

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTON KAUPPAKORKEAKOULU
JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

EXPATRIATE EXPERIENCE AS PART OF THE LIFE
AND CAREER OF THE EXPATRIATE
A Cross-cultural Adjustment and Learning Perspective

Management and Leadership
Master's Thesis
Spring 2016
Karoliina Puruskainen

ABSTRACT

Author Karoliina Puruskainen	
Thesis Title Expatriate Experience as Part of the Life and Career of the Expatriate - A Cross-cultural Adjustment and Learning Perspective	
Major Johtaminen	Objective of the Study Pro gradu -työ
Date 6.6.2016	Number of Pages 91 + 1 Appendix Page
Abstract <p>Amidst the ever increasing trend of globalization, expatriation has become of great concern. The nature of expatriation is argued to be subject to changes in the external context, organizational structures and careers. Nevertheless expatriates have traditionally been perceived as a fairly homogenous, broad population in the literature and the alternative forms of expatriation besides company-assigned expatriates have received little attention. The purpose of this study is to explore the changing face of expatriation and understand the phenomena of cross-cultural adjustment and learning and their perceived contribution to the overall experience.</p> <p>The study is a qualitative case study and the data was collected by five semi-structured interviews of former or present expatriates with varying backgrounds. The data was analysed by utilizing firstly theme analysis and subsequently narrative analysis. This research approach was selected due to the exploratory and descriptive interest to cover under-researched topics and provide in-depth subjective considerations on the research phenomena.</p> <p>The findings of the study point to increasing heterogeneity in the nature of expatriation as well as a shift beyond the traditional forms of expatriation. There appears to be a subtle shift from companies to individuals and individual career plans as regards the phenomenon. The expatriate experience could be identified to result in considerable professional and personal development. The expatriates were able identify a variety of affective, knowledge, and skill-based learning outcomes, which were typically achieved by practical, people and problem solving oriented learning tactics. Several aspects facilitating adjustment were identified as well.</p>	
Keywords Expatriation, Cross-cultural adjustment, Cross-cultural learning	
Place of Storage Jyväskylän yliopiston kirjasto	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	6
2	PERSPECTIVES ON EXPATRIATION	9
2.1	Traditional View on Expatriation.....	9
2.2	Shift in the Nature of Expatriation	13
2.3	Beyond the Traditional Definitions of Expatriates	15
2.3.1	Personal Commitment	20
2.3.2	Intent to Stay	20
2.3.3	Thriving Abroad.....	21
2.3.4	Building / Following a Career	23
3	CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND LEARNING DURING INTERNATIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE	25
3.1	Characterizations on Culture	25
3.2	Cross-cultural Adjustment	29
3.2.1	Culture Shock in Cross-cultural Adjustment.....	32
3.2.2	Phases of Adjustment	32
3.2.3	Factors Contributing to Adjustment.....	35
3.3	Cross-cultural Learning	37
4	RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA.....	44
4.1	Philosophical Assumptions Underlying the Study	44
4.2	Case Study as Research Strategy	46
4.3	Semi-structured Interviews as Data Collection Method.....	47
4.4	Organization of Interviews and Sample Selection.....	48
4.5	Analysis of Data	50
4.6	Trustworthiness of the Study	52
5	RESULTS	54
5.1	Expatriate Anna - Changing Perspectives.....	54
5.2	Expatriate Sebastian - Seizing Opportunities	59
5.3	Expatriate Juha - Returning to Where it All Began	64
5.4	Expatriate Janne - Experiencing Something New	69
5.5	Expatriate Lukas - Internationality as a Lifestyle.....	73
5.6	Literature Analysis Combined with Narrative Analysis	78
6	DISCUSSION	85
	REFERENCES.....	88
	APPENDIX 1 Interview Outline	

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization has involved a substantial increase in cross-cultural interactions. The increased internationality of the economic, political and social spheres has rendered cross-cultural interactions, that is, contacts between people from different cultural backgrounds, both more frequent and in-depth. (Black & Mendenhall 1990.) The importance of national boundaries is suggested to diminish, as global companies continue to manoeuvre in an increasingly borderless world (Steers & Nardon 2005, 14-15). Companies are now embracing globalization as a means of enhancing their market shares and profits (Lee & Liu 2006). Due to the globalization of the business world, a variety of cross-cultural experiences, ranging from encounters with foreign customers and suppliers as well as international divisions to the longer-term stays abroad have become prevalent. Among the most intense cross-cultural experiences is proposed to be the expatriate assignment. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.)

Amidst this ever increasing trend of globalization, expatriation has become of great concern (Peltokorpi 2008). Based on their study, Lee and Sukoco (2010) suggest 80 per cent of middle-size and large enterprises to send their employees on global assignments and 45 per cent to plan an increase in the numbers sent (Lee & Sukoco 2010). According to global mobility statistics from 2005, roughly 40 per cent of organizations reported deploying fewer than 50 expatriates, 9 per cent between 51 and 100, 13 per cent fewer than 1000 and 13 per cent reported having over a thousand expatriates (Brewster, Sparrow & Vernon 2008, 237). This increase derives from multinational companies responding to competition by expanding their international operations at an increasing rate, while yet striving to remain cognizant and in control of them (Lee & Liu 2008).

Research on expatriation has so far predominantly focused on company assigned expatriates, who typically are suggested to have been understood as western male senior managers in their 40s or 50s who have a wife and children accompanying them (McNulty & Hutchings 2016). The nature of expatriation is nevertheless argued to be subject to the changes in the external context, organizational structures and careers. This challenges the conventional notions of ex-

patriate assignments as part of organizational career plans, and highlights personal decisions and aspirations instead. Self-initiated foreign work experiences have thus become more prevalent in line with global or boundaryless careers. (Siljanen & Lämsä 2009.) Regardless of the differences, expatriates are yet perceived as a fairly “homogenous, broad population” in the literature (Peltokorpi 2008). These alternative forms of expatriation have received virtually no attention in the literature, in spite of being prevalent and widely utilized by organizations (Jokinen et al. 2008). The distinctiveness of self-initiated expatriation as opposed to traditional expatriation together with the increasing importance of self-assigned expatriates in the global work force entail a greater focus on the heterogeneity of the phenomenon (Siljanen & Lämsä 2009).

Organizations assigning expatriates on foreign assignments do so on the supposition that the expatriates will be successful in their work and adjust to the new environment. Research, however, suggests that this is the case far too seldom. (Huang, Chi & Lawler 2005.) Expatriate failure rates are proposed to vary between 10 and 40 per cent and these failures to largely be attributable to difficulties in adjustment of the expatriate (Siljanen 2007, 14-15). Likewise, cross-cultural adjustment has been identified a major determinant of expatriate satisfaction and success (Jenkins & Mockaitis 2010). As the financial and non-financial costs of expatriate failure for both the organization and the expatriate are substantial (Aycaan 1997) and multicultural workforce increases in importance and variation, adjustment is suggested to require novel approaches (Siljanen 2007, 14-15).

Although company assigned expatriates have received much attention, more empirical research is needed on self-initiated expatriation. This study will examine the phenomenon with respect to the few previous studies differentiating self-initiated foreign work experiences (SFEs) from traditional expatriates and attempt to illustrate the diversity of expatriation. Furthermore, this study will explore cross-cultural adjustment and learning during international work experiences. These phenomena are believed to allow for much greater variation than generally assumed and to aid in forming a broader picture of expatriation.

The purpose of this study is to explore the changing face of expatriation and understand the phenomena of cross-cultural adjustment and learning and their perceived contribution to the overall experience. The study is an empirical research with a qualitative research approach. The data of this case study was collected by five semi-structured interviews of former or present expatriates with varying backgrounds. This study aims at providing qualitative considerations of the subjective interpretations of expatriates.

More specifically, the study aims at understanding the research subject by pursuing the following two research questions:

- How do the expatriates see the expatriate experience as a part of their personal life and their career?
- How do the expatriates describe their cross-cultural adjustment and learning as well as their contribution on the experience abroad?

The report consists of seven chapters. The first chapter establishes the context as well as the focus of the study and argues for its importance to international human resource management and presents the purpose and structure. The second chapter introduces the existing literature on expatriates by first discussing the conventional company assigned expatriates and the recent shift occurring in the nature of expatriation. It then presents the few advances made on the field beyond these traditional conceptions of expatriates. The third chapter introduces cross-cultural adjustment and discusses its relevance to international work experiences. The fourth chapter introduces cross-cultural learning with respect to expatriation. The fifth chapter expounds on the data collection and analysis and argues for the decisions made in relation to these matters. The sixth chapter discusses the findings of the study. The seventh and final chapter concludes the study. It discusses the implications of the study along with a few avenues for future research. Evaluations concerning the study are presented as well.

2 PERSPECTIVES ON EXPATRIATION

2.1 Traditional View on Expatriation

Expatriate is a common term in international human resource management (Mendenhall, Punnet & Ricks 1995, 408). Inkson, Arthur, Barry and Pringle (1997) conceptualize Expatriate Assignments (EA) as international experiences for which the initiative primarily comes from the company. This company operates internationally and the individual will fill a position in one of the company's foreign-based subsidiaries. (Inkson, Arthur, Barry & Pringle 1997.) Expatriates have thus traditionally been understood as employees who are sent by their employer to work outside their home country for a certain period of time and then repatriated to the home country, yet as an employee (Mäkelä & Suutari 2009). After the return, the individual will assume another position within the company in the home country (Inkson et al. 2007). The repatriation may be planned early on during the assignment, or at the least, the expatriates ought to be guaranteed a position at the corresponding level to the former one (Suutari & Brewster 2000). This relates to the orthodox career theory and organizational careers, in which careers are considered to "unfold in a single employment setting" and employees to follow the organizational career path, that is, to proceed vertically up the organizational hierarchy (Crowley-Henry 2007).

Expatriates have therefore traditionally been closely associated with multinational companies (MNCs) and their transfers from the parent-country headquarters to subsidiaries abroad (Kauppinen 1994, 1-2). According to Lee and Liu (2006), a MNC can be defined as a parent company involved in foreign operations through its foreign-based affiliates, over which it exercises direct control in form of policies as well as business strategies in production, marketing, finance and staffing, which transcend national boundaries (Lee & Liu 2006). Arp, Hutchings and Smith (2013) suggest several reasons for these transfers and the consequent importance of expatriates. Expatriates are argued to serve the functions of retaining control of foreign subsidiaries, management development, transfer of knowledge, shaping organizational culture in subsidiaries as well as

ensuring allegiance, trust and control. (Arp, Hutchings and Smith 2013, 316.) Transfers may be designed so as to equip the expatriate with skills in managing in a foreign country. Alternatively, transfers may also be utilized in developing an internationally oriented management for headquarters. In any case, transfers are argued to be a form of management development. (Kauppinen 1994, 1-2.) The managers themselves are suggested to have reported a consequent amelioration of their skills in management, tolerance for ambiguity, working with others and finding alternative approaches (Steers & Nardon 2005, 285).

Due to these functions traditional expatriates serve in MNCs, they are suggested to generally occupy key positions at a high hierarchical level in the local subsidiary of a home country MNC. Their professional skills play an important role in their selection, which is why they are largely well-educated and already fairly advanced in their career. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.) There is therefore argued to be a tendency in the literature towards conceptualizing these employees as executives and managers (Inkson et al. 1997). The goals of traditional expatriates and their assignments are proposed to be fairly specific by nature and often associated with the completion of particular company projects (Suutari & Brewster 2000). These can be accompanied by such personal motives of the expatriates as international experience, financial gain and enhanced career opportunities within the organization (Crowley-Henry 2007).

As a consequence of this organizational emphasis evident in above characterizations, expatriate managers are argued to largely have been categorized from an organizational perspective. Traditional categorizations have based, for instance, on the expatriate's country of origin. The expatriate can thus be characterized as being a citizen of the home country of the employer, the country of assignment or neither of these. (Brown 2008.) Home-country or parent-country nationals are citizens of the country in which the employing organization is headquartered and assigned to one of the organization's foreign operations. Host-country nationals are citizens of the country in which the employing organization has its foreign operations. Third-country nationals are citizens of a country other than the country of the headquarters' or the foreign operations to which they are assigned. (Steers & Nardon 2005, 276.)

