other hand, such networking requires effort from the expat partner and may cause dissatisfaction towards the organization. (Lazarova et al. in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-52)

While expatriates themselves often enjoy the support written in their company policy (Littrell & Salas 2005), it is not uncommon for trailing spouses and children to be excluded from the privileges of organizational support systems. A major shortcoming, as was previously mentioned, is lack of communication. Moreover, most of the trailing partners do not receive any cross-cultural training at all. This is partly due to characteristic differences in self-initiated expatriate families versus classical expatriate families and the observation that even the expatriates themselves do not often receive cross-cultural training. As a silver lining for this shortcoming, it can be mentioned that when expatriates indeed do receive

training, it is also provided to the trailing spouse and even children. (Lazarova et al. in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-52)

3.3. Partner & family support

Among other stakeholders, families are an important source of support for working individuals (Caplan, Cobb, French, Harrison & Pinneau 1975). Traditionally, partner support has been discussed as a coping mechanism, first and foremost (Lu & Cooper in Cooper & Rousseau 1995: 51-63). Payne (in Cooper & Payne 1980: 269-298) suggests that expat partners can support show support by dealing with the local non-work infrastructure and logistics, allowing the expatriate to focus on work. Moreover, partners can provide mental support, giving the expatriate a confidence boost. Such tangible and intangible forms of support can then spill over from the non-work domain to the work domain (Caligiuri et al. 1998).

While “support” has a positive connotation, it does not always manifest itself positively. As expatriates face longer working hours, they are more dependent on the support of their partner, especially in terms of daily tasks like housework. At first, one might reason that housework-assistance etc. on the behalf of the partner facilitates the expatriate’s adjustment and performance. In other words, the expatriate would have fewer responsibilities at home, allowing him/her to focus on work performance. However, as the findings of McNulty (2015) as well as Lazarova et al. (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 29-52) suggest, the trailing partner often grows resentful towards the new role, causing negative spillover to the expatriate, consequently contributing to lower and/or failed performance at the workplace. Indeed, support is a complex issue. Support can also be delivered in various ways depending on the nationality of the partner or, to be more precise, depending on whether the partner is from the expatriate’s country of citizenship, the citizen of the host country or from a “third” country (Davies et al. 2015).

3.4. PCN, HCN & TCN partners

When discussing expatriate family units, one might presume the prototypical unit to be of the same citizenship – i.e. a Finnish expatriate, with Finnish partner and Finnish children sent abroad. Like numerous other institutions, marriages have felt the effect of globalization with the increase of international marriages (Heikkilä & Yeoh 2010: 89-102). An expatriate can find a foreign partner before prior to or during the time abroad. The nationality of the partner might have significant implications on the cross-cultural adjustment of the expatriate. Moreover, managerial implications can be derived from the spillover theories which explain, to a degree, the partner's role in light of the expat's performance (Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Lazarova et al. 2010).

PCN, HCN & TCN abbreviations and the related concepts can also be applied to expatriate partner nationality. As to whom of the three might potentially be the best “facilitator” of an expatriate's adjustment-process, it should come as no surprise that host country national partners have produced the best results. Obviously, not having to deal with their own adjustment, HCN partners are able to direct their attention towards the expatriate's adjustment process. Moreover, they master the local language, are familiar with the infrastructure and well connected with other locals, allowing the expatriate a fast-track access to opportunities which might be out of reach for single or PCN accompanied expatriates. TCN partners, while not necessarily so helpful in a practical sense, might be competent cross-culturally in general. (Davies et al., 2015)

3.5. Expatriate partner networks

The increase of global mobility and the advent of public internet have spawned various expat partner websites. The purposes of these websites can span anywhere from networking platform to practical advisory and emotional support. Naturally, different kinds of expat partner networking activities have predated the internet. As an example, Hughes (1999) and

Hickman (2000) provide anecdotes of “senior expat wives” who were presumably the most experienced trailing spouses in the area and were, thus, responsible of entertaining and helping out the new expatriates with their partners – most likely facilitating their adjustment process. As Haslberger, Hippler & Brewster (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 53-70) point out, while such formalities might be exceptional today, there is no denying the contemporary prevalence of networking in expatriate partner communities.

3.6. HCN competences & HCN connections

As previously mentioned, HCN partners – in comparison with their PCN counterparts - have a better framework for positive influence in expatriate adjustment (Davies et al., 2015). Following the advanced spillover & crossover theories, this influence could then reflect as improved work-performance by the expatriate. In other words, HCN partners could be hypothesized to be better expat performance facilitators on average. That is not to say, however, that PCN or TCN partners couldn't acquire some of the perks that HCN partners possess.

A simple way to overcome this disadvantage is the effective cross-cultural adjustment of the expatriate partner. Hypothetically, a PCN/TCN partner could become every bit as competent in the host country as a HCN partner – whether in terms of language competence, knowledge of local customs etc. This kind of PCN/TCN partner could facilitate expat performance very effectively according to the models of Caligiuri et al. (1998); Takeuchi et al. (2002) & Lazarova et al. (2010). However, due to temporal, financial and other constraints, such host country competence is extremely difficult to achieve.

Networking can be considered potentially as a more time- and cost-efficient alternative or, rather, a supplement of personal competence building. The silver lining of being an unemployed expat partner is having time to make friendships. While the working expat is

making business connections at the workplace, the trailing partner and children can make friendships with local merchants, education authorities and other individuals who improve the personal everyday infrastructure of expatriate families. Such connections have an important role in adjusting the expat family into the foreign culture (Bell & Harrison 1996; Shaffer & Harrison 2001).

4. WORK-LIFE MODELS FOR EXPATRIATES

While not necessarily that clear in the first place, the boundaries between work and life become more blurred during foreign assignments (Caligiuri & Lazarova in Poelmans 2005: 121-146). To an extent, the organization takes over some of the traditional responsibilities of the family while the family members become more dependent on one another (Caligiuri et al. 1998). As previously mentioned, the expatriate is often burdened with work-related responsibilities (Shaffer & Harrison 2001) and the spouse, employed or not, is expected to fill in some of the holes left by the expatriate (Riusala & Suutari 2000) causing strain in both family- and work-domains (McNulty 2015). The academic interest has, thus, leaned more towards work-life conflicts – rather than the positive reciprocity which the work and life domains might have (Schütter & Boerner 2013). The next few paragraphs present different models which describe the work-life dynamics of expatriates – with their advantages and disadvantages.

4.1. Theoretical model of family adjustment and employment

One prominent model to describe the dynamics of expatriate family adjustment and expatriate adjustment is that of Caligiuri et al. (1998) – see **Figure 2**. The model is based on family systems theory (McCubbin 1988), ABCX theory (McCubbin & Patterson 1983) and the spillover theory (Aldous 1969). The authors claim that the model and the related research is the first of its kind to include entire expatriate families. According to the model, expatriate families have a set of characteristics which affect their adjustment process during a foreign assignment. In other words, the characteristics of a family might help global HR managers assess the family's adjustability potential prior to relocation. Moreover, the study found support for the hypothesis according to which the pre-departure perception of living abroad contributes to the adjustment process. Unsurprisingly, the families who had more positive perceptions of the prospect would have a smoother adjustment process. The third connection, as illustrated by the model, suggests that the family adjustment – whether

successful or unsuccessful – would “spill over” to the expatriate’s adjustment and work performance. (Caligiuri et al. 1998)

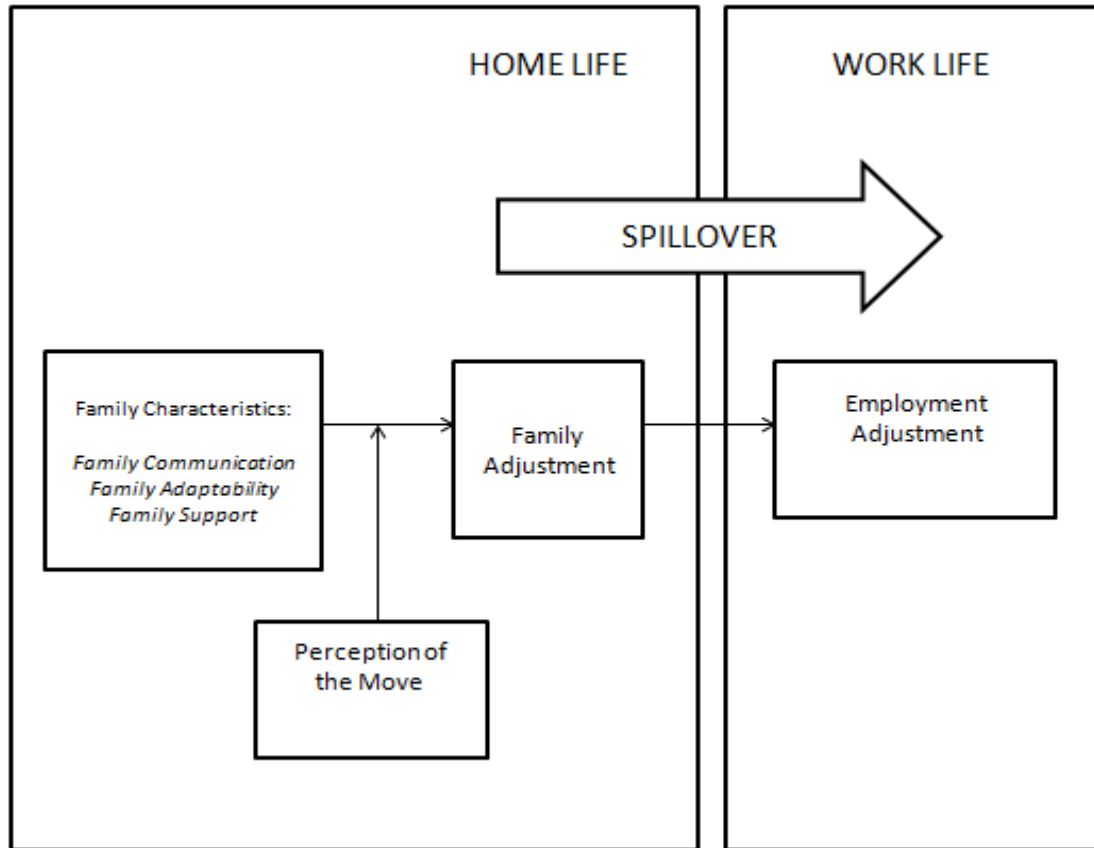


Figure 2. Theoretical model of family adjustment and employment (Caligiuri et al. 1998: 600).

In addition to including entire families, the model by Caligiuri et al. was pioneering in the sense that it was based on a longitudinal study – whereas cross-sectional design had dominated the previous research on the subject. However, the study had some shortcomings that need to be pointed out. Although the expatriate family is often referred to and studied as a single unit, individual members of the family have a great influence on the overall adjustment process and, therefore, should be studied as such – a limitation in the model

noted by the authors. For example, Van Der Zee et al. (2007) suggest that many families are not that close-knit, leading to adjustment issues among children. Also, while the positive perceptions about living abroad might indicate better adjustability, the perceptions don't always match the reality. In fact, McNulty (2015) found that the mutual excitement of going abroad which expatriate couples initially experience often transforms into a dividing force between the spouses which can, consequently, lead to premature repatriation.