Mendenhall, Punnet and Ricks (1995) elaborate on the above categorization based on the country of origin of the employee. Firstly, parent-country nationals (PCNs) are largely suggested to be managers, technicians, trouble-shooters, subsidiary heads and experts. The value of these people is suggested to lie in their knowledge of both the parent company operations and wishes of the headquarters, and thus their consequent ability to convey this information in the local units. On the other hand, during their stay abroad PCNs gain first-hand knowledge of the intricacies of the foreign market as well as the response of the local consumers to the company products or services. Furthermore, they are suggested to acquire cross-cultural management skills and knowledge of global business at large. Mendenhall et al. (1995) emphasize the need for PCNs in cases where the company operates in countries with high political risk. Having PCNs at the top is considered to facilitate the flow of information and assist

strategy and policy considerations. In addition to the above discussed advantages, PCNs are suggested to entail difficulties as well. They are, for instance, costly for the employing organization and are proposed to have a “cultural learning curve”, that is, they must learn the nuances, intricacies, and norms of working in a foreign business culture. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 404-405.)

Secondly, as local citizens, host-country nationals (HCNs) can be associated with several advantages for the foreign subsidiary. They, for instance, are already acquainted with local business norms and practices, master the local language and dialects, are perhaps more successful in attending to the local workers and are more economical than PCNs for the company to employ. On the other hand, as HCNs have never worked at the headquarters, they are argued to potentially lack knowledge of the headquarters’ needs, prefer a local view to a global one with respect to the subsidiary’s operations, and have cultural difficulties when interacting with parent-company employees. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 406-407.)

Thirdly, third-country nationals (TCNs) are suggested to largely be transferred or hired on the basis of their expertise or their ability to work cheaply in comparison with PCNs and HCNs. These factors render them attractive in the eyes of the employing organization. Nevertheless, TCNs are proposed to be more difficult to acquire due to the smaller numbers of potential candidates and thus necessarily not to present a straightforward solution to staffing in the foreign subsidiaries. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 407-408.)

In addition to the above discussed categorization based on their country of origin, distinctions between expatriate managers may alternatively be drawn with respect to the home office region, such as USA, Europe or Japan, the length of the international assignment or frequency of travelling. Newer categorizations of the types of expatriate managers are suggested to include assessing the expatriate’s organizational commitment, that is, whether the expatriate holds his or her allegiance to the parent or local firm, or the entrepreneurial spirit of the expatriate. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

Adler provides a further categorization of this phenomenon by discussing expatriates, inpatriates and transpatriates. The first are home country managers who are sent abroad to accomplish a particular goal in a foreign unit of the MNC. Inpatriates, on the other hand, are managers from local cultures, who are sent on assignment to the home country headquarters to learn the management approaches of the MNC. They are then transferred back to the local unit to manage the operations. Besides these “one-way” transfers, Adler highlights the need of a third group, namely transpatriates. They can be sent from any country to any other country and are argued to function as glue holding the globally dispersed units together. (Adler 1997, 235-236.)

Sending home-country nationals on assignment to the local units can present many advantages for both the employing organization and the expatriates themselves. Nevertheless, expatriation is argued to present several potential difficulties as well (Steers & Nardon 2005, 285). Firstly, expatriate failure rates,

which Steers and Nardon (2005) conceive of as premature return of either the expatriate or the family, are estimated to potentially range up to 40 per cent (Steers & Nardon 2005, 185-186). Alternatively, Brown (2008) proposes premature return rates to range between 8 and 20 per cent (Brown 2008). These failures are considered to primarily result from difficulties in adjustment of the manager or the family, other family problems, the personality of the manager, excessive demands or responsibilities placed on the expatriate, the technical proficiency or the lack of motivation of the manager for the assignment. (Steers & Nardon 2005, 185-186.)

However, as Holopainen and Björkman (2005) point out, understanding failure and success merely in terms of completion of the assignment is problematic. After all, premature termination of the assignment may, in some cases, derive, for instance, from retirement or acceptance of a new position. Likewise, the mere completion of the assignment is not indicative of the effectiveness of the expatriate in performing his or her duties during the assignment. (Holopainen & Björkman 2005, 38.) Adekola and Serge (2007) concur with these notions concerning the definition of expatriate failure. They propose an expanded definition, including the "the negative effects, stresses, and strains of an international assignment on expatriates and their families" by which they suggest the failure rate increase to 28 per cent. (Adekola & Serge 2007, 252-254.)

Expatriation may present other issues as well. It has been proposed that mainly due to family and dual career concerns, finding candidates for international assignments from the traditional sources, such as United States, Europe and Japan, has become more difficult (Brown 2008). This applies to suitable candidates in particular (Steers & Nardon 2005, 283-285). The expatriate must be competent in order to tackle the many cross-cultural obstacles confronting him or her during an assignment, which can be characterized with "culture shock, differences in work related norms, isolation, homesickness, differences in health care, housing, schooling, cuisine, customs, sex roles and the cost of living, to mention but a few" (Adekola & Serge 2007, 252-254). All in all, the international assignment is likely to inflict increased stress for the expatriate (Brown 2008).

Traditional expatriation presents substantial costs for the employing organization as well. This encompasses, on the one hand, the often generous expatriate compensation, and the potential costs of failed assignments as well as the costs of losing and replacing a returning expatriate on the other. (Inkson et al. 1997.) Expatriation is suggested to be the most expensive staffing strategy for the MNC (Lee & Liu 2008). There is considered to be an intrinsic risk for the employing organization of losing talent during or after the international assignment (Jokinen et al. 2008), and repatriation presents many additional issues, which are suggested to be illustrated by the high turnover rates of the returning expatriates (Inkson et al. 1997).

Although expatriates serve important functions in the employing organizations and are suggested to only increase in number in the future, they inevitably entail challenges. The above discussion highlights some of the difficulties

associated with expatriation in its more conventional form. This may be indicative of why the interest for alternative forms of expatriation is increasing and why a new breed of expatriates is suggested to be on the rise (Peltokorpi 2008). The following section depicts the changes taking place in the nature of expatriation in greater detail.

2.2 Shift in the Nature of Expatriation

As discussed above, the literature on company assigned expatriates is extensive (Jokinen et al. 2008; Inkson et al. 1997). However, an increasing number of foreign employees do not fall into this category (Jokinen et al. 2008). Previous studies have indicated the high proportion of employees working outside their home country, who do not qualify as traditional expatriates (Jokinen, et al. 2008; Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010).

Brewster, Sparrow and Vernon (2008) consider the traditional expatriate profile to be changing in a few important respects. They argue a shift to have occurred from the traditional career model with “white, middle class male employees from headquarters” and the modern expatriate population to be considerably different. Today, there are argued to be more both third-country nationals and inpatriates. Furthermore, women are argued to currently be better represented and the numbers to be yet increasing. Compared to the 10 per cent in 1994, in 2005 the percentage of women in the expatriate population had increased to 23. Nevertheless, several barriers for their participation are argued to persist. On the other hand, dual-career couples are estimated to have increased in number. This renders international assignments considerably more challenging, as the partner, whether a male or a female, is seldom willing to undertake the “trailing role” of not working and supporting the expatriate partner. As the partners often have careers of their own, they assume to work in the host country as well. Furthermore, it is suggested that expatriates are nowadays better educated due to the higher demands placed on their achievements during the assignment as well as the developmental purposes for high-potentials. They are also slightly younger than before with 54 per cent aged between 20 and 39, compared to the corresponding percentage of 41 in 1994. Moreover, Brewster et al. (2008) also emphasize the recent trend by which many expatriates themselves now seek employment abroad, instead of being sent by an organization. (Brewster et al. 2008, 237-238.)

The expatriates’ expectations concerning the assignment and career progression are suggested to have changed as well. The perceived value of an international assignment is suggested to derive from the opportunity for skill acquisition and personal development on the one hand, and career enhancement on the other. (Brewster et al. 2008, 237-238.) The often implicit assumption that the skills acquired during an international assignment are only applicable in the

organization in which they were acquired is largely refuted. On the contrary, they are proposed to frequently be developed and transferred across organizations. (Inkson et al. 1997.) Expatriates are argued to increasingly judge the experience as enhancing their careers, but in line with the recent notions of boundaryless careers, these advancement prospects are suggested necessarily not to lie within the company (Brewster et al. 2008, 237-238). After an international assignment, the expatriates perceive their extra-organizational career opportunities to have improved. Along this line of thought, the understanding of expatriation has shifted to be characterized as largely unplanned and with insufficient long-term intra-organizational career prospects after repatriation. (Crowley-Henry 2007.)

In contrast to organizational careers, Mäkelä and Suutari (2009) discuss the notion of boundaryless careers as a product of this development, which highlights the movement across organizational boundaries in the course of one's career. Employees are thus increasingly in charge of their own career development and career progress is considered more inter-company by nature. (Mäkelä & Suutari 2009.) Banai and Harry (2004) consider such boundaryless careers to have become prevalent. They perceive business transactions to have replaced the traditional organizational commitment, as the loyalty and ties of the employees have decreased. (Banai & Harry 2004.) This shift is argued to result from the current insecure job climate (Crowley-Henry 2007). Careers are therefore more professional and entrepreneurial by nature, since the employees themselves now organize their careers. Employment is often assessed against the backdrop of personal development, flexibility in career progress and psychological meaningfulness. In this paradigm, employees describe their career identity in terms of their profession instead of the employer and aspire to develop know-how as well as networks valuable beyond the current employment. The employees therefore ensure receiving frequent training and development in order to be eligible to work across companies, to which path they are unafraid of embarking on. All in all, in these employment relationships high levels of commitment are suggested to prevail "for the period of the mutually beneficial relationship" and the eventual termination of this contract to be anticipated. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

The trend of boundaryless careers is suggested to be particularly strong with international careers (Crowley-Henry 2007; Mäkelä & Suutari 2009). This transition is argued to have rendered internal motives for migration more common and giving rise to global careers (Mäkelä & Suutari 2009). Crowley-Henry (2007) adopts a more holistic perspective on international careers by providing more subjective considerations within the boundaryless career context. She describes the motivations for commencing on an international career in terms of external and internal career-related motivations. The former may include factors such as the hierarchical level, job type and financial success, whereas the latter factors such as personal development, learning a new language, adapting to a new culture, self-fulfillment or a better work/life balance, including vacation time and the climate. The motivations are suggested to con-

tain considerable variation and to be, in most cases, intertwined. Furthermore, they may often be accompanied by such externalities as the labor market situation, family situation and age. The objective motivations are shown to be an important factor governing the decision to move and settle abroad. Nevertheless, these are shown to often be accompanied with the more subjective ones. The decision to remain for a longer period of time in the host country was yet mainly attributed to internal career motivations. (Crowley-Henry 2007.)

Consistent with the above arguments, Siljanen (2007) also considers several changes to have occurred in the nature of expatriation. The external context is suggested to have become borderless as well as politically and culturally complex. Due to the growth in expatriation and shift in host locations, expatriation patterns are argued to have become more heterogeneous. Furthermore, the traditional hierarchical careers within organizations along with corporate structures are considered to be subject to change. This highlights transfers to a variety of directions, instead of the traditional transfers from developed countries to developing countries. Expatriation is suggested to also have become more prevalent in different types of new international commercial and non-commercial organizations, in comparison to the traditional MNCs. These changes in expatriation are asserted to have influenced expatriates per se and transformed expatriate assignments from organizational career plans to individual career plans and decisions. (Siljanen 2007, 18.)

This new breed of expatriates differs from company-assigned expatriates in many respects which renders the existing expatriate literature largely irrelevant to these individuals (Suutari & Brewster 2000, Jokinen et al. 2008). In order to capture the current diversity in expatriation, a shift beyond traditional career literature and the traditional definitions of expatriates is therefore required (Siljanen & Lämsä 2009; Crowley-Henry 2007). There yet appears to be a void in current research as regards the expansion of the concept (Siljanen & Lämsä 2009; Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010). The recent approaches to expatriation include the emphasis on the reasons and motivations for migration (Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010), career and personal development (Peltonen 1998), cross-cultural adjustment with a career perspective (Siljanen 2007, 20), learning (Jokinen et al. 2008) and identity and self-narrative (Siljanen 2007, 29). The following research represents the few advances made on the field with respect to the alternative forms of expatriation (Inkson et al. 1997; Siljanen & Lämsä 2009).

2.3 Beyond the Traditional Definitions of Expatriates

In this study, following the definition of Brewster (2002), expatriation is defined as “the process of an individual moving to live in another country” (Brewster 2002, 84). Following this line of thought, an expatriate can thus be understood as “anyone living or working in a country of which they are not a citizen” (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 408). The phenomenon is defined with this breadth in

order to encompass and allow for the assumed diversity of the phenomenon as well as to ensure a separation with traditional expatriate literature.

Inkson et al. (1997) were the first to address the widespread phenomenon of people independently seeking work abroad, which had previously been overlooked in the literature. In order to capture this phenomenon, they introduced the concept of Overseas Experience (OE). OE is characterized as a personal odyssey driven by curiosity, in which the emphasis is on cultural experience and geographical exploration. The initial goals are characterized as diffuse and personal by nature, including "seeing the world", "try[ing] something different" and "find[ing] myself". The role of work is mainly that of ensuring the continuance of the travels. Having spent abroad a period of time, ranging from few months to several years, the person is argued to be likely to return home in order to either continue with his or her career or begin a new one. (Inkson et al. 1997.)

This phenomenon is portrayed as highly ad hoc by nature: Work in the host country is suggested to seldom be arranged in advance and the person will therefore switch jobs and be geographically mobile. Consequently, any attachments to the employing companies tend to be weak and temporary. This experience cannot be considered career-oriented, in that the person is inclined to accept unskilled temporary employment, which is unlikely to benefit their career. Conversely, it can even be considered as "short-term career sacrifices". Any career development is considered to derive from cultural experience instead of work. These may include the broadening of perspectives, the appreciation of cultural differences as well as the building of confidence. (Inkson et al. 1997.)

The work of Inkson et al. serves as a valuable advancement beyond traditional expatriates. However, this definition may arguably be considered somewhat insufficient in characterizing all migration which does not fall under the traditional notions of expatriation. Although this model acknowledges the existence of a few well-qualified candidates who obtain work in advance, the focus is yet on the "thousands of young people head[ing] overseas for a prolonged period of travel, work and tourism" (Inkson et al. 1997, 358). This approach is argued to oversimplify the phenomenon (Suutari & Brewster 2000; Siljanen 2007). In addition to the distinction between traditional expatriates and OEs, further distinctions between the different types of self-initiated expatriates are suggested to be required (Suutari & Brewster 2000).

Corresponding to OEs and building on the framework established by Inkson et al., self-initiated foreign work experiences (SFEs) or alternatively self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) have been included in the discussion. Although seldom distinguished, these are argued to substantially differ from organizational expatriates. (Suutari & Brewster 2000, Peltokorpi 2008.) "Self-initiated expatriate refers to any person who is hired on a contractual basis and not transferred overseas by the parent organization" (Peltokorpi 2008, 1593). These concepts are considered to be better applicable to the European context, where international assignments do not necessarily require crossing seas (Siljanen 2007, 17). Due to

the differences between company-assigned expatriates and SFEs, a conceptual and empirical distinction between the two is argued to be required (Näsholm 2014).

According to Suutari and Brewster (2000), SFEs differ from traditional expatriates in four important respects. Firstly, the defining difference is argued to be the initiative for emigration. Whereas in the case of traditional expatriates the initiative for relocating comes from the employing organization, in the case of SFEs it comes from the individual. Secondly, the goals of traditional expatriates tend to be easier to pin down and more associated with the employing company, although personal motives can coexist. The goals of SFEs are less straightforward and specified, often concerning some form of personal development. Furthermore, they tend to possess a considerably higher personal motivation toward internationalism and be driven by push-factors such as the job market situation and limited domestic career possibilities. These two, the source of the initiative and the goals, can be discussed together, since both correspond to the motives of the assignment. Motives are proposed as the primary feature to be investigated in comparisons between traditional expatriates and SFEs as well as in constructing possible subgroups of the latter. As regards SFEs, they are generally proposed to be motivated by their interest in internationalism and the poor employment situation (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Pertaining to the above mentioned, Suutari and Brewster (2000) introduce further discrepancies between SFEs and traditional expatriates by discussing individual background variables. Due to the functions and goals of traditional expatriates, they largely are higher up in the organizational hierarchy, well-educated and advanced in their career. SFEs, on the other hand, are a more heterogeneous group and encompass both early career and experienced transfer-ees. They are proposed to be slightly younger than their expatriate counterparts, and more often single, female and to have a spouse working abroad. Furthermore, they are suggested to frequently work for less international, local or foreign organizations and tend to be located in near-by countries. SFEs have more often temporary employment contracts and work on lower organizational levels. Due to the above mentioned factors, the typical tasks of the two groups are proposed, in all likelihood, to differ. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Thirdly, traditional expatriates and SFEs can be differentiated by investigating their funding or compensation. As regards the former, funding comes from the company salary and expenses. Expatriate compensation is based on the idea of ensuring the expatriate to maintain a given standard of living and thus compensating for any additional costs, which may arise during the assignment. Furthermore, an additional premium is suggested to be designed as an incentive for accepting the offer. Generally, the compensation package is thus complex, encompassing various allowances, premiums and insurance. On the other hand, the SFEs are unlikely to enjoy as generous compensation. They are less likely to receive premiums, allowances, additional insurance or performance-based bonuses. There is greater variation in the salary levels among this group but largely they are suggested to be "employed under local compensa-

tion principles". Therefore, their negotiations are suggested to be easier. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Finally, the careers of SFEs are argued to be boundaryless and planned by the individuals themselves, whereas expatriates tend to rely on company support, although this may prove insufficient in many cases. These two groups also differ with respect to repatriation arrangements. SFEs face a more uncertain situation and have to re-establish their careers fairly independently. Unlike traditional expatriates, they are largely not promised a job after repatriation and even when some form of agreement is negotiated, this is seldom done prior to the departure. SFEs may be more inclined to accept another assignment and consider a more permanent, if not permanent, stay abroad. They appear yet less optimistic that the international experience be valued. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.) Table 1 summarizes the above discussed contrasts between traditional expatriates and SFEs.

TABLE 1 Contrasting traditional expatriates and SFEs (Suutari & Brewster 2000; Inkson et al. 1997)

	Traditional Expatriates	SFEs
Source of the Initiative	Employer	Individual
Goals for the foreign job	Personal: financial, international experience, career. Organizational: completion of organizational projects.	Diffuse & unspecified individual development, internationalism, limited career possibilities
Individual background variables	Key positions in home-country MNCs	Heterogeneous tasks in local or foreign international organizations
Funding/compensation	Expatriate compensation package: allowances, premiums, insurance	Local compensation principles (+expatriate benefits)
Career type	Organizational career	Boundaryless career

The above characterizations point to several significant differences between traditional expatriates and SFEs. Several authors have argued for the distinctiveness of the two groups (Suutari & Brewster 2000; Peltokorpi 2008; Howel-Walsh & Schyns 2010). This existing classification of expatriates, which revolves around traditional expatriates on the one hand, and overseas assignment and self-initiated foreign work experience on the other, is yet argued to be an oversimplification of the phenomenon and further research on this field to be needed (Siljanen 2007, 180). In addition to appreciating the heterogeneity of the phenomenon, it has further been argued that that considerable variation exists even

among self-initiated expatriates (Suutari & Brewster 2000; Banai & Harry 2004; Siljanen & Lämsä 2009).

A few categorizations illustrating the diversity among self-initiated expatriation and the deviation from the average SFE have been provided. Firstly, Suutari and Brewster (2000) identify six subgroups of SFEs by investigating the differences between traditional expatriates and SFEs along individual variables, employer and task-related variables, motives, repatriation agreements, funding and future career perceptions (Suutari & Brewster 2000). Secondly, Banai and Harry (2004) discuss career management in an international milieu and identify a “new breed” of international managers. These international itinerants are defined as “professional managers who over their careers are employed for their ability, by at least two business organizations that are not related to each other, in at least two different foreign countries” (Banai & Harry 2004, 97). These managers are suggested to exhibit a greater tendency towards self-managed careers instead of corporate-managed ones as well as towards defining success in terms of psychologically meaningful work instead of pay, promotion and status. They emphasize skills which can be transferred across companies and prioritize on-the-job training. They define their career progress by professional learning compared to formal training programs and age-related milestones. (Banai & Harry 2004.) Thirdly, Siljanen (2007) investigates in her research international career and expatriate experience in not-for-profit organizations (NFPs) in the Israeli-Palestinian cultural context. (Siljanen 2007, 142-176) As an international assignment is suggested to be a contribution towards greater career self-management, these four categories are approached from the viewpoint of personal life management (Siljanen & Lämsä 2009). This is considered to encompass the dimensions of external and internal life management. The former reflects the employment conditions of the individual and, depending on how deliberate the progress can be considered, the external life management is defined as either in control or wandering. The latter, on the other hand, reflects the more subjective considerations of oneself and the expatriate experience and can be defined as calculated, balanced or diffused. (Siljanen 2007, 146-147.) The categories of international actors identified in the research also have different “attachment anchors” which they find important and which explain the success of their foreign assignment (Siljanen 2007, 179).

These three categorizations can be regarded as holding a few corresponding emphases in their classification of the differing expatriate types. They will, therefore, here be presented along these four different types of emphasis which each respective group is found to exhibit. These themes are personal commitment, intent to stay, thriving abroad and building or following a career and they will present different expatriate types across theories.

2.3.1 Personal Commitment

Some form of personal commitment can be considered the overarching element of dual career couples, returning nationals and idealizers. Firstly, dual career couples identified by Suutari and Brewster (2000) in investigating subcategories for SFEs, is highlighted by the spouse-related variables. The members of this group have sought employment abroad as a result of the expatriate assignment of their spouses, and can therefore be defined as trailing spouses. This trend is argued to be more common in the Nordic countries, where equality in working life is greater. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Secondly, returning nationals, identified by Banai and Harry (2004) in describing international itinerants, are students and managers who have returned to their home country after a period abroad. This migration tends to be from a less developed country to a developed country in order to receive training or education or to advance their career. These individuals may yet face a difficult position at home, as their qualifications and experience are not valued merely because they are nationals. Furthermore, returning home may also be a loss of face, since it may be perceived as a step down by their fellow citizens. Consequently, returning nationals may become international itinerants. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

Thirdly, idealizers are characterized by a strong inner calling and religious commitment because of which they have also moved to the Middle East. Deriving from the Bible, Israel is suggested to embody a unique place for this group. This ideological commitment and spirituality appears to strongly affect all aspects of their international assignment. (Siljanen 2007, 166-171.)

2.3.2 Intent to Stay

Their intent to stay a longer period in the area can be considered to combine localized professionals, balanced experts and "failed" expatriates. Firstly, for localized professionals, repatriation arrangements are proposed to be largely irrelevant, since they currently have no intention to return to the home country. They wish to extend their time abroad and may not be able to estimate the length of their stay. Their intention to stay may be governed by marriage with a foreigner. Furthermore, their motivation can be characterized by a strong personal interest in internationalization on the one hand, and insignificance of the domestic job market or employer initiative on the other. Their expatriate assignment may have either changed to a permanent position or, to the least, they have ceased to be treated as expatriates in the organization. They have thus often neither premiums nor allowances. The variation in salary levels among this group is argued to be considerable as well. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Secondly, balanced experts are characterized as positive and balanced. They have generally worked a longer period in the area and may have returned after a stint in their home country or another location. They have generally in-

vested considerable time and effort in studying the host country languages and cultures and have often achieved fluency in one or more host society languages. Consequently, they consider themselves connected with the culture and express regard for the language. They are able to realistically reflect upon their selfhood and identity. This realism also extends to their work, to the work community and host society, with which they are satisfied and deeply committed to. They are exposed to the host culture at work as they work in diverse teams with both locals and internationals, in which the language is often local. Due to this deep involvement with the host society members, this group is more embedded in the host culture and “establish and maintain relatively stable and functional relationships with unfamiliar cultural environments”. They, nevertheless, consider themselves foreigners in the society. (Siljanen 2001, 150-167.)

Balanced experts are characterized as psychologically healthy people, who are willing to change. Their greatest strength is suggested to lie in their awareness of their roots, by which they are able to reflect upon their own cultural background and recognize difficulties in both their identity and their “being in the middle”, not feeling quite at home even when at home in their home countries. However, they are able to adopt multiple perspectives and thus instead of clinging to their beliefs and habits, they are eager to modify them when proven necessary. They are conscious of this skill of theirs for change and embrace the possibility of personal development and learning. The success in this is suggested to be evident in their lengthier stays in the host country. Balanced experts are argued to have selected to adapt in the host country society, instead of the international expatriate society or their home country society. (Siljanen 2001, 150-167.) This strong attachment of balanced experts to the host society is suggested to contribute to the success of their foreign assignment (Siljanen 2007, 179).