4.2. Spillover and reciprocal crossover model

The model in **Figure 3.** by Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk (2002) emphasizes the distinction between spillover and crossover effects. Where Caligiuri et al. (1998) describe family adjustment as something that can “spill over” to expatriate adjustment, Takeuchi et al. refer to the spouse-expatriate dynamic as the crossover effect. The spillover effect, in turn, is seen as the expatriate's inner dynamic of attitudes between different domains of life. To use a hypothetical situation, an expatriate could, for example, experience success in the non-work (e.g. home) domain which increases his/her confidence in the non-work environment. This attitude could, then, influence the expatriate's attitudes in the work domain – manifesting itself as increased confidence. The assemblers of the model asserted, at the time of its publication, that the spillover effect especially needed further inquiry.

The model is built on a number of hypotheses. In addition to spillover and crossover effects, it takes into consideration job satisfaction, willingness to repatriate and the influence that the expatriate has on the spouse. Some of the findings were as one might expect. For example, the better the expatriate adjusts to the local culture, the more satisfied he/she is at work and in general. Conversely, bad experiences during the adjustment process make the expatriate more likely to consider repatriating earlier than initially intended. On the other hand, the findings gave some slight surprises. The successes of work adjustment which an employee experiences while working within his/her home country tends to spill over to general adjustment (Grzywacz & Marks 2000).

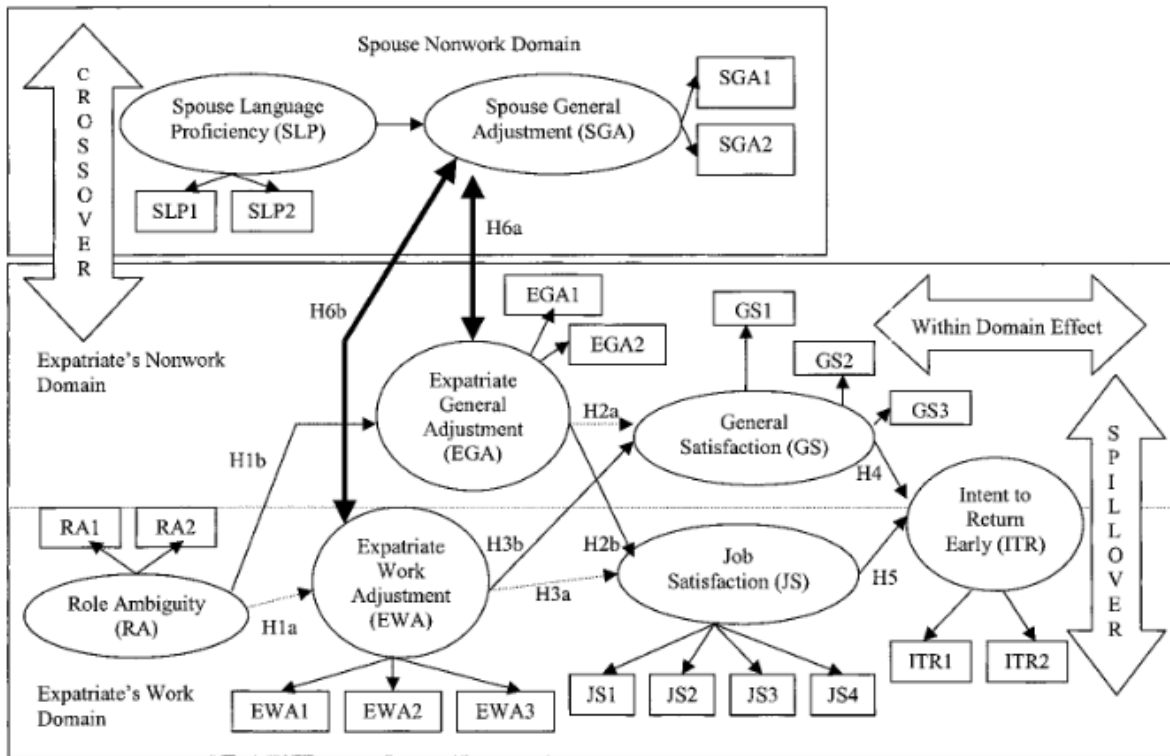


Figure 3. Spillover and reciprocal crossover model of expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment (Takeuchi et al. 2002: 659).

However, Takeuchi et al. did not find such phenomenon in their expatriate research. The finding that provides the most interesting input to this paper is the support to the hypothesis of spouses' relationship reciprocity. In other words, there is a continuous synergy between the expatriate and the spouse – both who are dealing with individual and collective adjustment issues. More importantly, this two-way influence can be either negative or positive. (Takeuchi et al., 2002)

The study builds on the findings of Caligiuri et al. (1998), creating new distinctions and emphasizing the reciprocal nature of relationship between expatriates and their spouses. In the process, Takeuchi et al. (2002) provide managerial suggestions to MNCs – e.g. mentoring to reduce role ambiguity and pre-departure training for the spouse in order to minimize negative crossover effect. The study has its limitations, though. As opposed to the

longitudinal design behind the Caligiuri et al. research, the cross-sectional design of Takeuchi et al. disregards the differences between pre-, mid- and post-expatriation responses. Moreover, the Takeuchi et al. responses probably have more common-method bias (Caligiuri et al. 1998; Takeuchi et al. 2002). It should also be noted that all of Takeuchi's respondents were Japanese, thus representing a very distinctive business culture.

4.3. Lazarova model

The model in **Figure 4**. by Lazarova et al. (2010) in - serving as a challenger towards previous research trends - starts out with the premise that adjustment does not merely act as an adjacent or a “proxy for performance”. Instead, the authors suggest that the relationship between the two is more complex whereby motivational engagement from the expatriate works as a mediator between adjustment and performance. This model also considers the spillover and crossover effects. A notable characteristic in the model is that “performance” is described as a process broken down to four stages: cognition, affection, conation and behavior.

Cognition is seen as the period of observing and experiencing the foreign environment. The expatriate takes in the positive and negative experiences and interprets them. In this stage, the expatriate sees the potential relocation-related change in roles as an employee and a family member. In the *affect*-stage, emotions and meanings are attached to the experiences. For example, increased logistical support from the partner may lead to feelings of security and comfort. In the *conation*-stage, the previous experiences and the attached feelings turn into motivation. An expatriate who is accompanied by a supportive partner could feel motivated to perform better at home and at the workplace. The *behavioral* element, then, seeks to explain how these motivations turn into actual performance. (Lazarova et al. 2010)

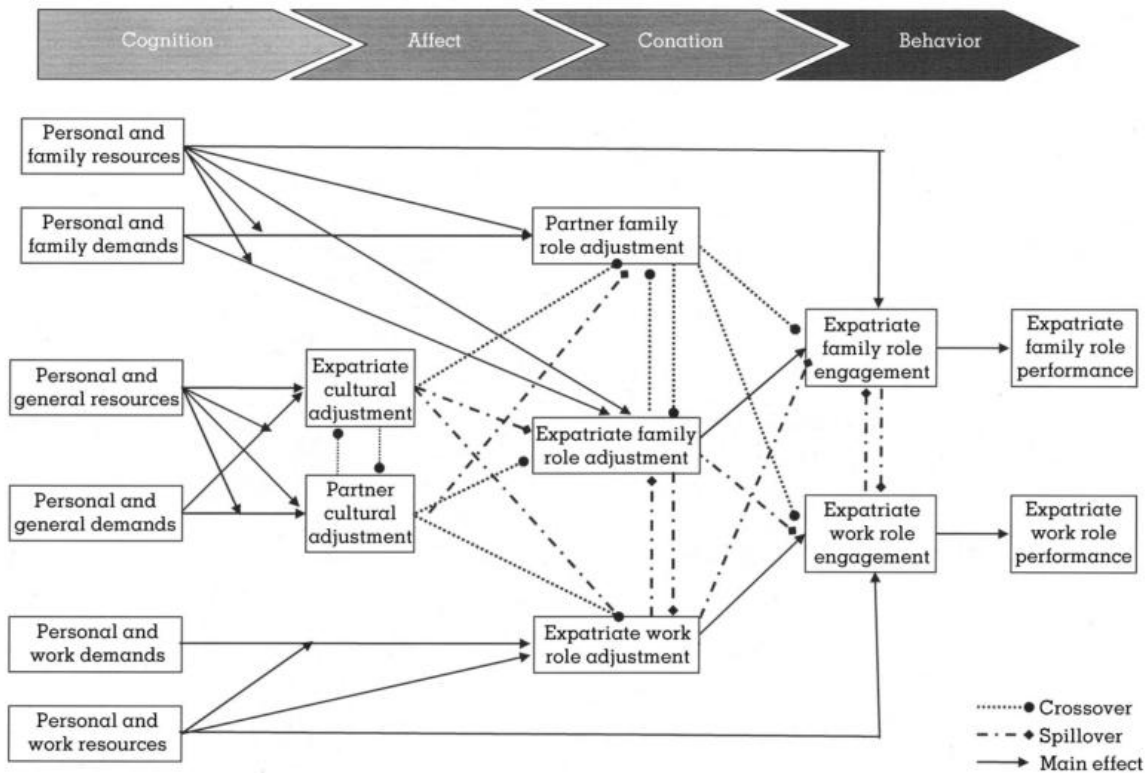


Figure 4. A Model of the Work-Family Interface on International Assignments (Lazarova et al. 2010).

While the theoretical contributions of Lazarova et al. (2010) are pioneering, the stories behind the theory remain unclear, justifying the need for this study. Moreover, the implications of HCN partners remain indistinct – a limitation which stigmatizes most of the prominent models. However, assuming that the model applies to HCN partnered expatriate units as well, some speculations can be made. Since HCN partners are culturally adjusted by definition, they could initiate spillover and crossover effects which contribute to expat performance eventually. Moreover, the cross-cultural competencies of TCN partners – as mentioned by Davies et al. (2015) – could appear as stronger or more positive spillover & crossover from the “partner cultural adjustment”, in comparison with PCN partners.

4.4. The family-environment-correspondence model

Haslberger, Hippler & Brewster (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 53-70) provide another model – presented below in **Figure 4**. The premise for the model is interesting in the sense that it does not perceive family as merely a supporting unit for the expatriate. Thus, the point of view is somewhat reminiscent of the model by Takeuchi et al. (2002) – in that it seeks to distance itself from expatriate-centrism. This model is based on the Family Adjustment and Adaptation Response - FAAR for short (Patterson 1988) and the Theory of Work Adjustment – abbreviated TWA (Dawis & Lofquist 1984). Expatriate scholars have applied both, potentially due to their applicability in situations where families move between different environmental demands.