Thirdly, “failed” expatriates have decided to stay abroad and are thus failures in the eyes of their employing organization. They are suggested to perhaps enjoy the greater autonomy and responsibility associated with itinerant work or to have become frustrated with the demands of the headquarters and embarked on their own journey. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

2.3.3 Thriving Abroad

Some expatriates can be characterized as fixed on their international life, which they also take great pleasure in. Their stay outside their home countries is on a fairly permanent basis and the change of location during this time common. This group, encompassing cosmopolitans, international professionals, novelty seekers and drifters, is somewhat detached from their home countries.

Firstly, cosmopolitans are characterized as professionals who possess the knowledge, skills and abilities and utilize them in an international milieu. For them this milieu is argued to be the greatest attraction and the “wandering life” to be desirable. This may derive from extensive international experience during

childhood or early adulthood, by which they have detached themselves from their fellow citizens. They may therefore consider it easier to associate with other itinerants or foreigners and be both willing and capable of working in situations to which traditional expatriates would be difficult to persuade. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

Secondly, international professionals are distinguished by their extensive international experience. They are characterized as “global specialists”, who are focused on individual jobs instead of companies and are thus familiar with intra-company transfers. Their stay outside their home country is suggested to often be of permanent nature. Most often they work in higher-level management functions or as experts. Their motives largely correspond to those of other SFEs, although this group is proposed to be more inclined to value economic benefits and undervalue professional development, perhaps because they are already confident of their abilities. Only a few among this group have a repatriation agreement, which is likely to color their negative perceptions of finding a similar-level position in the home country. Furthermore, they hold it unlikely that their international experience will benefit their future career. Although they cannot perhaps be defined as traditional expatriates due to their own initiative, their compensation package closely resembles that of traditional expatriates. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Thirdly, novelty seekers may have become disconnected from their home countries and may thus seek employment outside their home countries and organizations. They frequently have a partner representing a different race, religion or nationality, which facilitates their access to this community, while perhaps excluding them from their own. Due to their skills, they are capable of working in different cultures and also thrive on it. Their greatest motivation is argued to lie in the possibility of living in various countries and they are therefore likely to frequently relocate. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

The fourth group, drifters, is placed in this category due to the many factors they share with the above three groups. They can yet be perceived less successful, as they are characterized by confusion, dissatisfaction and a feeling of being a guest and outsider both in the host and home countries. They have previous international experience and may come from intercultural families. They generally experience the environment as very difficult and indicate frustration towards both themselves and the host society. This may partly derive from their attempts of learning the language and fitting in the society, which nevertheless failed to happen. Although drifters are suggested to have undergone cross-cultural adjustment multiple times, their adjustment is depicted to be dominated by sadness, frustration and tiredness with the situation. Due to their multicultural background, drifters are argued to have a diffused identity and difficulties in determining who they actually are. They can thus be “easily pulled by all kinds of winds”, which is illustrated by the uneasy wondering of the group around the world. The international assignment can perhaps be regarded as an attempt to find their identity. In general, drifters show pessimism concerning the future, as this far their expectations have not been fulfilled. (Siljanen 2007,

171-176.) They are argued to still seek for something they can attach themselves to and find meaningful in the longer term (Siljanen 2007, 179).

2.3.4 Building/ Following a Career

For a few expatriate types an elevated focus on career considerations would emerge as a common feature. Building one's career or following a career one has already embarked on would seem to determine their relocation. Although these expatriates are at various stages of their career and differ from each other along several criteria, young opportunists, managers with unique expertise, mavericks, global careerists, job seekers and officials are all driven by work-related decisions.

The first group, young opportunists, corresponds to the young people already identified by Inkson et al. (1997). This group encompasses young people below the age of 30, who are at an early stage of their career. Among this group professional development and career progress are elevated in importance, whereas financial benefits not as much. They tend to be located in Europe and work for foreign companies or foreign subsidiaries of home-country companies. They are optimistic about their employment opportunities at home and assume the international experience to contribute to their future career progress. Their compensation package seldom involves additional allowances or insurance benefits. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Secondly, managers with unique expertise are characterized by their unique talent and skill which they sell on a global basis. Their career follows the specific needs of various employing organizations and proceeds from contract to contract which last a limited period of time. Their value further lies in their cross-cultural abilities. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

Thirdly, mavericks are employed for the set of personal and professional capabilities they possess in order to accomplish a specific task or project. Their greatest asset lies, however, in their "self-management" and they usually succeed without direction and control. The value of mavericks is usually limited in duration and they cease to benefit the company once they have delivered the expected results. (Banai & Harry 2004.)

Fourthly, global careerists are described, above all, as exhibiting determination in their career path and commitment to their work. They are also argued to be confident in their own expertise. Their self-confidence derives from this professional expertise along with their novel roles and networks. Generally, they have worked abroad on several occasions as well as in multiple locations and are thus skilled in foreign languages and intercultural communication. Consequently, they adapt easier and recognize cultural differences between their home and host countries. This group consists of professionals with expertise which enables global transfers, which the above mentioned skills facilitate. Their behavior is characterized as goal-oriented and they are argued to show a disposition towards learning, in which they are also prepared to invest time

and effort. They are shown to associate their learning experiences, for the most part, to their professional expertise and cross-cultural know-how. As a result, the worldview of the expatriate is suggested to broaden. (Siljanen 2007, 150-159.) The success of this group is argued to be explained by their strong commitment to their global careers (Siljanen 2007, 179).

Although global careerists integrate to varying degrees to the local culture, they associate most, if not even entirely, with the local expatriate community and may even spend all holidays outside the area. Therefore, they may have very limited dependency and interaction with the host country. They are yet argued to be competent and prepared to entering other cultures and be able to deal with a plurality of cultures and their coexistence. Global careerists accentuate their network of work colleagues both locally and internationally. Global careerists are argued to sometimes hold mixed feelings towards home and be "at home everywhere and never quite home anywhere". They are yet depicted as having a healthy and balanced conception of their identity and to be able to identify changes in it. They are inclined to engage with members of other cultures and be open to the diversity of cultural experiences. Due to the fact that global careerists are accustomed to switch between cultures, they are argued to have a larger repertoire of cultural identities which they are able to exhibit. (Siljanen 2007, 150-159.)

Fifthly, job seekers, is characterized by limited career possibilities at home or even unemployment. The overriding feature is the motives, in this case the poor work situation at home. Consequently, professional development is considered less important and financial benefits a more important motive. They work in foreign owned companies around the world. Largely they have no repatriation agreement and are skeptical concerning their employability on return. Premiums and allowances were less common among this group. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

Finally, officials, is highlighted by the employing organizations. They are located in Europe and work for such international organizations as European Union or the United Nations. These individuals tend to be older than average SFEs. They were motivated to the international assignment by economic benefits, their personal interest towards internationalization as well as new experiences and had largely made the initiative to the job themselves. This group is markedly less optimistic concerning the contribution of the assignment to their future career and finding a job which would correspond to their skill-level. Nevertheless, a considerable percentage of these individuals have a repatriation agreement which guaranteed them, at the least, a similar-level task at home. The compensation package involves various premiums and allowances, which may even exceed those granted to expatriates. (Suutari & Brewster 2000.)

3 CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND LEARNING DURING INTERNATIONAL WORK EXPERIENCE

The global world has triggered changes in organizations, interactions between people and careers to mention a few and therefore increased communication across cultures. One of the most in-depth exposures to a foreign culture is the expatriate experience. A differing cultural context basically presents the options of either continuing as in the home culture or adjusting to the changes (Shim & Paprock 2002). The success of an expatriate in a new cultural context is suggested to be dependent on cultural adjustment (Lee & Sukoco 2010). Without achieving at least satisfactory adjustment, an expatriate is argued to be unable to fully engage in the work or society (Oberg 2006). This adjustment process is proposed to be strongly influenced by learning (Siljanen 2007, 51-52). Yamazaki and Kayes (2004) point as well to the growing literature suggesting expatriate adjustment to be dependent on how well the expatriate is able to learn from experience during the time abroad (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004).

This section will firstly define culture and identify the elements constituting a culture. It will then briefly discuss the differences among cultures and how they relate to cross-cultural adjustment and learning in this study. In order to understand the framework for cross-cultural adjustment and learning, the literature surrounding the two intertwined phenomena will then be examined.

3.1 Characterizations on Culture

Building on the work of Kluckhohn and Kroeber, Black and Mendenhall (1990) define culture as consisting of “patterns of behaviors that are acquired and transmitted by symbols over time, which become generally shared within a group and are communicated to new members of the group in order to serve as

a cognitive guide or blueprint for future actions" (Black & Mendenhall 1990). The construct of culture is argued to have long been the source of considerable confusion in multiple disciplines, which has increased richness, perhaps on the expense of clarity (Mendenhall & Oddou 1991, 14). Although the aspirations towards an acceptable definition may even be considered futile, numerous definitions characterizing the phenomenon are argued to persist (Goodwin 1999, 7). These definitions are suggested to be overly general and vague (Mendenhall & Oddou 1991, 14). The following chapters will characterize culture by discussing the common elements suggested by the literature.

According to Adler (1997), culture can be understood as something 1) shared by virtually all members of a social group, 2) passed on from older members to younger ones and 3) shaping behavior or perception of the world. In general, culture is suggested to "distinguish the members of one human group from another" and the substantially differing ways of life of groups are generally conceived of as different cultures. (Adler 1997, 15.) Paralleling to the aspects proposed by Adler, Goodwin (1999) highlights culture as a set of learned meanings, which are, to a certain degree, coherent and organized within a particular group of people and which differentiate groups from one another. These meanings are "transmitted across time" and provide guide for action. Furthermore, he points to culture as the "human-made part of the environment", which draws attention to such cultural products as houses as reflections of the culture. (Goodwin 1999, 7.)

The cultural orientation of a group can be considered to exhibit the interplay of the values, attitudes and behaviors of its members (Adler 1997, 15). It is "a set of norms, according to which things are run, or simply 'are' in a particular society or country, and to which most members of the society adhere to (Kauppinen 1994, 3). The members convey the culture through their values concerning life and their environment, which then affect their attitudes of the type of behavior which is regarded as appropriate and effective in a particular situation (Adler 1997, 15). These elements of culture can be organized into three levels according to their visibility. Beginning from the most visible representation of culture, at the first level are behaviors and artifacts, at the second beliefs and values, and at the third the underlying assumptions, which require inference. In order to comprehend the actual meaning of the behaviors or beliefs for group members, the underlying assumptions need to be surfaced. This is challenging in that people are generally suggested to be oblivious of the assumptions they hold and take them for granted. (Mendenhall & Oddou 1991, 14.)

In a particular culture, there is thus a preference for a distinct cultural orientation, which on the surface level illustrates itself through the way in which certain behaviors are generally favored while others repressed. Diversity is, nevertheless, emphasized to exist both within and among cultures and cultural descriptions to rather equal norms or stereotypes of a given society, specifying the attitudes of the majority of people the majority of time, never each member all of the time. They neither predict the behavior of any particular individual. (Adler 2002, 18-19.) Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck present a set of assumptions

which they suggest to explain the cultural orientations of a society. These assumptions are suggested to allow for the above mentioned diversity within the society and illustrate how cultural descriptions always refer to stereotypes or norms. The six assumptions are the following (Adler 2002, 18-19):

1. There are a limited number of mutual problems, to which all societies always need solutions to. These solutions include clothing, feeding and housing its people as well as devising systems of justice, communication, education, health, commerce, transportation and government.
2. These problems are solved with only a limited number of alternatives. Housing may, for instance, be arranged by means of tents, caves, igloos or apartment buildings. In any case, people need some form of housing in order to survive the winter.
3. Although all the alternatives for the problems are available in all societies, only some are preferred.
4. Each society holds a dominant profile, or value orientation, as well as multiple variations to this profile, that is, alternative profiles. Disease may, for instance, be cured with chemotherapy, surgery, acupuncture, prayer or nutrition.
5. Both the dominant and alternative profiles have a preferential order for the different alternatives.
6. When societies are undergoing change, this preferential order may be diffuse, as different parts of the society hold different preferences.

The variation between cultures is suggested to be both distinct and significant. Instead of being arbitrary, patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving base on one's cultural heritage. One may not yet be aware of the impact and distinctiveness of one's culture until encountering other cultures. (Adler 1997, 32.) These differences between cultures are argued to be likely to cause misperception, misinterpretation, and misevaluation in cross-cultural encounters and thus render cross-cultural interaction more difficult, since one's own cultural perspective hinders the accurate understanding of another (Adler 1997, 67-92). As different cultures hold different patterns of behaving, believing and interpreting the world, in cross-cultural interactions one is likely to draw erroneous deductions concerning the other's behavior, since they base on one's own cultural norms and worldview (Black & Mendenhall 1990).