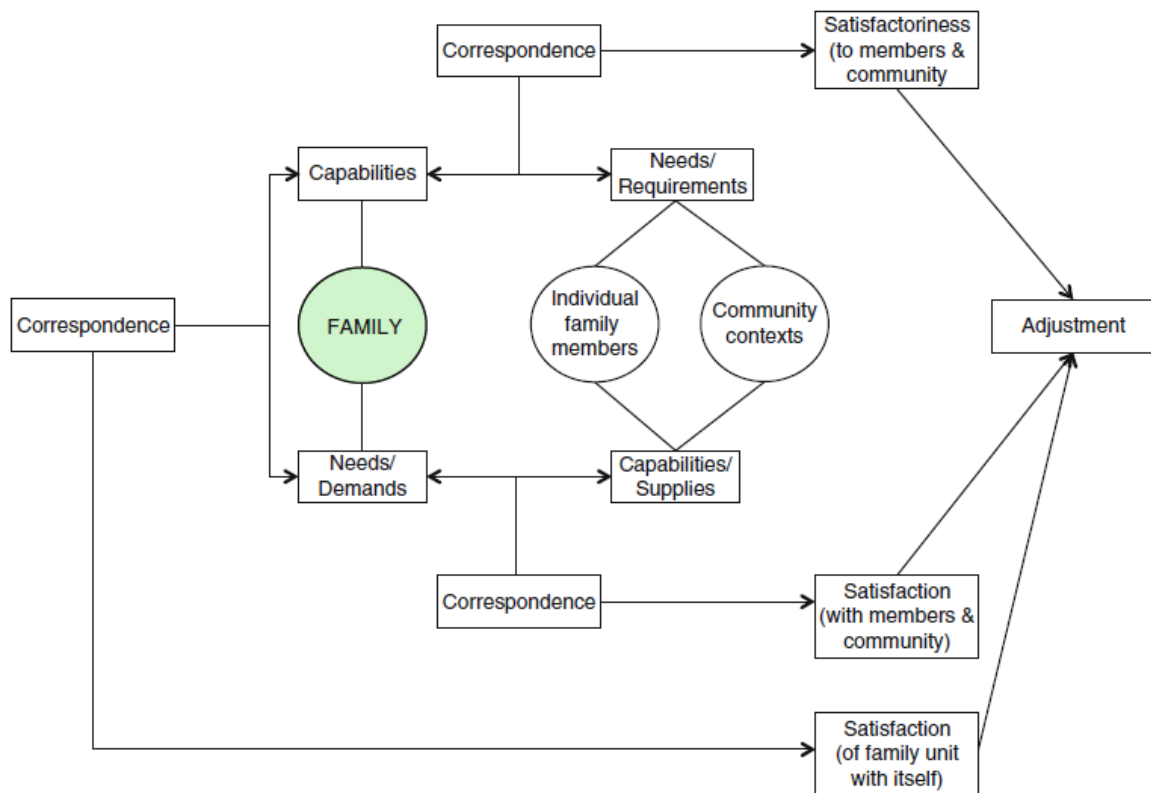


Figure 4. The Family-Environment-Correspondence Model (Haslberger et al. in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 53-70)

The model takes a family unit supply & demand form, where the different demands of the foreign environment correspond, successfully or unsuccessfully, with the family supplies and capabilities. These demands and supplies meet on three different levels (individual, family and community) before producing the end result – family adjustment. While the model might help in breaking down the process through which families adjust to foreign environments, the model has very vague implications for expatriate performance in the work-domain. After all, the complex relationship between adjustment and performance is noted by e.g. Lazarova et al. (2010). This notion is, more or less, ignored by Haslberger et al. (in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 53-70).

Again, the model's applicability to HCN and TCN partners is questionable since it is based on relocated family units. In fact, "bi-cultural expatriates", as the authors put it, are delimited out of the examined sample. Nevertheless, some components can be picked out where the HCN partners (and HCN children) can be presumed to provide different outputs compared to their PCN counterparts. Take, for example, "satisfaction (with members and community)" where HCN partners are presumably more knowledgeable. Actual satisfaction, though, is arguable. Just as self-initiated oftentimes feel dissatisfaction towards their home country and a subsequent push force (Jackson et al. 2005), HCN partners of expatriates might not be satisfied with their local community even though it is very familiar to them.

4.5. An opposing view

The reviewed literature has covered different expatriate and expatriate partner types. Moreover, the nature of partner support and the models of spillover (and crossover) have been studied. Support and "non-work to work" spillover have been connected to expat work performance as contributory factors. In other words, the role of the partner as an expatriate work performance facilitator has been discussed. In the following paragraphs, a somewhat contradicting study is presented where partner support was not seen as a contributory factor

to an expatriate's performance. Such presentation of an opposing view is important for critical evaluation of the models which advocate a more positive view. However, the opposing view has its limitations which this thesis seeks to compensate.

While the research by Kraimer, Wayne & Jaworski (2001) – which aims to connect partner support to expatriate performance (see **Figure 5.**) - has a respectably sized sample, it is solely based of assigned expatriates, raising questions about the findings' applicability regarding SIEs and expatpreneurs. Moreover, the respondents were 98% male which downplays the prevalence of females in expatriation activities. After all, females account for approximately 20 percent of all expatriates (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2015) and the percentage might be even higher in SIEs (Suutari & Brewster 2001). Also, while the representation of host locations is multiform, a review of the expatriates' ethnic origins reinforces the homogenous appearance of the sample where the majority of the respondents are Caucasian. While homogeneity, in itself, is not a limitation, it questions the global applicability of the findings in this context. After all, the partner-expatriate dynamics might be vastly different in e.g. Far East Asian- based expatriates.

Interestingly, Kraimer et al. (2001) found no connection between expat partner support and expat adjustment. On the other hand, adjustment and performance seemed to walk hand in hand. However, none of that would be attributed to the partner who, admittedly, represented the classical expatriate unit – instead of the non-traditional units which are of interest to this paper. In light of the research by Davies et al. (2015), the findings in this paper are expected to yield contradicting results – especially with HCN partner accompanied expatriates. Even Kraimer et al. hint indirectly at this benefit of HCN partners by suggesting the following:

“The results of this study provide initial evidence that expatriates who are well adjusted at work and who are comfortable interacting with host-country citizens are perceived to be higher performers by their managers on task and expatriate contextual performance, respectively” (Kraimer et al. 2001: 93)

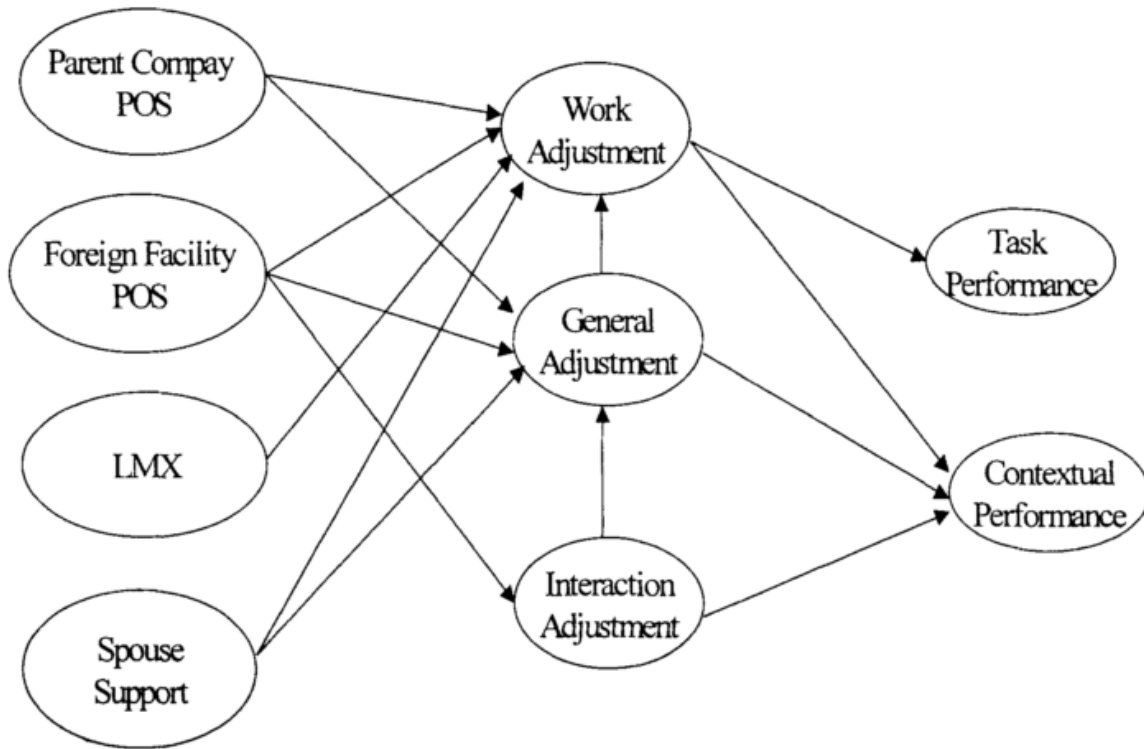


Figure 5. Perceived organizational support (POS), leader-member exchange (LMX) and spousal support in relation to expatriate adjustment (Kraimer, Wayne & Jaworski 2001:74).

Later on Kraimer et al. (2001) and similar studies were criticized by Lazarova et al. (2010) for lacking an understanding of the relationship between adjustment and performance. Lazarova et al. suggested, as mentioned earlier, that a motivational commitment element is needed to mediate the two. This could be interpreted to be in line with the findings of Davies et al. (2015). After all, personal relationship with a local can be a strong driver for host country commitment (Jackson et al. 2005).

5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As the core literature is now reviewed, the next step is to discuss the ways in which answers are sought for the research question. This section illustrates, firstly, how the question is approached methodologically. Then, the discussion turns towards the ways in which the data for such approach is acquired. Data-analysis methods are also reviewed, leading to the final part of the section – critical evaluation of the methodology.

5.1. Research approach

For this research, a qualitative approach is chosen. *A Dictionary of Media and Communication* (Chandler & Munday 2011: 347) defines qualitative research as follows:

“[qualitative research] Methods of investigating phenomena which do not involve the collection and analysis of numerical data. Any interpretive method which focuses on understanding meanings.”

The reviewed literature recognizes the prevalence of partner support and positive spillover from non-work to work domain in an expatriate context. Therefore, this research will not try to refute or endorse those phenomena via numerical data collection and analysis. The main focus is to find out “how” such phenomena take place through the narratives of expatriates, hence making qualitative approach a feasible choice. As the general philosophy of the study leans towards subjectivism, it is important to let the expatriates elaborate and articulate their perceptions freely without being tied by the hypothetical boundaries that a quantitative approach might set. The approach is also deductive where the conceptual outlines – e.g. SIE categorization by Andersen et al. 2014 & partner nationality distinction (e.g. Davies et al. 2015) as well as models built around the subject – e.g. Lazarova et al. (2010) –serve as a framework and a premise for the qualitative data collection process.

5.2. Data collection

The source of qualitative data is semi-structured interviews.. Since the thesis explores some of the less understood expatriate units (e.g. a self-initiated expatriate with a HCN partner), an extent of openness is needed to facilitate the discovery of new themes in the expatriates' perceptions. Yet, the overall framework allows the interviewer to keep the discussion relevant to the research question. Another benefit of the semi-structured interview – as opposed to completely structured interviews – is that the flexibility allows the interviewer to follow each interviewee somewhat differently (Noor 2008). After all, the personal nature of the discussion might make some subjects reserved while others feel completely relaxed and open. The interview sheet can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

The interview requests were made in March 2016. The potential subjects were contacted mostly through an informal social network for expatriates. The interview proposition was posted for all the network members to see. Consequently, a number of subjects expressed their interest and suitable volunteers were chosen. Additionally, one subject was a personal acquaintance of the researcher. Such sampling, as will be criticized later, entails some bias which needs to be addressed. The interviews were conducted in March & April 2016. A total of 16 interviews took place, 9 of which were face-to-face. The remaining 7 were online calls, some with only audio and some with audio & video. All of the conversations were recorded for transcription. While transcription allows accurate quotation and reference, notes were also made by the interviewer during the discussion. This facilitates, not only the modification of the semi-structured interview on the fly, but also the identification of inter-thematic connections. In other words, some preparation for the data analysis was already made during the interview sessions.

The interviews started with the inquiry of basic information (e.g. educational background, country of citizenship). Most of this information was available to the interviewer through the social network profiles, making the first part of the interview quite brief. This was followed by allowing the subject to freely describe his/her circumstances under which the

relocation took place. The focus in this phase was to discuss the drivers which pushed and/or pulled the expatriate abroad. For the most part, the subjects went through this phase with great detail, resulting to relatively few probing questions from the interviewer. This phase was included in the interview sheet after the first interview which was relatively terse. This inclusion remained as the only fundamental modification of the interview sheet throughout the data collection process. After talking about the relocation circumstances, different topics related to living abroad were discussed. The focus was on different cross-cultural challenges (e.g. language, building networks), the partner's role in supporting with those challenges and the implications for the expatriate's work. After that, future plans for the expatriate units were discussed. Again, the subject was encouraged to explain the outlook of the near future in his/her own words.

The planned length of the interviews, 30 minutes, was achieved for the most part. In the end, the average interview lasted around 25 to 30 minutes. Two outliers were present as the shortest interview took 15 minutes and the longest nearly 2 hours. This highlights the benefits of the semi-structured interviews as both interviews still had great relevance for the research questions – even though the two subjects were extremely different in the ways in which they answered the questions.

5.3. Data analysis

After the transcriptions and notes are gathered, the data is analyzed thematically. Such type of analysis is useful for picking up certain recurring patterns in the subjects' narratives (Aronson 1994). A certain theme – e.g. language – can then be divided further into subthemes depending on how comprehensively the subjects discuss language. The recurring patterns are summarized in the author's own words, with occasional mentions of peculiarities and special deviations in individual expatriates. If a remark by an interviewee captures the essence of a phenomenon in a profound or otherwise interesting way, quotations will be used.

The style of the data analysis is partly interpretative, looking to understand the meanings behind the interviewee's stories. This is due to the assumption that the negativity and positivity of a phenomenon is not always explicit in the subject's narrative. When different themes and interpretations are finally gathered, they are then interlinked in order to provide a coherent view of the sample's experiences (Leininger 1985: 60). Once the themes and the interpreted meanings behind them have been discussed, they are then viewed in the context of previous research to see which ideas the findings support and which ideas they challenge. Moreover, the findings can give implications on how to develop pre-existing models and theories further.

5.4. Methodology evaluation

In the next few paragraphs, the validity and reliability of the research are taken under a critical evaluation. Validity refers to the consistency which the findings may or may not have with the real world, while reliability is concerned about what kind of results the replication of the study produces (Merriam 1995). Each are measurements of the trustworthiness of a research. The researcher's interpretive inconsistency with reality can be argued to be the greatest enemy of a qualitative study's validity. Reliability, on the other hand, can be subject to multiple biases. As presumably is the premise with most studies, this research tries to avoid the various pitfalls of validity and reliability – but is not immune to them. Thus, various biases affecting the findings are discussed along with their implications to the limitations of the research.

Understanding the validity of a research requires the conceptual understanding of reality. The peculiarity in qualitative research, as noted by Merriam (1995), is that the results of the study are, in essence, the researcher's "interpretation of someone else's interpretation of reality". Thus, a question arises about how far this twofold interpretation is from the real world. As mentioned before, semi-structured interviews were chosen in order to allow open discussion with the subject. In other words, the personal interpretations of the interviewee

were not distorted by a strict framework. Yet, the interviewees were relatively straightforward, leaving minimal room for misapprehension on the researcher's behalf.

Although the distortion of interpretations was avoided during the interviews, the relevance of the expatriate's perceptions in general should be questioned as well. When discussing the perceptions of individuals, the risk is that the perceptions are in conflict with observable or objective facts. For example, an expatriate and his/her family could be offered a fixed amount of money each month (the amount being the objective fact). The expatriate could then perceive the amount as insufficient, even if it was the most generous family unit compensation offered by any MNC in the world. Thus, the objective fact (and no doubt the HR manager's perception) would somewhat conflict with the expatriate's perception. However, that would not change the sincerity of the expatriate's perception. These perceptions and interpretations can trigger repatriation or other dramatic decisions which affect the personal life and business operations. Therefore, they are a perfectly valid way to produce data which has major managerial implications.

During the first few interviews, when recurring patterns were relatively early to identify, the interviewer had to pick up recurring themes from the previous literature to facilitate the discussion with the expatriate. In other words, the first interviews were a tad more "directed" or structured compared to the last ones, possibly affecting the interviewees' train of thought. It should be noted, though, that the interviewees were comfortable with discussing the themes which were picked up from the literature. Therefore, the interviewer is assumed to have little to no influence on the validity of individual answers that the subjects gave. However, there rises a question whether the early interviews were missing some central themes which, for some reason, were underrepresented in the literature. Nonetheless, a stronger argument can be built for those themes which recur previous studies (Noor 2008). Thus, the speculated "missing" themes can be dismissed without undermining the validity of the research.

While the sample is not systematically biased, the practical constraints (time, money, contacts etc.) entail certain biases. The sample is a non-random convenience sample or, more specifically, a volunteer response sample where expatriates were not approached individually but through a public proposition (within the social expat network). Consequently, willing participants were chosen. The willingness, in itself, can be a source to “positive experience” bias since expatriates with extremely negative experiences might feel uneasy sharing their experiences to an unknown person. However, since the goal of the research is not to illustrate the prevalence of negative & positive experience – but to understand the background behind the latter – such bias does not hurt the reliability of the research. In other words, similar positive experiences can be expected to appear even if the participants were approach differently in a replicated study.

6. RESULTS & FINDINGS

The sampling process of this research highlights that the definition of an expatriate is highly subjective among the population. For example, some students and trailing spouses expressed their interest to be interviewed as expatriates. The positive connotations of “an expatriate” – as opposed to “migrant” (Al Ariss 2010) – might have certainly played a part. It is possible that informal expatriate networks, such as where the majority of the sample was acquired from, include numerous individuals who identify themselves as expatriates merely in terms of lifestyle – as opposed to occupational circumstances. Due to the delimitations of the research, only the subjects who have occupational experience in the host country are included and quoted in the findings.

6.1. Sample characteristics

Due to the personal nature of the discussions, the names of the interviewees are not used in the findings. Instead of using pseudonyms, individual subjects are referred to with descriptive abbreviations – See **Table 1.** for interview subject profiles. The abbreviations state the type of expatriate that the individual represents. AE stands for “assigned expatriate”, SIE for “self-initiated expatriate” and EP for “expatpreneur”. Please note that in addition to their role in the company, the expatpreneurs, whose profession is marked with asterisk (*), are the (sole or joint) owners and managers of the same company. A special case, “convenience expatriate” or CE is also defined. CE is, to an extent, a hybrid between self-initiated and assigned expatriate. A CE has a personal connection with a certain foreign country and a desire to potentially move there. The parent country organization, a multinational organization, has then offered a foreign assignment taking place in that particular country. If the expatriate has represented multiple roles throughout his/her career, the abbreviations are separated with a hyphen (-). In cases where the relocation circumstances of the expatriate are open to interpretation, a slash (/) is used to

separate the abbreviations. Multiple representatives of a single category are numbered. Although they are numbered according to the order in which the interviews were conducted (i.e. first interviewed self-initiated expatriate is SIE1), the numbers don't serve any purpose here other than distinction and simplified character identification across different thematic sections.

#	Expatriate type	Country of citizenship	Occupation / Position		Host country / countries	Partner status
1	AE	India	Software engineer	M	Finland	PCN (Indian)
2	AE-SIE	Germany	Sales manager	M	Belgium& Hungary	TCN-HCN (Hungarian)
3	CE1	UK	Researcher	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
4	CE2	Finland	IT consultant	F	Sweden	HCN (Swedish)
5	EP1	USA	Yoga teacher*	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
6	EP2	Czech Rep.	Psychologist	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
7	EP3	USA	Design sales*	M	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
8	EP4	India	Photography*	M	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
9	SIE1	Poland	Data-Analyst	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
10	SIE2	Germany	Researcher	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
11	SIE3	Spain	Social worker	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
12	SIE4	Australia	NGO worker	F	Finland	TCN (South African)
13	SIE5	Hungary	NGO worker	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
14	SIE6	Netherlands	Sports sales	M	Finland	HCN (Finnish)
15	SIE7	UK	IT engineer	M	Finland	TCN (Russian)
16	SIE8	Hungary	Delivery manager	F	Finland	HCN (Finnish)

Table 1. Interview subject profiles.

Exactly half of the interviewed expatriates were clear-cut SIEs. All of these SIEs are also part of the inter-self-initiated expatriate category by Andersen et al. (2014), relocating to a new country and an entirely new organization. Two individuals were keen on transferring to a certain country and got their wishes, earning them the “convenience expatriate”- title. The Finnish CE2 transferred within the organization to a Sweden, somewhat representing Andersen’s intra-self-initiated expatriate. The UK-based CE1, in turn, accepted an inter-organizational assignment in Finland – a relatively common practice in academia. A fourth of the sample consist of entrepreneurial expats, where two individuals (EP1 & EP4) were sole owners of the business while others (EP2 & EP3) had a local business partner – in each case the business partner was also the romantic partner of the expat-preneur.

Two “classical” assigned expatriates are also present. The Indian AE is an especially traditional expatriate in the sense that he was accompanied by a parent country national. Subject AE-SIE, a high-profile manager in the airline industry, partly fits the definition of the “Drawn expatriate” by Andersen et al. (2014), being regularly approached by foreign organizations. For this research, though, his time as an assigned expatriate is the point of focus. Moreover, his time as a SIE in his partner’s home country was discussed. With that being said, it could be noted that all four types of expatriates described by Andersen et al. (2014) and visualized in **Figure 1** are somewhat present in this study.

The nationality of the subjects is relatively dispersed, with no nationality having more than two participants. India, Hungary, UK, USA & Germany all have two participants and the remaining parent countries are represented by individual people. While 11 expat parent countries are present, most of them are located either in continental Europe or the English-speaking, former/current Commonwealth countries – collectively known as the “Anglosphere”. This leads to some Western bias as Asia is represented with merely two Indian participants, while South-American and African participants are missing. The nationality of the partner in this sample is rather homogenous, as 11 out of 16 (or 68,75%) of the interviewees’ partners are Finnish. The remaining 5 partners originate from different individual countries.

Studies such as Kraimer et al. (2001), where MCNs are approached formally, might receive a high number of responses. However, the aforementioned research had responses from three different companies. In this research, each interview subject represents a different company. As can be seen from the table, the positions of the expatriates are rather heterogeneous as well. The slight downside to informal research approach and volunteer response seems to be that only half of the interviewees can be classified as managers. After all, a lot of the expatriate literature (eg. Cappellen & Janssens, 2010; Feitosa, Kreutzer, Kramperth, Kramer, & Salas 2014; Lirio 2014) refer to expatriate as “managers” whose knowledge is irreplaceable to the MNC. It should be noted, though, that SIEs especially tend to be younger than AEs (Jokinen et al. 2008), effectively having less time to climb the corporate ladder. Moreover, there is no strong argument which precludes lower level employees from experiencing similar expatriation issues that top managers go through.