As regards culture, research on international HRM has traditionally revolved around understanding similarities and differences across cultures. This variation is suggested to illustrate cross-cultural communication and adjustment. Several dimensions have been identified along which cultures are argued to be similar or dissimilar. (Siljanen 2007, 20.) The following paragraphs will elaborate on the dimensions identified by Hofstede.

Hofstede has conducted an extensive investigation into cultural differences across cultures in his 40-country study, which was subsequently expanded to cover over 60 countries. Interviews, which were conducted within one large multinational company, revealed substantial differences in the behavior and attitudes of employees from different countries. These differences in work-related values and attitudes were attributed to the national culture more than they were to position within the organization, profession, age or gender. Furthermore, they appeared to be leveled neither by the common employer nor by the time gap between the interviews. The most significant differences were initially summarized into four primary dimensions: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance and career success/quality of life. A fifth dimension, Confucian dynamism, was subsequently added (Adler 2002, 52.)

Individualism is characterized by people defining themselves largely as separate individuals and committing mainly to themselves. This suggests loosely knit social networks and the greatest emphasis to be placed on attending to oneself and one's immediate family. Collectivism, on the other hand, is defined by tight social networks where the division into own in-groups, such as relatives, clans and organization, and other groups is crucial. In a collectivist culture goals are common by nature instead of centering around self-interest. Loyalty to the group is anticipated to guarantee in return care, protection and security from other members of the in-groups. (Adler 2002, 53.)

The second dimension, power distance, indicates the extent to which an unequal distribution of power is approved of by organizational members lower in the power hierarchy. This illustrates how readily employees reconcile themselves to the superior wielding more power than they do. In high power distance countries, the superior may, for instance, be considered to be right simply owing to the position, whereas in low power distance countries this occurs only when the superior actually knows the correct answer. Likewise, employees may execute their work in a particular manner either because this is the wish from the superior or because it is in their opinion the best way. (Adler 2002, 56-57.)

The third dimension, uncertainty avoidance, indicates the extent to which people regard ambiguity with anxiety and thus attempt to evade it by striving for greater certainty and predictability in their lives. In an organizational context this may manifest itself in the establishment of more formal rules, rejection of deviant ideas and behavior, acceptance of the possibility of absolute truths and unquestionable expertise as well as provision of greater career stability to the employees. (Adler 2002, 59.)

The fourth dimension, career success/quality of life, illustrates whether a society is more inclined to emphasize more narrowly career success or more broadly the general quality of life. The former is defined by a focus on assertiveness as well as the acquisition of money and matter with a lesser attention on people. On the contrary, the latter societies highlight relationships among people, concern for others and the overall quality of life. (Adler 2002, 61.)

The fifth dimension, Confucian dynamism, was subsequently identified when investigating Chinese management and employees. It determines the ex-

tent to which the employees are devoted to the work ethic and have respect for tradition. (Adler 2002, 63.)

Despite its popularity and variety of applications, the work of Hofstede has yet received criticism. It has, for instance, been challenged for the underlying assumption of equating nation with culture, quantifying culture by means of dimensions and the difficulties associated with it as well as the observer being located outside the culture. (Baskerville 2003, 1.) More generally, categorizations concerning cultural differences have yet been argued to oversimplify the phenomenon and the heterogeneity as well as within-group differences of ethnic groups to require closer scrutiny (Siljanen 2007, 45). These differences across cultures per se or the relative difficulty of adjustment to different cultures are, however, of no direct interest to this study. Here, expatriation and the consequent change in location are presumed to be accompanied with a shift in prevalent patterns of behavior, belief and interpretation. These distinct patterns are treated as far as they entail a potential need for accommodating one's behavior and perspective.

3.2 Cross-cultural Adjustment

Kauppinen (2004) begins the discussion on adjustment by suggesting that people generally wish to have a fairly high degree of certainty and predictability in their lives. This is suggested to be the main reason behind our inclination towards adopting the many routines in our lives. Therefore, a routine illustrates a certain level of proficiency. The importance of routines is argued to lie, by its name, in their routinization, which facilitates one's daily operation. The disruption of routines consumes more time and mental energy, as one is forced to process the issues which otherwise would be routine and little thought about, and less time and mental energy can thus be invested in other matters. This is likely to result in feelings of frustration, anxiety and uncertainty. As people seek satisfaction even when their living conditions have altered and their routines disrupted, they either actively induce changes or passively accept them. People therefore adjust. (Kauppinen 1994, 2-3.)

Adjustment is required when a need to think or act outside one's own cultural context arises. This largely involves the move beyond casual encounters to deeper forms of interaction with other cultures, such as work in multicultural teams or international assignments. (Bennet & Bennet 2004, 156-157.) Black and Mendenhall (1990) describe adjustment to a cross-cultural situation as a process by which the individual gradually develops familiarity, comfort and proficiency as regards the differing behavioral expectations as well as values and assumptions of the new culture. In other words, cross-cultural adjustment equips the individual with "knowledge of which behaviors to execute or suppress in given situations and the ability to effectively actualize this understanding". (Black & Mendenhall 1990, 124.)

This change or process of taking over traits from a culture other than the one in which the individual has his or her primary learning in, is generally referred to with the concept of acculturation. Various acculturation strategies have been identified, which expound on the approach of an individual to the dominant society. Four basic strategies have been identified: assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. In the assimilation strategy the individual puts aside his or her own culture in order to identify with the dominant culture. In the separation strategy the individual shuns contact with others and fosters his or her original culture. In the integration strategy the individual wishes to retain his or her original culture by interacting with others and being a part of the society. Finally, in the marginalization strategy the individual lacks interest or opportunity in both cultural maintenance and interaction with others. (Siljanen 2007, 33.)

The process and result of this acculturation process, on the other hand, can be described with the more generic term of adaptation, which can be understood as encompassing both of these. Siljanen (2007) presents three strategies of adaptation: adjustment, reaction and withdrawal. In adjustment the changes taking place in the individual derive from an attempt to reduce conflict. In reaction the changes result from retaliating against the environment. In withdrawal the changes result from an attempt to reduce the pressures of the environment. The adjustment strategy is generally considered to be the only realistic one for the individual. Following this line of thought, Siljanen argues adaptation and adjustment to have fine distinctions in meaning and the former to be a broader concept and process as regards cross-cultural adaptation. (Siljanen 2007.) These two concepts are, nevertheless, suggested to frequently be treated in the literature as carrying similar meanings and used interchangeably (Siljanen 2007, 33-34; Aycan 1997). The latter perspective will be adopted in this study. Thus, the concepts of adaptation and adjustment are assumed to carry no substantial difference in meaning and will be used interchangeably. The following chapters will specify the phenomenon further.

Despite being central concepts in acculturation literature, Aycan (1997) agrees on the definition of adjustment and adaptation to have proven difficult. He defines them as "indicat[ing] a feeling of acceptance and satisfaction, acquisition of culturally acceptable skills and behaviors, the nature and the extent of interaction with host nationals or the lack of mental problems, such as stress or depression". This indicates the occurrence of changes in the individual, which allow for a certain degree of achieved fit and reduced conflict between the external demands on the individual and his or her attitudes as well as behavior. (Aycan 1997.) Inducing these changes in oneself is highlighted to be a conscious effort and adjustment to other cultures to necessitate an intention to do so (Bennet & Bennet 2004, 157). Successful adjustment can thus be illustrated by effective functioning as well as reduced conflict and stress (Aycan 1997). Alternatively, it has been described a process through which the individual strives to achieve greater predictability of the new environment (Wu & Ang 2011). Consequently, the individual is assumed to maintain an expected level of perfor-

mance, returning only after completing the assignment, forming constructive relationships with members of the host society, maintaining a moderate level of stress and holding positive attitudes towards work (Aycan 1997). Successfully adjusted expatriates “open to the host culture” and complement their native cultures with novel behaviors, norms and rules. Conversely, maladjusted expatriates cling to their native cultures and neither accept nor adjust their behavior to the new culture. (Peltokorpi 2008.)

The above discussed illustrates the complexity and multidimensionality of the phenomenon. Acculturation literature presents three facets of adjustment: psychological, socio-cultural and work adjustment. With respect to expatriate adjustment, these facets have been suggested to correspond to interaction with host country nationals, general environment and work, respectively. (Peltokorpi 2008.) Interaction adjustment refers to socializing and interacting with host nationals (Huang et al. 2005). It also describes the way in which one becomes fully effective and capable of tackling problems in non-work situations (Aycan 1997). General living adjustment refers to the living conditions and includes aspects such as housing, food, health-care and recreation (Huang et al. 2005). It can be characterized by a sense of satisfaction with various aspects of life, also compared to that experienced by others in home and host societies (Aycan 1997). Work adjustment refers to specific job and supervisory responsibilities as well as performance expectations of the job (Huang et al. 2005). It is illustrated by good performance in one’s new position as well as a positive attitude towards it. Associated with work adjustment is also the commitment to the local unit and intent to stay. (Aycan 1997.)

Siljanen (2007) advances the understanding of cross-cultural adjustment by suggesting that, instead of stressing the importance of communication and relationships with the host society in cross-cultural adjustment, it can relate to various cultural contexts. Adjustment is proposed to potentially have different frames of reference. This may, for instance, be the international colleagues or one’s ideology. In order for the adjustment to be successful, some subjective attachment is yet argued to be required. (Siljanen 2007, 176-177.)

Bennet and Bennet (2004) suggest adjustment to occur in stages. Initially it is described as frame shifting, in which the individual seeks to adopt an alternative perspective, that of the host culture. In this way, the individual attempts to experience the “appropriateness of a particular action” and to move from knowledge to behavior. A non-member is, however, unlikely to ever experience the culture as a member does. Subsequently, adjustment takes the form of behavioral code-shifting, in which the individual begins to experience a particular aspect of the new culture as a given form of appropriate behavior. This highlights the fact that these two stages should follow one another in this particular order. The adapted behavior should result from the feeling of appropriateness instead of the mere knowledge of the appropriateness. In adjustment, the authenticity is thus argued to be of great importance. The individual is argued to have “an expanded repertoire of behavior appropriate to various cultural contexts”. (Bennet & Bennet 2004, 156-157.)

3.2.1 Culture Shock in Cross-cultural Adjustment

The term culture shock has been utilized in referring to the “unpleasant or negative experiences in intercultural encounters” (Siljanen 2007, 41). It can be considered to describe to the psychological uncertainty involved in these encounters (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 410). Adler (1997) considers culture shock a natural reaction to the stress the expatriate experiences when immersing oneself in the new environment. This stress results from the many changes which occur when the expatriate leaves the home country and organization and transfers to “the new, unpredictable, and therefore uncertain environment”. Culture shock is explained by the consequent difficulties in perception and interpretation, as the expatriate interprets the new environment based on the home culture instead of the local one. This renders their perception and interpretation both ineffective and inappropriate, which is why the behavior of others’ may seem to lack reason and their own behavior not to yield expected results. This, together with the conflicting values of the host culture, intensifies the experienced stress. (Adler 1997, 238-240.) According to Steers and Nardon (2005), the inability to perform such minor tasks as making a phone call or utilizing public transport may escalate the experienced feeling of distress (Steers & Nardon 2005, 286). Culture shock can be therefore distilled to encompass the following aspects: 1) stress resulting from attempts to adapt psychologically, 2) feelings of deprivation and loss, 3) not being accepted by and not accepting members of the new culture, 4) bewilderment deriving from roles, values, expectations and identity, 5) astonishment and distress due to cultural differences and 6) sense of inability due to difficulties encountering the new environment (Siljanen 2007, 41).

This type of stress-related culture shock may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Psychological reactions include embarrassment, disappointment, frustration, impatience, anxiety, identity confusion and anger. Furthermore, physiological responses, such as sleeplessness, stomachaches, headaches and trembling hands are possible. (Adler 1997, 238-240.) Despite these negative reactions, culture shock is suggested to be a positive sign and a starting point for adjustment, since it is argued to indicate that the expatriate is gradually detaching oneself from the home culture and becoming more deeply involved with the host culture. Therefore, instead of attempting to eliminate culture shock, one should rather manage the stress associated with it. Successful expatriates are suggested to utilize various stress management techniques in order to cope with culture shock. (Adler 1997, 238-240.)