Despite the 20% representation that females have been reported to have in the global expatriate population (Brookfield Global Relocation Services 2012; 2015), many studies have great gender disparities in their sampling (Janssens et al. 2006). This study offers a counterbalance with 62,5% female representation. Out of the sample, two partnerships were same-sex while the rest were heterosexual – 8 of which were marriages. Seven expatriates had children with their partner. Two of the respondents were no longer romantically involved to their partner during the time of the interview. In other words, they were discussing the matters according to pure retrospection.

6.1.1. Assigned expatriates’ background

Before moving on to general thematic categories, the background of each expatriate type represented in this sample is discussed briefly. The review starts from assigned expatriates. Cross-culturally, the relocation process for the German AE-SIE was relatively harmless since the two (assigned and self-initiated) relocations he made were within Central-Europe. For the Indian AE, the relocation all the way to Finland was both swift and shocking:

“My boss said ‘I have a project for you for Nokia’... and I said I don’t want to go to Japan. He said ‘No, it’s in Europe, in Finland.’ I had never heard about Finland... I had heard once from Finland. I didn’t have any clue and the following week I was here [in Finland] already... I didn’t know then where I was located on the map.”
(AE, Indian)

As opposed to SIEs, who are presumably somewhat familiar with the host country’s culture (due to personal connections or general interest), assigned expatriates might be subject to more severe culture shocks. The Indian expat (AE) continued the story as follows:

“It was a bit of a culture shock at first. Coming from the [Indian] countryside to Helsinki... It was a huge transformation. The first time I saw a guy kissing a girl in the Kamppi metro station, I was thinking... can this happen? Is this real what I’m seeing? So that was the kind of shock for a guy from the conservative countryside to this kind of culture.” (AE, Indian)

Each assigned expatriate reported generally positive experiences. Although the assignments were organization-initiated, both families were able to adjust well to the host country. In the case of the German AE-SIE who was assigned to Belgium and was accompanied by a TCN partner from Hungary, the successful adjustment can be mostly attributed to the cosmopolitan nature of the family unit. The couple was linguistically competent and positive about the prospect of living abroad. In the case of the Indian expat (AE) who was accompanied by an Indian PCN partner, the adjustment came down to hard work and familial circumstances. The accompanied partner achieved fluency in Finnish language – a feat deemed impossible by many interviewees – and their children were born in Finland.

6.1.2. Self-initiated expatriates’ background

While assigned expatriates often deal with homesickness (Mendenhall et al. 1987: 331), self-initiated expatriates seem to be more driven to thrive in a foreign culture (Peltokorpi &

Froese 2009). The interviews hint that these kinds of pursuits are commonplace for those self-initiated expatriates whose stay – and potentially the initial departure as well - are motivated not only by occupational prospects, but also by affection towards the host country and the host country partner. It should be noted, that in many HCN/TCN partner cases, the expatriate and the partner have already met prior to relocation. In these types of situations, personal relations seem to have a great influence in the departure contemplation process. However, as Vaiman & Halsberger (2013) imply, the career development of SIEs is not something that they are willing to compromise that easily. This notion is supported by the thoughts of a British female expat, categorized as CE1 in this study:

“I would be uncomfortable coming to Finland just for my partner. I would feel really insecure without having a job to come to. Not just any job but a job I want to do... So, for me, that was a big factor – having the professional network as well, rather than having just the partnership.” (CE1, UK)

On the other hand, the interviews suggest there is some openness to compromise one’s occupational position, albeit only on the short-term. These findings seem to echo some the dilemmas described in dual-career couple literature (e.g. Harvey, Novicevic, & Breland 2009; McNulty 2012; Riusala & Suutari 2000; Selmer & Leung 2003).

Hanson (2010) suggested that SIEs require less financial incentives to relocate. Many companies seem to be aware of this as the assigned expatriates interviewed for this study were given a generous compensation for relocating. As for self-initiated expatriates, the UK-based expatriate (SIE7), for example, had an opposite experience with a small company in Finland:

“My company didn’t offer any help in relocating because it was a growing start-up and they had never hired anyone from outside of Finland before. So they didn’t have the manpower to do it... So we just did a lot of Googling.” (SIE7, UK)

Since the company had no overseas units, they weren't able to inpatriate employees from foreign subsidiaries, hence the need for self-initiated expatriates with special skills. However, as small and new the company was, they had not considered relocation assistance for foreign workers. This issue seems to be very characteristic for self-initiated expatriate in general. As the further results will highlight, SIEs are highly dependent on personal networks during their time abroad.

While failure and repatriation of SIE- family units is relatively under-researched in the reviewed literature, an Australian female expatriate had this interesting anecdote to share, suggesting that self-initiated-expat failures might have similar family-based causes and family-affecting ramifications as expat failures in AEs:

"I had met a lot of expats in the other cities that we lived in and... if the family is not happy, the job is not staying. If they kicked up a fuss and said 'We're done. It doesn't matter how much money it cost to bring us here. We're gone.' ... and that's the reality with most families. I've seen people come and go, you know? I've seen South-Africans giving up [US] green cards and moving back to places where they were desperate to get out of because the partner wasn't happy... and I can understand that." (SIE4, Australian)

6.1.3. Expatpreneurs' backgrounds

Entrepreneurial individuals might be able to transfer their pre-existing business abroad or, alternatively, venture with a new business model in another country. For example, US-based expat-preneur (EP1) took the former route, discontinuing her own health & wellness business in USA and launching a similar enterprise in Finland where her partner lived. However, such transfers obviously come with numerous risks. Since her HCN partner was an engineer employed in a relatively small industrial city, the market size of her business decreased considerably, leading to smaller customer base and decreased income. However,

with the help of her HCN partner's family contacts, she was able to build networks and increase the visibility of the business

The stories told by three other expatpreneurs follow roughly the same pattern as the story above. Although business-savvy and cosmopolitan in general, these expatpreneurs got their relocation motives almost entirely from personal relationships. Thus, they were willing to take the risk and relocate the business into a foreign country. Although these expatpreneurs are the masters of their craft, they lack the local connections and the bureaucratic knowhow – necessitating extensive support systems in the host country. Since the local partner is often the main “pull” force that drives the relocation, some of the business processes might become the responsibility of that partner. To give perhaps the most obvious example, here is a quote from the Czech EP2:

“I think I wouldn't dare myself to open up a business in a foreign country because he is basically the person who is... I would say I'm still the psychologist working with my clients but he holds the business... So he has helped me with financing and insurances. He does the book-keeping as well... He has built the web pages and he has tried to advertise through Google.” (EP2, Czech)

6.2. Navigating through bureaucracy

Two of the most common themes in the partner support discussion were practical help (with bureaucracy) and language issues. Although they are closely interconnected, they are discussed in different thematic sections. To create some distinction, the administrative issues caused by language barriers are discussed in this section, whereas language learning matters are discussed in the “Language Support” section.

Surprisingly, the two assigned expatriates, with TCN and PCN partners respectively, reported no significant problems in dealing with Belgian or Finnish bureaucracy. In this regard, their organizations proved to be very helpful. It was not until he became a self-

initiated expatriate, when the German AE-SIE had to rely on partner-based support as opposed to organizational support:

“She basically managed the administration and everything around the house and the banking and the kids and so on... That’s where you usually have these issues.”
(AE-SIE, German)

Due to HCN partners’ language competence and familiarity with local institutions, they are able to guide the expatriate through the bureaucratic steps of the integration process.

Although English has become something of a de facto language in dealing with foreign people in Western countries, the English proficiency of Finnish authorities and social service officials was perceived as sub-par. The Australian SIE4, who was accompanied by a TCN partner, reflected her own experiences to those expat couples where the other one is a local Finn:

“We were told: ‘Oh you don’t need to speak Finnish at all. Don’t worry. You’ll be fine.’ It might be true if you have a Finnish partner. We’ve met a lot of people who’ve lived here a long time without learning Finnish because they have a Finnish partner... I mean everybody seems to speak English very well. However, it’s not ingrained in the local departments as well as it could be.” (SIE4, Australian)

The expats with HCN partners did indeed rely on the support of the local partner when language barriers appeared. Help was needed not only with public officials, but with banks, official documents and online portals as well. Below are just a few of many examples:

“There was no-one in the [bank] branch who spoke English so we had to translate through him and... I mean he is very good, his English is great but there are questions that I would have probably liked to ask for myself so that we could cover everything. So when I got the bank account, it turns out I couldn’t do what I needed

with it, I couldn't do online banking because my income comes from kind of an unconventional source. So I ended up having to switch banks.” (CE1, UK)

“Every time I had to use public services, he came with me and he is translating all the letters from public institutions and the bank.” (SIE3, Spanish)

“They don't have every website completely in English so I have to have some sort of help with that... With so many foreigners living here nowadays, they should be a bit more updated.” (SIE6, Dutch)

“He takes care of all the bureaucracy... I think language has a lot to do with it. I am handicapped on that score. The language has been a very hard thing.” (EP3, USA)

While English is widely spoken in Finland, an American expat-preneur suggested that some public officials might have an attitude issue towards speaking English – necessitating more help from the partner:

“The first few times he went with me. The lady who works here... I don't mean to speak badly about anyone but she's a real troublemaker. Not a nice lady. She refuses to speak English to anyone. So... despite the fact that she can, she refuses to. It just makes everything that much harder so he's had to come with me.” (EP1, USA)

Naturally, the partner's support in administration and bureaucracy is much more intensive in the beginning. Going forward, there are fewer formalities to be taken care of and the expat becomes familiar with the processes over time. The following quotes highlight this progression:

“In the very beginning, of course, he helped with registering with the police and stuff. In the beginning I knew very little Finnish. The bank, specifically, was quite an issue... that took some time to get sorted.” (SIE5, Hungarian)

“When I came here, I became like a baby because I needed to rely on [my partner] to take care of everything and many times... he does still. I’ll ask him to call places or do things but not to the same degree it was when I initially came here.” (EP3, USA)

“He was helping a lot in quite common things. Especially in private life things like banks, to start a bank account, hospital services. Later I managed myself but at certain points he was with me at the beginning. Especially with police when I needed a residence permit. We always arranged it together and he spoke Finnish there.” (EP2, Czech)

“In the beginning he helped a lot with the doctor’s appointments and things like this. Now I do it myself but in the beginning it was really helpful. (SIE2, German)

In addition to active “hands-on” helping, legally recognized arrangements like marriages, civil unions or registered partnerships with a HCN partner can take some administrative pressure off the expatriate:

“I have to say that things are much easier when you are with a Finn. Not necessarily because of linguistic borders or anything like that but I have found it really interesting that... since we registered our partnership, all the bureaucratic issues are basically gone... because now I am under the Finnish system. Also, if I need to submit some tax papers or anything official, it’s good that she can check it out.”