3.2.2 Phases of Adjustment

Research has scrutinized the dynamics of culture shock and argued a U-shaped curve to describe the phenomenon to a large extent. This general pattern exhibits the relationship between adjustment and the duration of the individual’s stay in the new culture as well as the different phases or stages in the process.

(Mendenhall et al. 1995, 410; Siljanen 2007, 41-42.) Following the U-curve model, Oberg originally suggested four phases of adjustment and culture shock. These were honeymoon, crisis, recovery and adjustment. (Oberg 2006.) Following this line of thought, most discussions concerning the U-curve involve four stages. Mendenhall et al. (1995) present their four stage curve (Figure 1), which presents the stages of honeymoon, culture shock or disillusionment, adjustment and mastery. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 410.)

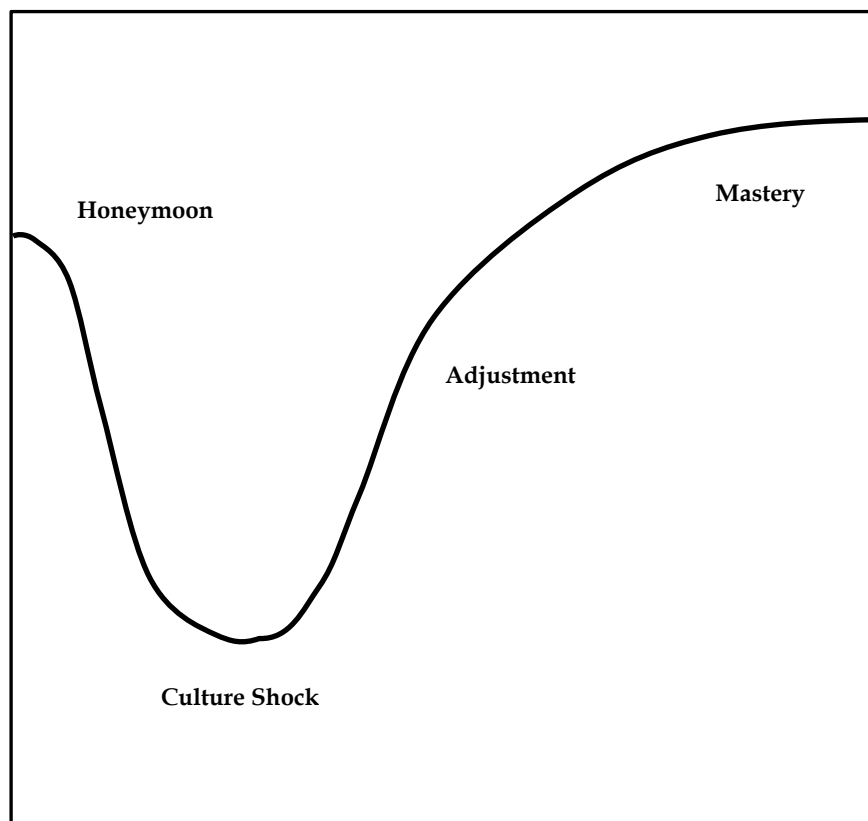


FIGURE 1 U-curve illustrating culture shock (Black & Mendenhall 1991, 227)

The honeymoon stage is defined by the expatriate's infatuation with the host culture. As the expatriate initially discovers the host country and host nationals, they appear exciting and exotic, and the expatriate is intrigued by this novelty. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 410.) Relationships with the host culture are suggested to be superficial by nature and the newcomer to meet everything with enthusiasm and fascination (Oberg 2006). This initial phase at the top of the curve is suggested to generally cease within two or three months after arrival (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 410).

In the culture shock stage the initial fascination towards the host culture is replaced with disillusionment, frustration, confusion or dissatisfaction with

new situation (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 411-412). This is argued to derive from the differences in language, values, concepts as well as the loss of familiar symbols (Siljanen 2007, 41-42). The expatriate is bombarded by too many new cues from the environment, which he or she fails to understand (Adler 2002, 262-263). The struggle of attempting to adjust to the host culture is estimated to occur when roughly three months of arrival has passed and it may potentially last to up to nine or ten months after arrival. This is illustrated by the "adjustment" or "satisfaction" curve rapidly declining and reaching the very bottom. Although the model suggests this stage to be followed by the adjustment stage, the expatriate may also remain at this stage the duration of his or her assignment. These expatriates are proposed to either return home prematurely or to complete their assignment only by effort of will. They may never be entirely effective or satisfied in the host culture. As regards the U-curve, in such cases it may be nonexistent or at least have a shorter right arm than the left. This would signify some adjustment to have occurred which would, nevertheless, fall short of the negative feelings towards the host culture (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 411-412.)

In the adjustment stage, the newcomer eventually adjusts to the peculiarities of the host culture and copes under a new set of living conditions. It is the attitude of the expatriate which changes, by which the environment no longer perturbs the same and the personal discomforts are not projected to the locals and their manners. (Oberg 2006.) This stage is characterized by gradually learning the norms of the new culture and beginning to live a more normal life (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 412). This involves increased familiarity with the language and culture as well as greater confidence in the new environment (Siljanen 2007, 41-42). The expatriate is suggested to learn what to focus on and what to ignore as well as to differentiate individual behavior from that reflecting a cultural pattern. Tackling the demands of the new environment contributes to improved problem solving abilities. (Adler 1997, 240-241.) Adjustment depends upon considerable effort on part of the expatriate and occurs neither naturally nor overnight. It is proposed to begin after nine to ten months of arrival and continue the entire duration of the stay. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 412.)

The mastery stage is defined by effective functioning in the host culture as well as taking pleasure in the host culture institutions, norms, traditions and activities (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 412). This should be evident in fewer cases of anxiety or stress (Siljanen 2007, 41-42). The expatriate does not necessarily welcome all aspects of the host culture but, nevertheless, is aware of why the aspects he or she dislikes exist. Likewise, the expatriate comprehends that his or her home culture contains aspects different but yet analogous to those of the host culture which may be seemingly unattractive as well. This stage is argued to entail a high level of cross-cultural maturity, which requires a desire to understand the host culture as well as willingness to make an effort in order to do so. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 412.)

Although Mendenhall et al. (1995) acknowledge the cycle to potentially appear slightly different for some expatriates depending on the personal characteristics of the expatriate, they, nevertheless, assert expatriates to generally

undergo each of the phases discussed above (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 412). Culture shock has yet been criticized for undermining individual differences. For instance, the assumption that the subsequent phases necessitate the proceeding ones is largely refuted. On the other hand, vast international experience is argued to potentially facilitate the transfer and to thus prevent culture shock. This U-curve model of cross-cultural adjustment has subsequently been modified into W- and J-curve models. These curves represent extensions to the U-curve, and take into account in their time frame the return to the home country and the realistic anticipatory expectations, respectively. U- and W-curves are criticized for assuming that everyone embraces the new culture with optimism in the beginning. Instead, they are proposed to perhaps hold considerably more realistic anticipatory expectations. (Siljanen 2007, 41-43.)

As discussed above, culture shock as part of the adjustment process has been of considerable interest. It is therefore considered of importance to further investigate the phenomenon with respect to expatriation and cross-cultural adjustment in the present study. The varying expatriate experiences are assumed to advance the understanding on culture shock as a process and to perhaps allow for assessing the above mentioned criticism.

3.2.3 Factors Contributing to Adjustment

Due to the fact that the work of expatriates is often perceived crucial for the employing organizations, the field of human resource management has been occupied by identifying key success factors for expatriates. This encompasses attempting to delineate the exact nature of international adjustment as well as the key skills assisting in it. (Mendenhall et al. 1995, 408.) Research has suggested a variety of factors to determine the success of expatriate adjustment. These factors contributing to the different facets of adjustment can be classified into individual factors, organizational factors and environmental/cultural factors. (Holopainen & Björkman 2005, 37-38.)

The personal characteristics of the expatriates have attracted attention, in particular (Holopainen & Björkman 2005, 37-38). Personality traits have, for instance, often been posed among the most important contributors to expatriate adjustment, although the literature investigating these linkages remains underdeveloped. It has also been argued that the effects of personality traits on cross-cultural adjustment need be considered in a specific cultural context. (Huang et al. 2005.) Nevertheless, the findings lack convergence and multiple individual, contextual and work-related factors have been argued to influence the different facets of adjustment instead (Peltokorpi 2008). However, utilizing the suggested factors as an aid for further reflection is considered appropriate. As the greatest emphasis of this study is on the individual expatriates, the organizational and cultural factors will largely be disregarded.

As already mentioned, various individual factors facilitating adjustment have been identified. Shaffer and Miller (2008) discuss anticipatory individual

factors, which refer to the initial expectations and groundwork the expatriate has prior to the assignment. They include such personal characteristics as language ability and previous international experience. Knowledge of the local languages is suggested to facilitate the transition (Shaffer & Miller 2008, 118-119.) According to Brewster et al. (2008), the mere language ability is, however, insufficient. The expatriate must be both willing and capable of expressing oneself in verbal form in the host culture and able to understand non-verbal communication. (Brewster et al. 2008, 242-243.) Prior international experience, on the other hand, contributes to a better understanding of appropriate behavior in the host culture. Extensive exposure to other cultures provides the expatriate with knowledge of functioning with other cultures which is often transferable across cultures. Based on this cultural awareness, the expatriate is argued to better be able to anticipate problems, which facilitates adjustment. (Shaffer & Miller 2008, 118-119.) Furthermore, the value of previous cross-cultural experience has been explained by the acquirement of skills which enable dealing with uncertainty as well as the possession of more realistic expectations concerning the difficulties one will encounter. How much one is to benefit from this experience is suggested to be dependent on both the time gap between the two assignments and their nature. The closer in time and the more similar the work and cultural contexts are, the more they are suggested to prepare the expatriate for the upcoming assignment. (Aycan 1997.)

Aycan (1997) has identified additional factors contributing to the adjustment of expatriates. Firstly, a group of mental capabilities are identified which are suggested to enable greater self-regulation and thus facilitate adjustment. This involves affective capabilities which encompass controlling and reducing negative reactions and exhibiting positive reactions to the challenges one encounters during the assignment. These may be, for instance, aggression, withdrawal as well as excessive excitement, and commitment, proactive involvement as well as enthusiasm, respectively. On the other hand, intellectual competencies include analytical thinking, information generation in order to assess the situation, planning for future actions and self-reflection. The third subgroup of mental capabilities is action-oriented competencies, which include persistence to pursuits, interpersonal sensitivity and empathy to mention a few. Secondly, Aycan argues for the importance of technical and managerial competence for adjustment. This derives from the arguments of expertise reducing uncertainty in the new position which then reduces stress as well as competence building self-confidence, which, in turn, allows for new behavior and learning. Demonstrating one's competence is also suggested to breed trust and cooperation among colleagues in the local unit. (Aycan 1997.)

Two important relational skills associated with adjustment are cultural flexibility and conflict resolution skills. The former refers to the ability to enter a new cultural setting. (Aycan 1997.) This may involve flexibility in acquiring new behavioral and attitudinal patterns as well as holding respect and a non-evaluative stance towards the behavior of host culture members (Brewster et al. 2008, 242-243). This flexibility may involve discovering substitutive activities in

the new culture for those enjoyed in the home country (Aycan 1997). This relates to the self-oriented dimension identified by Mendenhall and Oddou (1995), which “serve[s] to strengthen the expatriates self-esteem, self-confidence and mental hygiene”. This firstly involves replacing the traditional joy bringing activities of the home culture with corresponding activities of the host culture. Such general categories as arts, sports and cuisine are suggested to be valued by practically all cultures; their manifestations may merely be dissimilar. Adjustment is argued to be more successful when the expatriate is able to discover substitutes for his or her interests and activities in the host culture. Secondly, entering an unfamiliar culture is suggested to be a likely source of stress for the expatriate and the ability to deal with stress to therefore be crucial for adjustment. This may include the discovery of “stability zones”, such as meditation, diaries or engaging in favorite pastimes, which serve as “way out” for the expatriate when the host culture becomes overly stressful. (Mendenhall & Oddou 1995, 344-346.) The importance of substitutive activities and stress reduction techniques is acknowledged by Brewster et al. as well (Brewster et al. 2008, 242-243). On the other hand, conflict resolution skills refer to the ability to cope with interpersonal conflicts. This involves appreciating others’ viewpoints and increasing mutual respect. Conflict resolution is assumed to contribute to cultural learning and reduce stress. (Aycan 1997.)