(SIE8, Hungarian)

Some international couples had experience living in each counterpart’s home country – or had the plan to do so in the future. These expats acknowledged the reversion of administrative roles when moving to the other country. For example, take the Czech expat-preneur EP2:

“I take care of our things in Czech Republic and he takes care of our things here [Finland]. Any kind of bills, accounts, papers, bank things...” (EP2, Czech)

While HCN partners seem to manage the expatriate’s administrative tasks quite extensively, the role distribution seems to be different in expatriate units where the partner is a TCN or a PCN. These partner types are generally just as clueless about the foreign country’s bureaucracy as the expatriate. Since the counterparts stand on equal grounds in terms of knowledge and skill on this matter, the time and effort is divided equally. A quote from a British expat, whose partner has represented the TCN and HCN roles, exemplifies the underlying reasoning:

“When we first started, we did everything together. So when we first arrived [to Finland], we said... you know, if one of us does something, then that becomes the job of that person. So we both went to the police station together because, we said: ‘I need to do this process so you need to learn how it works’... We try to split everything evenly. We did that in Russia [partner’s home country] as well. If I had to do anything, she would usually come with me because I wouldn’t understand what they were saying... and I needed her to shout at them, rather than me being polite and British.” (SIE7, UK)

Even though one partner might have some specialized skills, the expat couples with TCN and PCN partners tend to achieve a general equality. The Indian AE with a PCN partner summarizes this as follows:

“She is my translator with some documents but mostly it’s fifty-fifty.” (AE, Indian)

All of the expatriate types are subject to bureaucratic issues. Assigned expatriates might be able to evade these issues, to some degree, with the help of their organization. In terms of bureaucracy, the importance of partner support seems to be amplified in SIEs and expatpreneurs. Having a HCN partner is especially helpful and sometimes even necessary to

complete bureaucratic formalities. The support of the partner saves the expatriates nerves and – as a British female expatriate perfectly summarized it – time:

“It definitely helps – being in a new country. I find that doing things takes me longer here than it would in the UK. So if my boyfriend can help with some of those things...” (CE1, UK)

A Spanish expatriate shares the same sentiment in a bit more detail while contemplating what it would be like without the support of her HCN partner:

“It would be a hundred times harder. I mean, of course I can communicate with anyone in English but there are some things that I could not do... or I would need to spend a lot of time. If I receive a letter in Finnish from a public office, I would need to go there and waste time... but now he can look at it and say if everything is okay.” (SIE3, Spanish)

6.3. Language learning

The sample includes individuals with versatile experience. For some, frequent changes between countries seem to be conventional. A Polish female interviewee (SIE1) who had experience in being a self-initiated expatriate as well as a trailing partner during another relocation serves as a great example. After the first relocation to Northern Europe as a self-initiated expatriate, she was partnered with a HCN to whom the facilitation of cross-cultural adjustment was greatly attributed. As with many others, the practical assistance due to linguistic limitations was appreciated, especially when the HCN partner was running the couple’s or the expatriate’s errands with local banks, legal services and other institutions which might deal with complex matters and use specialized language. The problem in this case was that this type of assistance, while helpful in the short-term, hampered the expatriate’s learning process of the local language.

This notion is an important reminder that some efforts of support might be productive on one aspect but counterproductive on the other. Also, it should be remembered that some expatriate partners may experience some everyday practical assistance as tiresome and unfit for their role in the partnership (McNulty 2015). However, in this case there seemed to be no such implications.

The story of the Polish expatriate is somewhat reflected in few other expatriate's anecdotes as well, pointing out a peculiar issue in partner-based language support. Since most of the interviewed couples use English effectively as their primary language of communication, changing to a language where one is fluent and the other a beginner alters the dynamics of the conversation greatly. In this regard, some of the partners appear either unsupportive or supportive but ineffective:

“He tries... but we learn in different ways. So when he tries to help me, he just ends up confusing me. My father-in-law, actually, has been really great. So he, apparently, thinks the same way I do. My mother in law does not speak any English so... We've known for four years and only now me and her are, kind of, starting to have conversations.” (EP1, USA)

“He never said anything but sometimes I feel like he gets bored, because I can only speak the basic things like how is the weather. There is not a real conversation there. It is an elevator conversation... and I'm always asking 'What? What?'. Because, yeah... “puhekieli” [spoken Finnish] is not my thing.” (SIE3, Spanish)

“That's why I don't have my girlfriend teaching me Finnish because... When she teaches me Finnish, she is like: 'yeah, I can't explain you' ... she understands Dutch as well. She used to live in the Netherlands so when I speak Dutch she understands me and she speaks a little bit herself.” (SIE6, Dutch)

Some determined expatriates force their way to speaking the local language continuously, even without the help of the HCN partner. Having previous background in the language obviously helps, as was the case with this Finnish expatriate in Sweden:

“I made the decision, when leaving, that from this day forward, I will speak only Swedish. So I tackled the challenge with my high-school level Swedish and it got a bit better each day.” (CE2, Finnish)

Others get the support from the partner but require some more formal language learning sources as well. This expatriate was fortunate enough to receive lessons from a teacher who could sympathize with his situation:

“It’s a combination of having someone that is Finnish in your life as well as... I found a very good teacher that I have learned with several months who, also, was a German national who married a Finnish guy and she’s been here for like fifteen years. So she understands more. The Finnish teachers who were Finnish were very negative, in terms of ‘he will never learn this language’- type of attitude or ‘he can try but he will never learn it’. She drilled over and over and she didn’t talk down to us. She spoke to us like we were equals. So I think that was a big factor there.”
(EP3, USA)

Many interviewees did indeed report positive experiences related to language learning with the partner, even if knowing the local language was not a huge benefit in their work:

“In terms of language it was really helpful to have someone at home practicing Finnish with you – the communication, helping with the language course... He also speaks German so we try to mix it a little bit. One day German, one day Finnish, one day English... But usually we turn back to English sooner or later” (SIE2, German)

For two interview subjects, learning the local language with their partner allowed them to make use of this newly acquired language at work. For a self-initiated expatriate who is not planning on changing organizations, this might be a nice addition but to an expat-preneur with a local customer-base, it can be absolutely crucial in the long term:

“He does understand some Hungarian and of course I speak a lot more Finnish now... I use Finnish at work now.” (SIE5, Hungarian)

“He [partner] was very important for the language because during the first conversations he was correcting [my Finnish] a lot and nowadays he still corrects me. I think the fact that I can speak Finnish is because of him – that I could practice with him. At the beginning we spoke English and I wouldn’t mind to continue speaking English but at certain point, before the children were born, he felt himself that it was better to speak only Finnish and Czech. He speaks also Czech. So usually we communicated so that I speak Czech to him and he answers in Finnish. If we speak on the phone, we speak only Finnish. I don’t know why.” (EP2, Czech)

This increased her Finnish language competency to the level where she can serve her customers in Finnish, increasing her market size. She also helped his husband to speak Czech. Although his husband used English at work during their time in Czech Republic, knowing the local language might have helped his husband to bond with the local colleagues in informal situations.

Expatriatepreneurs, just as the other expat types, are prone to language-barrier-related confusions. The legal liabilities of their company entail an additional element of stress. Because of linguistic nuances, it can be difficult for the expatriatepreneur to understand which institutions work under a governmental mandate and which institutions are private. Consequently, when the expatriatepreneur is approached in the local language, the legitimacy of the situation can be unclear. Here’s a related anecdote shared by the Czech expatriatepreneur:

“I felt like I was cheated several times because of the language. It was the beginning of the last year [2015] when I started the business. I was quite anxious when I was getting some phone calls in Finnish. I never knew whether it’s something obligatory that I have to do with this kind of business. Sometimes I have to ask again and again because I’m not even sure who I’m speaking with. They used to call me and it really happened to me two or three times. Nowadays I’ve learned how to deal with it. But in the beginning I was surprised because there are some companies that call you and in the beginning they just say: ‘we will check your contact information’. Then they ask to confirm your company name, the phone number and the address and I just say ‘yes, yes, yes’. And in the end comes a very fast sentence which says that ‘you have been added on a list’ and apparently it costs around 150 Euros... luckily my husband managed to cancel the first one and I canceled the next one.” (EP2, Czech)

While dealing with such ethically questionable companies was difficult in the beginning, through the guidance of her husband, the expat-preneur was able to learn and deal with the situation.

Neither of the two assigned expatriates felt any special pressure towards learning the local language. The German AE-SIE, who was an AE in Belgium and a SIE in Hungary, speaks German with his Hungarian partner and mostly English at work. He did, however, become relatively proficient in Hungarian some time after moving to Hungary as a self-initiated expatriate. The Indian AE, whose Indian PCN partner had become fluent in Finnish, spoke Tamil with his partner and English at work. Although the expat himself had learned basic Finnish he felt that using English in everyday life had become easier over the years:

“Back then in 1999 it was very difficult even with English because people were not open to speak in English. Helsinki was very conservative then, I should say... compared to what we are today. Even most older people talk English now. They kind of practice talking in English. But back then, people were very shy.” (AE, Indian)

6.4. Cultural guidance

The cultural customs and the general code of conduct in the host country might create some initial confusion for expatriates. The expatriates in Finland, who form the majority of the sample, noted the laconic nature of the local people. Take this example from an American female expat-preneur:

“The silence. The fact that you guys are comfortable with silence. I can’t get used to that. I can’t stand when a friend comes over for a coffee and we just sit in silence with our coffee cups. I feel like I should say something or ask something.”

(EP1, USA)

The expatriates with HCN partners found some solace when they were explained that it’s nothing personal – just a common practice in the host country. A Spanish SIE recalled a conversation with her partner, where the SIE was concerned about her Spanish compatriot – another expatriate in Finland. The partner explained that there is nothing to worry about:

“She was shocked that nobody was talking to her during the first week and I was like ‘How can they be so rude?’ and he said ‘Well it’s normal. They don’t know her.’... How are they going to know her if they don’t speak to her? ‘Well that’s Finnish culture. Get used to it.’ No, I don’t want to! So he was saying that it’s different here and we need to understand that.” (SIE3, Spanish)

The Spanish expatriate did indeed adapt to the local communication style – a change which was also noted by her relatives in Spain:

“I didn’t realize that myself but when I came back to Spain for holidays, my family was like ‘You have become Finnish’ because I’m talking less and my voice is slower. In Spain we speak really fast so... I don’t feel uncomfortable anymore with the silence.” (SIE3, Spanish)

As can be expected, HCN partners are crucial to the expatriate's cultural adaptation-process in general. This American male expat-preneur, who had a HCN partner, had observed a notable difference between those expats with HCN partners and those with a PCN partner:

“I do believe that people in my situation have advantage of adjusting better than people who do not [have a local partner]. And a part of the reason why I say this is that I have been in Finnish language courses and integration course that is ran by the government. And a lot of the people who were in the class had very negative views of Finland and of Finnish people because many of them had... they were not involved with Finnish spouses or relationships. They were both from the same country... and they had very different views from the ones that had at least a partner or a husband or wife that was Finnish.” (EP3, USA)

Surprisingly, many of the interview subjects mentioned culinary issues. A combination of linguistic limitations and cultural differences, this issue was once again dealt with the help of a local – mostly a HCN partner:

“Going to the supermarket together and when I moved here, I didn't speak much Finnish at all... so working out what cuts of chicken were chicken breast... really basic things like that.” (CE1, UK)

6.5. Networking with partner & family

In the previous quote, the confusion was clarified with the help of a local partner. The situation is a bit trickier for expat units with a TCN or PCN partner. However, as will be unraveled in the next few paragraphs, support can be received from the partner's networks or the networks that the expatriate unit acquires through children. Here's an example on how an Australian female expatriate found a solution to the culinary issue:

“I went grocery shopping a few times and I didn’t know what I was buying. Nothing was familiar. Nothing was in English. You can’t Google Translate every single item of groceries. So I was cooking things to my kids and I was thinking why there are strange bits of something in our food and... And so one day I happened to mention it to one of the moms at soccer so she said ‘Oh I’ll come to Prisma [supermarket] with you’ and she literally walked up and down the aisles and explained: ‘This is the same as sour cream; this is the regular flour for making bread...’ That was really helpful. Initially, that was the biggest frustrating struggle... because that has to happen every day.” (SIE4, Australian)

The connections of the TCN partner (who was also employed in the host country), as well as the connections the couple made through their children, proved to be very useful for the expatriate couple. Moreover, the support was something that the couple was determined to pay forward. The Australian expatriate elucidated the matter further:

“We’re making friends with other families with children of same age. So that’s very specific to our situation because we have children. And I meet people through my husband’s work. His work colleagues were very welcoming and a number of them are from overseas so that makes a difference. And if you’re an expat and you know someone new is coming, then you tend to be a bit more inviting than what a local would be... because you know what they are going through.” (SIE4, Australian)

While TCN and PCN partners can be useful in indirect support acquisition, those expatriates with HCN partners, again, have an upper hand. This is largely due to the fact that most of their relatives live in the same country. Most interview subjects with HCN partners reported some sort of support from the HCN partner’s family:

“I have very good relationship with his sister. He has got two sisters here in Helsinki. They are quite close and sometimes they help us look after the children.” (EP2, Czech)

“The fact that his family lives in the area... They are quite an international family so the family helps a lot and they take very good care of me.” (SIE2, German)

“She had a big family. They are really social so it was a wonderful experience. Her whole family was very welcoming. So, that was the biggest way how she helped because we were always invited to events.” (EP4, Indian)

“His family have been really helpful and kind. It has been great to have my partner's parents and siblings around since I am away from my own family, and they have been very supportive when we first starting living together here and needed help with various matters” (CE1, UK)

“His whole family lives in this town so... It's actually his cousin's wife that helps me find some friends.” (EP1, USA)

“Now I'm part of a Finnish family. Christmas is really different here so he was explaining the traditions and everything.” (SIE3, Spanish)

The family of the partner can indeed help in many ways. As the examples above illustrate, the families of HCN partners can offer practical, cultural, emotional and other forms of support. Such support saves the time of the expatriates and makes them feel more accustomed to the host country culture. Moreover, expatriates with HCN partners travel extensively within the host country while the interviewed expats with TCN and PCN partners remained mainly in the city they were working in.

Some expatriates reported negative experiences in terms of networking through the partner. Especially the partner's circle of friends seemed to be very hard to enter. On the other hand, this issue is presumably not limited to expatriate couples. Nonetheless, some issues were clearly present:

“Well, he has tried really hard to take me to all these parties and introduce me to his friends and everything but... ultimately, I must say, especially the personal network was very hard to build ... I was trying to get to know Finnish people. So what my partner did was, he took me to this sports club with only Finnish people, but they still would not talk to me. So... he tried but I’m not too close with his friends.”

(SIE2, German)

Due to their status, the expectations for HCN partners seem to be a lot higher. Here is a word from a Finnish expatriate in Sweden:

“When I first moved there, of course the assumption was that he helps with, for example, dealing with the local authorities et cetera... and also with hobbies so we can do something together in the beginning, since I don’t know anyone there.”

(CE2, Finnish)

Unfortunately, the bar was set too high:

“Even though my [Swedish] language competency advanced to the point where I could deal with the tax authorities... I still didn’t manage to create personal contacts through hobbies. Of course, in the beginning, after a long distance relationship, it is nice to spend time together - just the two of us. But after a while, you really feel disconnected from the outside world. Maybe I should have gotten a grip on myself and just go to do some hobbies by myself.” (CE2, Finnish)

Obviously, networking is essential for expat-preneurs. Again, the partner plays a big role. Here is how the American male expat-preneur saw it:

“It’s not like we have a defined role but he is, because of all of his contacts and the companies that he has dealt with, he has the relationships with a lot of the Finnish brands. And of course, understandably, those Finnish brands and designers feel more

comfortable in dealing with him. But that is slowly shifting because he is going to be doing other things, so he won't have enough time. So they will have to deal with me more... and we'll see how that works out. Some people are very good and others are... you know... I don't think they know how to approach me.” (EP3, USA)

Even though assigned expatriates often have access to formal networking events, they might not be desirable. The German AE-SIE recalled his times in Brussels when the flamboyance of formal events became unbearable:

“I hated these events with NATO officials, American bankers and EU parliamentarians and... it was just amazing. These people showed up with golden jewelry that they were carrying around everywhere. It was just not our cup of tea.” (AE-SI, German)

In the end, the German-Hungarian couple preferred to build networks on their own time, away from the fabricated events. Such preference towards informal networking events seemed very common among the interviewed subjects.

6.6. Cross-cultural competence & mobility

In some industries, like academia, the inter-organizational mobility is very flexible, allowing individuals to move quite effectively. The downside to mobility in industries like academia, as mentioned by CE1, is the potentially short-term, project-based nature of the employment contracts. In such cases, when the expatriate relocates to a country and wants to stay long-term, he/she might still have to consider yet another relocation to avoid unemployment. For example, although CE1 wanted to remain in the host country with the HCN partner, the prospect of joint relocation to another country might be slightly less daunting since the partner had background in another arguably mobile profession, arts.

For modern expatriate couples, the cross-cultural competence and the potential cross-border mobility of the unit is of importance. For classical expatriate units especially, it is important that the trailing spouse feels comfortable about the thought of going abroad. The German AE-SIE contemplated whether having a cosmopolitan-minded partner helped in the relocation process:

“When the decision is made, then you need to kind of guess how your partner will be able to adopt and to match...and the impact on her happiness and life so.. Sure! Without that I probably wouldn’t have even come abroad.” (AE-SI, German)

Many self-initiated expatriates were entertaining the idea of yet another relocation. In most cases, the relocation would be to their home country. Some had even agreed on it with their HCN partner. In other words, the roles would be reversed one day. One couple had gone as far as making a pact – an agreed number of years after which the relocation to the expatriate’s home country would take place. For these plans to work, however, the partner needs to be occupationally and mentally mobile in terms of international relocation. A German SIE was very confident about the planned relocation to Germany, not only due to his partner’s German language competence, but also due to his work background:

“He’s an engineer. He can work anywhere!” (SIE2, German)

When questioned about the role reversion, the German SIE remained confident, suggesting that the Finnish partner would not need much of her help in Germany:

“I think it would not be the same. I think he could learn from my issues in Finland and we could avoid them for the most part” (SIE2, German)

The three expatriates with TCN partners represented very cosmopolitan values where relocation challenges were seen as exciting. The reasoning of the UK-born engineer is a fitting summary:

“That was one of the reasons why we both didn’t want to move to Britain... because if we moved there, I would just be doing what I did before we met. I would go to the same places, even if we lived in a completely different town that I grew up in... I would go to the banks, to the social services and hospitals and everything and we said: ‘Let’s go somewhere where it’s just as difficult for both of us. We wanted it to be an adventure for us both because we didn’t want anything to drive us apart.’”

(SIE7, UK)

6.7. Spillover from non-work to work-domain

The interviewees were not asked about the spillover or crossover effects directly. However, through an indirect approach, this connection was inquired. The answers revealed some polarization within the sample. While all interviewees admitted some sort of partner-based support, the way in which they discussed this support made a difference. Many expatriates were extremely thankful of the support they received, while others experienced the support as a necessity or mundane. In general, it seems that many expatriate’s do not necessarily perceive the spillover & crossover effects the same way as many of the business managements studies do. Here are two examples of answers, when asked about the relationship between partner support and work adjustment & performance:

“Yes, of course [it helps]. But not in any way different as in a normal relationship, I guess. We already had children in Belgium and here [in Hungary] so having somebody who can deal with all these questions: find a doctor, do the registration in the municipality to rent a flat, you know? It helps a lot. If I had to do all those things myself, it would have been a lot tougher.” (AE-SI, German)

“Yeah, I think so. But I wonder if that’s just having a partner in any case. I don’t know would it make a difference if I was here or in the UK.” (CE1, UK)

More specifically, it could be said that many expatriates do not see a difference between the spillover and crossover effects during expatriation and during residence in their home country. When it comes to SIEs, those who's strongest "pull" force to the host country was career development or culture, appeared very appreciative of the support they received. On the other hand, those SIEs who were pulled to the host country by the partner seemed more demanding about the partner-based support. In other words, many of the SIEs felt they could not relocate and adjust without the support of the partner – but they probably would not do it in the first place without the partner's "pull" influence.

7. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this section, the objectives and the findings are viewed in the light of the reviewed literature. The distinction of different expatriate types, the partner nationality and the work-life models for expatriates are all taken into consideration.

7.1. Objectives and results

According to the research question, this paper sought to understand the ways in which expatriates perceive the support from their partners. Moreover, the perceived influence to the non-work and work domains was studied. On the basis of spillover and crossover theories (Caligiuri et al. 1998; Lazarova et al. 2010; Takeuchi et al. 2002), it was argued that such support and positive influence would potentially lead to improved work adjustment and performance.

As the result of the thematic analysis, five partner support themes were identified: bureaucracy assistance, language mentoring, cultural guidance, networking assistance and cross-cultural competence & mobility. According to these themes, the expatriate partner takes multiple roles, some of which correspond with a professional title; for example, translator, teacher, consultant, business partner, therapist. For expatriates who do not receive such support from their organization (like most interviewed SIEs), the support which they receive from the partner is very important. Even those expatriates, whose organization pays close attention to the well-being of their international employees, need to have a partner who is supportive to the idea of relocation – and open to cross-cultural adaptation.

Even if the partner is not competent on all areas, he/she might very well know someone who has the competence to deal with an expatriate's issue. HCN partners have a big upper

hand on this score, because they have – in most cases – had their entire lives to build networks in their home country. Moreover, the family and extended family of the HCN partner usually live in the same country, increasing the network even further. However, as the examples of two assigned expatriates showed, a trailing TCN or PCN partner can also be a very effective networker in the host location – whether employed or not. Moreover, expatriates with children may network even further through other parents, educational authorities et cetera.

Regarding HCN and TCN partners in general, the findings of Davies et al. (2015) seem to correspond with the findings of this research. HCN partners, in most cases, provide the expatriate with all the important tools to thrive in a foreign culture. Even Kraimer et al. (2001) whose findings suggested a disconnection between spousal support and expat performance, noted that interaction with host country citizens is important for performance. HCN partners and their networks provide just that. The TCN partner profile of Davies et al. (2015) matches with this study as well. Since the romantic relationship is international to begin with, TCN partners are more open to adaptation and cross-cultural challenges – many even consider it as adventurous and exciting. This study included only one expat couple with a PCN partner. In light of the literature which emphasizes family-based expatriation failure (e.g. Lee 2007; Tung 1987), this PCN partner fared exceptionally well in the foreign environment – even to the extent of becoming fluent in the exotic language. While such exception cannot lead to generalizations about PCN partners, it is still an intriguing example of a positive expatriate family experience.