In addition to the above discussed factors, Brewster et al. (2008) identify a few additional individual factors predicting the success of expatriates. These include, for instance, interpersonal and relationship development skills. Emotional stability and tolerance for ambiguity are also highlighted, as is self-efficacy, that is, the confidence in oneself of being successfully able to execute a given behavior. Furthermore, they suggest that personal interest in the foreign experience facilitates success and that success is more likely when the assignment is congruent with the career path of the individual. (Brewster et al. 2008, 242-243.)

The family is of particular importance to the adjustment of the expatriate. This includes the stability of the family situation as well as the adaptability and supportiveness of the spouse and family. (Brewster et al. 2008, 242-243.) The children may experience difficulties in adjusting to a new school and the spouse may encounter problems in employment. Whereas such problems on part of the family are argued to be a likely cause for elevated stress for the expatriate, well-adjusted families are suggested to reduce stress and contribute to all facets of the expatriate’s adjustment. (Aycan 1997.)

3.3 Cross-cultural Learning

According to Aswathappa (2010), learning can, in its basic sense, be perceived as “the modification of behaviour through practice, training, or experience”

(Aswathappa 2010, 144). This definition encompasses the aspects identified by Gold, Thorpe and Mumford (2010) as well, in that learning is both a process and an outcome. This presumes involvement in the acquirement of novel skills, knowledge or ways of relating to others and a sustained change in behavior, respectively. (Gold, Thorpe & Mumford 2010, 263.)

Ng, Dyne and Ang (2009), discuss learning with respect to its outcomes. They classify the outcomes into three major categories: affective, knowledge and skill-based outcomes. Affective learning outcomes describe the changes in motivation and attitude which derive from the learning experience. Knowledge outcomes describe the type and quantity of the attained knowledge deriving from the learning experience. In other words, learning is regarded as a change in an individual's knowledge domain, including attaining novel knowledge and forming a more sophisticated mental model of a particular matter. Finally, skill-based learning focuses on behavior. It scrutinizes whether individuals can apply the learned behaviors in practice. (Ng, Dyne & Ang 2009.)

Learning is argued to result in the accumulation of both explicit and tacit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is, by its nature, organized and can be further transmitted to other people. It generally derives from more formal sources, such as training or education. This type of knowledge represents, however, only a fraction of the total knowledge. (Aswathappa 2010, 145-146.) Most learning is proposed to be non-formal by nature and the learner not to necessarily even consciously be aware of the learning and its effects on behavior. This type of learning may be described as natural learning, in that it occurs without an intention to learn. It derives from daily human interaction in a wide array of contexts, including attending meetings and resolving problems. (Gold et al. 2010, 264-265.) In other words, it is attained through observation and direct experience. This type of learning results in tacit or implied knowledge, which represents the vast majority of knowledge. This knowledge is embedded in behavioral and thought patterns, and thus largely beyond one's comprehension (Aswathappa 2010, 145-146.) Thus, it cannot be put into words and communicated explicitly to others (Gold et al. 2010, 265).

This type of unconscious learning described above pertains to the development of the knowledge referred to as know-how, in particular. Know-how can be understood as the knowledge of how to proceed depending on the requirements of the situation. It is argued to assist in the resolution of regular situations, in that one is able, as a matter of routine, to recognize problems, attend to them and effectively normalize the situation. This type of reaction is illustrated with a thermostat: If the temperature declines, the thermostat is switched on. Likewise, when the desired temperature has been reached, the heating is switched off. This is referred to as single-loop learning. On the other hand, if the thermostat would question the reason for why it is set to a particular temperature, it would be double-loop learning. As regards people, this would indicate questioning a routine and the assumptions behind it. Professionals are generally considered highly talented at single-loop learning, because of their extensive training and education as well as encounter with many problems. Conversely,

they are not equally talented in double-loop learning. Whereas success in single-loop learning indicates a selection of assumptions which have proven successful in the past, success in double-loop learning presumes an ability to move past the behaviors deriving from these assumptions in cases when they are unsuccessful. One has to therefore be able to challenge and critically evaluate the situation and the assumptions leading to a particular type of behavior. (Gold et al. 2010, 265.)

As discussed earlier, cultural differences can be considered to be significant and to shape individual behavior to a considerable degree. Shim and Paprock (2002) scrutinize such cases in which individuals enter another culture and experience differences. The individuals are suggested to either continue as before or to change their perspectives and adjust. (Shim & Paprock 2002.) During this adjustment process, learning is proposed to be of great importance (Siljanen 2007, 51-52). In this sense, learning in a new cultural context is defined as a process producing changes in knowledge, attitude and skill, which occurs through experience in the host culture as adults (Shim & Paprock 2002). With respect to cross-cultural adjustment, three prevalent approaches to learning have been proposed: the social learning theory, experiential learning and transformational learning (Siljanen 2007, 51-52).

Firstly, social learning theory (SLT) can be considered to integrate elements of the above discussed conditioning and cognitive learning theories. It emphasizes the capability of individuals to learn and behave not only based on the consequences of their actions but also based on their observations of other people's behavior. Consequently, individuals form cognitive maps of associations between behavior and the resulting consequences, which are used in future circumstances to anticipate consequences. Important in observing a particular behavior are thus the perceived consequences of the behaviors. SLT also proposes that the learner is capable of anticipatory control, which indicates the choice concerning how to respond in various future situations. (Black & Mendenhall 1991.)

Social learning theory can be condensed into four main elements: attention (noticing an attractive model), retention (encoding the modeled behavior in the memory of the observer), reproduction (translating the symbolic representations into overt actions and comparing one's performance against the memorized modeled behavior) and incentives (influencing the choice of models and which behaviors are executed) (Black & Mendenhall 1991). By observing a model, which may, for instance, be a parent, peer or a superior, tacit knowledge and skills are acquired. The learner must pay close attention to the model and have a solid recollection of the model's behavior, in order to be able to imitate and practice the behavior. Imitating may be motivating for the learner, for instance, because an action has been demonstrated to result in reward. (Aswathappa 2010, 150-151.)

Black and Mendenhall discuss SLT in the context of cross-cultural adjustment and propose it to provide theoretical support for the U-curve pattern of adjustment. An SLT perspective is, for instance, proposed to explain the contra-

dictory empirical findings on the phases of adjustment. Furthermore, it is suggested to explain and provide a means of systematically evaluating the potential relevance of various individual differences to cross-cultural adjustment. (Black & Mendenhall 1991.) Nevertheless, as identifying important individual variables and their impact to adjustment as well as their relation to the U-curve pattern of adjustment are of mere indirect interest to this study, greater discussion on these aspects will be omitted.

Secondly, experiential learning theory (ELT) places experience in the center when considering human learning and development. ELT is defined as follows: "a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." (Kolb & Kolb 2005, 194.) This approach considers learning to be best conceived of as a process instead of outcomes, and highlights the way in which all learning is, by its nature, relearning, which builds on and refines existing ideas and beliefs. Learning is characterized as a holistic process of adjustment to the world, which entails conflicts, differences and disagreement, as one travels between opposing modes of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. Learning is, therefore, the result of synergetic transactions between a person and the environment, by which novel experiences are assimilated into existing concepts and existing concepts are adapted to novel experiences, respectively. (Kolb & Kolb 2005.)

In this model experience constitutes the foundation for the four modes of learning: feeling, reflecting, thinking and acting. These four modes in this order form the four-phase learning cycle. This journey begins with immediate concrete experiences (CE), which are subject to observation and reflection (RO). This eventually leads to the assimilation of the experience into abstract conceptualization (AC). AC is subsequently transferred into active experimentation (AE) with the environment, by which the learning cycle is completed. AE also fulfills the function of starting the cycle again, since it assists in creating novel experiences (CE). In order for learning to be effective, the theory emphasizes four learning abilities associated with the learning dimensions of CE, RO, AC and AE. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.) These four modes and the associated skills will be discussed next.

Ng et al. (2009), suggest individuals to differ with respect to their stance towards concrete experiences. This is illustrated in both how active they are and how much they enjoy learning from their experiences. Individuals with an inclination towards concrete experiences are argued to generally be open to new experiences, prioritize feeling to thinking and be at ease in unstructured situations. (Ng et al. 2009.) CE abilities are thus associated with the employment of feeling, intuitive understanding and sensitivity towards other people's emotions. This translates into holding an open mind to people, valuing interpersonal relations as well as performing well in unstructured and ambiguous situations. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.)

Reflective observation is described as occurring when experiences are contemplated and assumptions and beliefs critically reflected. This process is of great importance, in that individuals are consequently capable of objectively

describing and inferring the reasons behind a situation. Furthermore, it promotes considering alternative perspectives or views of a situation. (Ng et al. 2009.) RO abilities emphasize careful listening and observation, by which the whys and hows behind occurrences are uncovered. This may be evident in “imagining the meaning of situations and ideas, seeing things from different perspectives, and appreciating different opinions” (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004, 364). Individuals with strong RO tendencies are suggested to esteem patience, impartiality and considered judgment. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.)

Abstract conceptualization focuses on the development of general theories by utilizing scientific, rather than intuitive, approaches. On the learner’s part, this is proposed to involve distilling one’s considerations into more general concepts, which then supposedly direct future actions. In general, this stage prioritizes thinking to feeling. (Ng et al. 2009.) AC abilities rely on the use of logic, ideas and concepts, that is, thinking, analyzing and building general theories. This supports, for instance, devising systematic plans and employing abstract symbols. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.)

Finally, active experimentation describes a fairly practical approach to the environment. The individual endeavors to influence and succeed in one’s environment, the success of which illustrates whether the individual’s enhanced understanding corresponds to reality. (Ng et al. 2009.) AE abilities highlight the active effort to influence people and change situations, in order to make things happen on a very practical level. Individuals strong in AE are not shy of either taking responsibility or risks to manipulate their environment. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2004.)

As mentioned before, effective learning from experience is suggested to require the possession of all the four abilities discussed above. Nevertheless, individuals are seldom strong in all four poles of this model. People generally develop particular strengths in one or two of them, due to their inborn capabilities, past experience and the demands of the present environment. In the model the distinct dimensions of Concrete Experience-Abstract Conceptualization and Reflective Observation-Active Experimentation are positioned at opposite vertical ends, forming four quadrants of different learning styles as depicted in Figure 2. (Armstrong & Mahmud 2008.)

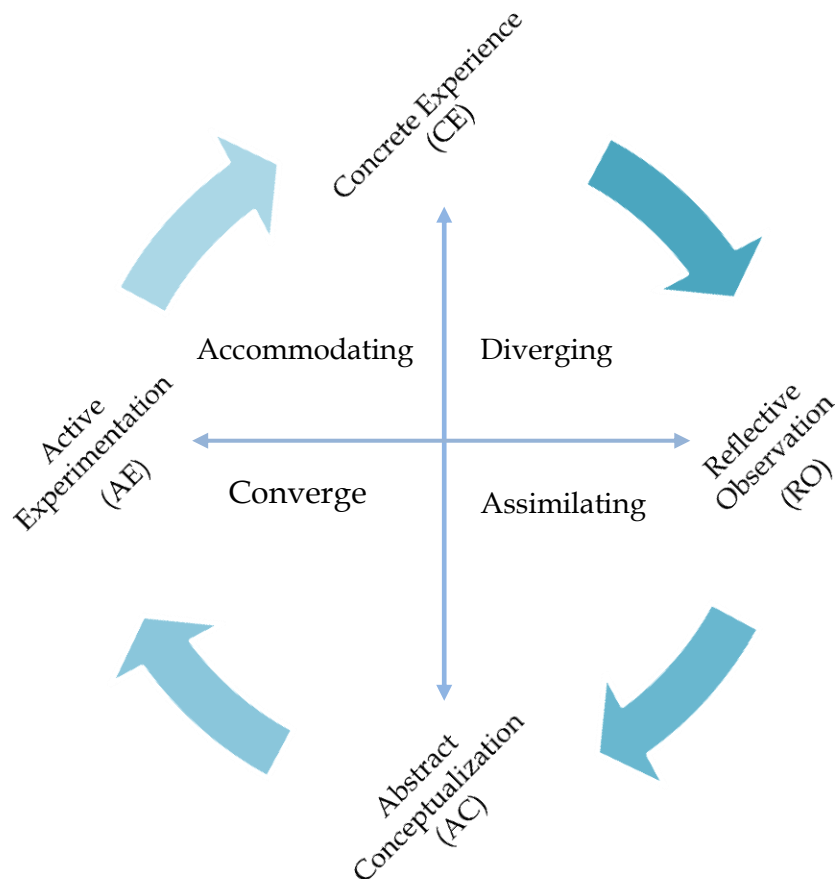


FIGURE 2 Experiential learning cycle and corresponding learning styles (Yamazaki & Kayes 2007)

Firstly, divergers are defined by their superb ability to consider concrete situations from multiple perspectives. They, therefore, succeed in situations requiring the generation of alternative ideas, such as brainstorming. They exhibit a tendency towards people, imagination and feelings, by which they excel at establishing personal relationships, communicating effectively, assisting others as well as understanding meanings. Secondly, assimilators are most focused on ideas as well as abstract concepts and very capable of obtaining and analyzing information, developing theories and conceptual models. They greatly benefit from their capability to comprehend a wide range of information and transform it to a logical concise representation. This approach is generally characterized by a lower tendency towards people. Thirdly, convergers are defined by their strengths at problem solving, decision making and practical application of ideas and theories. This approach prioritizes tackling technical tasks and specific problems to social and interpersonal issues. In general, convergers tend to be attracted to the abstract. Finally, the accommodator orientation is defined by a strong focus on doing. Accommodators execute plans and tasks as well as immerse themselves in novel experiences. Instead of utilizing their analytic ability, they tend to solve problems in a trial-and-error manner, depending on intuition

or other people's advice. Due to the acting skills of leadership, initiative and action, they are proposed to thrive in situations requiring adjusting to changing circumstances. (Armstrong & Mahmud 2008.)