The legal and financial liabilities of an expat-preneur bring additional challenge to the occupational life. Therefore, expat-preneurs are highly dependent on host country networks. A local partner, as the interviews revealed, is a critical factor in the success of the business. For two expat-preneurs, it was practically a pre-requisite. In other words, they would not even consider enterprising in the host country (in each case Finland), without the active participation of the local partner. It should be noted that expat-preneurs also face the same cross-cultural challenges outside of work as other expat types do.

With regard to the presented work-life models for expatriates (Caligiuri et al. 1998; Lazarova et al. 2010; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Haslberger et al. in Mäkelä & Suutari 2015: 53-70), this research provides some interesting insights. The expatriates' narratives increase understanding of the interplay between the expatriate's variables (expat type & partner nationality) and the various models' components. Most of the presented models include either partner or family adjustment in some form – as contributory components specifically. HCN partners, who are completely adjusted to the host country culture, can therefore be the source of exceptionally positive spillover towards expatriates. This positivity could manifest itself as, for example, faster appearance of spillover (e.g. instant access to partner's family networks) or stronger spillover (e.g. deeper, "inner circle" knowledge of the culture).

Takeuchi et al. (2002) list "spouse language proficiency" as one of the crossover components, contributing to the expatriate's cross cultural adjustment. Again, this benefit is characteristic but not exclusive to HCN partners. As the story of the Indian expat couple exemplified, PCN partners can achieve local language fluency, essentially providing similarly positive crossover as HCN partners in this regard. The interviewed expat couples where the partner was a TCN did not achieve host country language proficiency to any great degree. The main reasons include the fact all of these couples had lived (or planned on living) in other countries. Such lifetime mobility may reduce the interest of putting great effort on an individual local language. Moreover, these couples were mostly spending time with other expatriates, using English as the main language of communication.

Since studies like Kraimer et al. (2001) questioned the role of partner support in the expatriate's occupational achievements, a great emphasis was put on the model which consider work performance (as opposed to work adjustment) as the end result – specifically, *The Model of the Work-Family Interface on International Assignments* (Lazarova et al. 2010). Many of the expatriate resources, which Lazarova et al. (2010: 100-101) consider to be a positive factor in expatriate adjustment (and, consequently, in engagement and performance), were mentioned by the interview subjects. According to the

interviews, “spouse/partner support”- resource is something that contributes directly and tangibly to the expatriate’s adjustment while resources like “spouse/partner satisfaction” and “family communications” are potential facilitators of support. Again, the partners whose nationality allows more resources, can have a greater positive influence to the expatriate.

How the five identified support types (bureaucracy assistance, language mentoring, cultural guidance, networking assistance and cross-cultural competence & mobility) contribute to the expatriate’s work performance was relatively ambiguous – at least according to the perceptions of the expatriates themselves. However, some connections were discovered during the analysis. The greatest benefit on bureaucracy assistance is that it saves the expatriate’s time and nerves. In the beginning of a new foreign assignment or employment contract, the days are often long and the orientation might be burdensome. Dealing with the non-work relocation formalities (e.g. residence permits) at the same time can deprive the expatriate of any free time he/she has left. Moreover, the language limitations and bureaucratic inflexibility of the public officers adds to the frustration. Having the support of a partner, not only is some time saved, but also the mental capacity of the expatriate – allowing the focus to direct towards work.

The most notable “cultural guidance” and “language mentoring” - benefits in the workplace are the achievement of community. In the beginning, an expatriate might feel out of place, faced with a new office interaction culture. However, with the cultural guidance of the partner, many misunderstandings become rectified and cultural manners are explained, effectively making the expatriate more integrated with his/her local work community. It should be noted that this form of support, while not completely exclusive to HCN partners, was mostly found in those expat couples where the expat was partnered with a local.

The clearest representation of work-improving networking assistance was with the expatpreneurs. Again, while networking may improve each expatriate type’s general adjustment and spill over to the work-domain from there, the direct implications for work performance

were mostly present in those expatriates who were self-employed. Finally, the cross-cultural competence and potential mobility of the expat partner were not found to influence expatriates work performance directly. However, they can also be a source of positive spill over since many expatriates felt comfort in the presumption that the partnership is internationally mobile if need be.

While support, work performance facilitation and general positive influence (on the behalf of the partner) could be identified in the expatriates' narratives, the widely documented challenges and negative experiences were present in these discussions as well. Support, especially, proved to be a complex and a controversial topic. As previous literature has pointed out, expatriate partners are not necessarily satisfied with their supporting role. These discussions also highlighted that some forms of support may have negative side effects.

7.2. Theoretical contributions

The three main expatriate types, assigned expatriates, self-initiated expatriates (e.g. Jokinen et al. 2008) and expat-preneurs (Vance et al. 2015) were all represented in the sample. In comparison with the “classical” assigned expatriates, SIEs and expat-preneurs and their work-family dynamics are relatively under-researched. This thesis contributes especially to the understanding behind how the relocation drivers and motivators of SIEs and expat-preneurs affect the support that the partner offers. Where assigned expatriates often receive support from the organization they represent, SIEs and expat-preneurs are able to compensate this by receiving support not only from the partner but the partner's networks. This study highlights specifically *how* that exchange happens.

The theoretical background of partner nationality was largely based on the work of Davies et al. (2015) where TCN and especially HCN partners were seen as useful adjustment facilitators. Since their study was quantitative, this thesis adds an element of understanding

– why and how are expatriate partners a positive influence for the expatriates adjustment and work performance. Moreover, this research highlights the some of the differences that expatriates with different partner types (PCN, HCN or TCN) have. The thesis contributes to the work-life models of expatriates by adding a narrative behind the components of the model. The narratives of those expatriates with HCN partners offer intriguing insight on how some of the adjustment components of expat partners or expat families can offer swift and efficient contribution to the expatriate’s work adjustment and performance. This kind of influence can be offered, to a lesser extent, by TCN and PCN as well.

7.3. Managerial implications

While weighing the traditional pros and cons of expatriation, multinational companies should take into consideration the versatile selection of expatriates that is globally available today. Assigned expatriates, SIEs and expatpreneurs are driven by slightly different motives. However, each type has the potential to possess irreplaceable human capital which the MNCs can make us of. For example, multinational corporations should consider the characteristics of self-initiated expatriates and the motives for their relocation. Foreign subsidiaries of MNCs might be in need of parent country expertise. While the potential candidates in the headquarters potentially show reluctance towards relocation, the country of foreign subsidiary might already be home to self-initiated expatriates. Regarding expatpreneurs, their unique combination of parent country experience, cross-cultural adaptability and host country networks can provide interesting business opportunities for MNCs.

International organizations should not repeat the family related mistakes which have been present historically in assigned expatriation. As previous literature and this research have shown, expatriate partners are a critical influencer in the expatriate’s performance, regardless of the type of expatriation they represent. Especially, the role of the expatriate’s partner should be taken into account. For example, a SIE with a HCN partner seems to be a common combination, at least in Finland where the majority of the interview subjects were

located in. While suitable SIEs might be difficult to headhunt in the host location, such effort might be worth it for the MNC. In line with previous literature, those expatriates with a HCN partner have all the tools to thrive in the foreign environment. If an expatriate is accompanied by a PCN or TCN partner, the MNCs should consider how they can assist the partner to become more adjusted – essentially making him/her more competent on providing similar support as HCN partners do. If an expatriate is not accompanied by an actively participating partner, MNCs should consider mentoring programs where some of the partner-based benefits are provided.

7.4. Limitations & future research

The perspectives of the expatriate proved to be a challenging way of inquiring the spillover and crossover effects. Many of the interview subjects had a hard time visualizing the connection between partner support and work performance. One explanation could be the interviewees' apparent tendency to consider only tangible "hands on" support that affects their work directly. This was especially clear when comparing the answers given by self-employed (expatpreneurs) and company employed expatriates. The expatpreneurs received extensive support from their partners, covering many business operations. For assigned expatriates and SIEs, the non-work and work domains are much more separated, making the connection between partner support and work performance relatively vague. However, with a different kind of questioning and probing, such connections could be discovered.

The sampling process of the research and the related biases lead to some limitations. As the sample was volunteer response-based, the results might be more positive as a random sample from the population would be. This is due to the presumption that expatriates are keener on volunteering to share positive experience rather than negative. Self-initiated expatriates, especially, seem to be more willing to share their experiences since their expatriation is often the end result of hard work and the fulfillment of a long-term dream.

Conversely, while classical expatriates indeed earn their position through hard-work and merit, the initiative comes from the organization. In other words, the expatriate might have never even considered moving abroad prior to the foreign assignment – potentially leading to disinterest in sharing experiences with studies such as this one.

Moreover, the current relationship status of the expatriate might affect the findings. The two expatriates who were no longer with the partner who they were discussing about, seemed to be more critical – hinting that those couples who are currently together are predisposed to praise one another. On the other hand, separated couples might be overly resentful and, thus, report negatively biased experiences. These factors question the reliability of these findings in the general population.

The most common host country, with only two exceptions in this research, was Finland. As the majority of the interview subjects were from Western countries, this raises questions about the psychological distance of the countries and the subsequent implications to cross-cultural challenges. For example, a German expatriate might have minimal cross-cultural clashes in Finland compared to Far Eastern countries, for example. Thus, similar studies should be conducted in different continents to reinforce the reliability of the findings.

This study was cross-sectional. A longitudinal study would explain the potential differences in perceptions pre-, during- and post-expatriation. For example, a retrospective interview after repatriation would allow the expatriate to describe the time abroad as a whole – as opposed to an ongoing process. As many of the interviewed expatriates had only spent a few months abroad, many important perceptions which tend to appear later would, then, be absent from this study.

The applicability of assigned expatriate literature in analyzing SIEs and expatpreneurs should be questioned as well. Especially the interplay between expatriate type and partner nationality requires further inquiry. Moreover, the forms of direct support and positive spillover & crossover in these cases should be researched qualitatively and quantitatively.

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APPENDIX 1. INTERVIEW SHEET

BASIC INFO:

Assigned / SIE / Expatpreneur

Country of citizenship:

Country of expatriation:

Occupation & Industry:

Partner nationality:

Partner occupation:

1. RELOCATION BACKGROUND

- Please describe, in your own words, how you ended up being an expatriate.
 - Whose initiative? What were the drivers?
 - Relationship with partner around that time?

- Was relocation difficult?
 - What were the main challenges? What were the solutions?

2. SUPPORT

- Please describe to role division between you and your partner during foreign assignment.
 - Bureaucracy, administration, networking etc.
 - How did your partner support you in these matters?

- Did your partner help you adjust culturally? How?

- Could you imagine how these processes would go without your partner?

- Did any form of support help you in your work?

3. INDIRECT SUPPORT / NETWORKS

- What kind of networks has your partner given you access to?

- Family, friends, professional networks etc.

- How have these networks been helpful to you?

4. FUTURE PLANS

- Staying in Finland or planning to leave?

- Home country or third?