Kolb's experiential learning theory is argued to perhaps be the most well developed and researched model. As Armstrong and Mahmud (2008) describe it, experiential learning theory focuses on the acquirement and transformation of novel experiences and the way in which these experiences result in a greater sense of satisfaction, motivation and development (Armstrong & Mahmud 2008). This approach emphasizing satisfaction, motivation and development would seem to fit well with the emphases of this study. Furthermore, following the notions of Ng et al. (2009), ELT provides a means of scrutinizing learning as adjustment to the world, requiring the integrated functioning of the total person as well as interactions between the person and the environment. Due to this holistic nature of the model, it can be considered well suited to discussing the inherent complexities of international work experiences. The expatriates are, after all, exposed to and expected to tackle a multitude of demands and cues from the new environment. (Ng et al. 2009.) Learning can be considered a response to these external changes, by which the individual develops his or her understanding of the world. It is therefore asserted to extend beyond notions of problem-solving, change or socialization. (Yamazaki & Kayes 2007.) For these reasons, the ELT framework will be adopted as a basis for discussing the cross-cultural learning of the expatriates in this study.

4 RESEARCH METHOD AND DATA

There are two distinct principal research strategies for conducting empirical research: quantitative and qualitative. Qualitative research is largely associated with words and emphasizes individual meaning as well as the inherent complexity of situations. On the other hand, quantitative research generally relies on objectivity, generalization and replication by analyzing the numerical data statistically. Whereas qualitative research explores and infers meanings, qualitative research tests objective theories by investigating the relationship among variables. (Creswell 2009, 3-4.)

Considering the aim of this study, qualitative research approach was selected. The study is a case study and the data was collected by semi-structured interviews and analyzed by utilizing firstly theme analysis and secondly narrative analysis. The following sections elaborate on the research strategy, data collection procedure as well as data analysis process and address the philosophical assumptions as well as the trustworthiness of the study.

4.1 Philosophical Assumptions Underlying the Study

Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe social world to be treated in social science either as a hard, external, objective reality or as a creation of the subjective experience of individuals. (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 2-3.) This subjective-objective contrast in how the social world and its investigation are perceived in social science is illustrated along four sets of assumptions on ontology, epistemology, human nature and methodology. Ontology refers to the nature of the social world and its structures. Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge, how it is formed and can be transmitted. Human nature essentially describes the relationship between human beings and their environment. The previous three sets of assumptions guide how research seeks to investigate the

social world, or in other words the methodological choices of the research. (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 1-3.)

The current study emphasizes the subjective experiences and interpretations of individuals and therefore tends to the subjectivist approach. The philosophical assumptions underlying the present study can be summarized as follows:

- **Ontology:** Nominalism assumes the social world beyond individual cognition to consist merely of names, concepts and labels utilized to describe the world and no real structure to exist.
- **Epistemology:** Anti-positivism considers the social world relativistic and to be only understood from the viewpoint of the individuals directly involved in it.
- **Human nature:** Voluntarism considers individuals to be free-willed and autonomous of their environment.
- **Methodology:** Ideographic approach emphasizes the analysis of subjective individual meaning and interpretation in studying social phenomena.

(Burrell & Morgan 1979, 3-7)

Besides this distinction between objective and subjective assumptions, a further distinction between regulation and radical change can be identified. This dimension describes the underlying assumptions on the nature of the society. Regulation approaches the society from the viewpoint of unity and cohesiveness and seeks to understand the forces holding a society together. The polar opposite, radical change, focuses on the reasons behind the conflict and domination in a society and seeks emancipation and potential development. Combining these two principal dimensions of objective-subjective and regulation-radical change, four distinct paradigms describing social studies are formed. (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 16-19.) Further discussion on each of the paradigms will be excluded here and the following chapter will elaborate on the paradigm relative to this study.

This study adopts a subjectivist stance to the analysis of the social world and follows the notions of sociology of regulation. It therefore locates in the interpretive paradigm. Interpretative research can be characterized by an interest in the essence of social reality. Research seeks to understand the social world per se and the process of its creation by the individuals involved. Order and cohesiveness are assumed in the social world and conflict as well as change are considered insignificant. (Burrell & Morgan 1979, 28-32.) Following this line of thought, the main purpose of the current research is to form a detailed understanding of the phenomenon of expatriation along with the processes of cross-cultural adjustment and learning as such. Understanding is based on the first-hand subjective interpretations and viewpoints of the expatriates and utilized to form a more varied picture of the phenomena and their creation.

4.2 Case Study as Research Strategy

Case study is a common research strategy in many fields within the social sciences. Despite the popularity, it was long considered merely as the exploratory stage of another type of strategy or understood in terms of “doing fieldwork”. Much discussion on case studies concentrated on participant observation or fieldwork as a description of the data collection process. After the emergence of participant observation, it is suggested to have replaced references to case studies in textbooks altogether between the years of 1950 and 1980. Since 1980 the distinct logic behind case study has begun to be appreciated in its own right. (Yin 2014, 15-16.) The following paragraphs will elaborate on the strategy as well as the circumstances and research problems with which the strategy may be preferred.

Case study research describes a broad and varied research strategy aiming for detailed investigation of phenomena in their context over a period of time. It stresses the importance of understanding the context, as behavior and processes are suggested to be closely intertwined with the social context and to affect one another. Case study research may rely on quantitative, qualitative or both methods and largely utilizes multiple methods in combination. As far as theory is concerned, case study research often begins with merely a loose theoretical framework, which is then further developed and tested according to the data. Yet, case study research aims not only to explain the particular case at hand but also to provide more general applicability. (Cassell & Symon 2004, 323-331.)

Case study is argued to be elusive in terms of definition. Focus is argued to often have been placed on defining an individual case and to thus rather illustrate the different topics of past case studies than the actual research strategy. Yin (2014) therefore broadly characterizes the strategy by an objective of understanding complex social phenomena. As a form of empirical inquiry, it is proposed to allow focus on a particular phenomenon in its real-world context and to thus develop a holistic perspective of it. A case study is suggested to be relevant when extensive and in-depth descriptions are required. In particular, conducting a case study research is suggested to be preferable in cases where the main research questions seek “how” and “why” answers, the researcher has little or no control over events and the research focuses on contemporary phenomena. (Yin 2014, 2-25.)

In this study, case study is considered to provide a distinct advantage, due to an aim of developing an in-depth understanding of the diverse phenomenon of expatriation. Due to the scarcity of previous research on the different types of expatriates as well as the complex and intertwined processes of adjustment and learning, extensive and detailed inquiry favoring the subjective views of the participants is considered necessary. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the phenomenon of expatriation is currently in a state of change, and as Llewellyn (2007) stresses, case studies are increasingly valuable during times of changes.

The current study is a qualitative case study. Besides the strong intrinsic interest in the different expatriate profiles, the focus of study can be characterized as both exploratory and descriptive. The exploratory interests can be considered to derive from the void in previous research as regards the diversity of expatriation. On the other hand, the study is descriptive in that it seeks to describe cross-cultural adjustment and learning in the context on expatriation by investigating how it relates to existing research. In this study, a case is the unique expatriate experience of an individual expatriate and the study investigates five different expatriates. Multiple cases are investigated in order to explore the diversity of expatriation and to broaden existing understanding of the phenomenon. The data for multiple-case study was collected by semi-structured interviews. The next section will describe the data collection method in greater detail.

4.3 Semi-structured Interviews as Data Collection Method

In this study data was collected by semi-structured interviews. Interviews were selected as the data collection method due to the perceived value of allowing the interviewees to directly disclose their stories. As noted by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2000), interviewing is advantageous when emphasis is on the individual as a subject, creating meanings and being an active part of the research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 35.) Furthermore, as the research subject is underexplored, and thus, the connections between phenomena surrounding it remain vague, the opportunity of having the ability to request elaboration and clarification was considered important. Under these circumstances, interviews are argued to be appropriate. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 35.)

Conducting semi-structured interviews allowed the interviewees to freely describe their experiences and interpretations. Merely broad themes were prepared in form of the interview questions in order not to guide or limit the progression of the interview. The broad interview questions merely served in introducing and organizing the different themes to be covered during the interviews largely for the benefit of the researcher. These questions took various forms during the interviews. The interviewees were allowed to advance topics according to their own preferences and often the interviews did not follow the structure of the prepared questions. Several more detailed open-ended probing questions were also prepared in advance to facilitate the discussion on the themes. Allowing the interviewees to freely describe their experiences was assumed to advance their recollection, interpretation and propensity to share and to provide more in-depth considerations in the form of self-authored narrated accounts.

The interview outline consisted of three sections. Firstly, the interviewees were presented with a few simple background questions regarding age, nation-

ality, language skills, education and past non-work international experiences. The aim of these questions was to develop a basic understanding of who the expatriates are as individuals. The background questions were followed by four questions on the expatriate experience, introducing career and personal life considerations along with the initial expectations and perceived value of the experience. The aim of these questions was to understand the expatriate experience in greater detail and how it affected the career and personal life of the expatriate. The third section of the interview was organized to cover the considerations on learning as well as adjustment and future plans of the expatriate. These questions were designed as to illustrate how life in the host country changed as time passed, how the expatriates learned to function in the new environment as well as what changes they could identify in themselves (see Appendix).

4.4 Organization of Interviews and Sample Selection

The data for the study was collected during a one-week period in late May-early June 2015. Following the notions of data saturation, new interviewees were introduced until little new insight was being provided. This is, as Bowen (2008) describes it, "the point of diminishing returns, when nothing new is being added". (Bowen 2008.) As the interviews were varied and information rich, five interviews were concluded to provide sufficient data. The interviews resulted in 5 hours and 23 minutes digital recording in total. The shortest interview was 43 minutes and the longest 1 hour 34 minutes. The interview was conducted face-to-face in one case, on the phone in two cases and on Skype in two cases. Four interviewees were interviewed while at work and one while at home. On a few occasions the interviewee was contacted after the interview for further clarification. Although all interviews were initially intended to be conducted in English on account of consistency and accuracy in representation, two of the interviews were ultimately conducted in Finnish due to practical reasons.

The interviewees were offered a comprehensive description of the premises of the study prior to the interviews. This was assumed to advance their recollection and encourage their willingness to share. The interviewees were considered eager to participate and not shy to disclose even the more personal family matters. They even appeared curious to consider their experiences from novel point of views. As discussed in the previous section, the interviewer had prepared for herself a set of questions to ensure all the substantive themes are addressed over the course of the interviews. Several, more detailed, prodding questions were prepared as well. These questions were found valuable both in igniting the discussion and directing the discussion when it strayed too far from the themes at hand. The interviews thus had both structured elements in form of the themes and sufficiently free discussion in order to allow for the inter-

viewees' own voice and experiences to be disclosed. I held personal presuppositions but considered to have allowed the interviewees take the discussion on routes of their choice, which sometimes were fairly unexpected ones.

I utilized my professional networks for gathering the pool of potential interviewees. The interviewees were selected as to most likely shed light on the studied phenomena. In selection emphasis was placed on receiving diverse frames of reference in order to obtain as diverse data as possible. This was assumed to aid in forming a more comprehensive as well as accurate illustration of the phenomena studied. For instance, different backgrounds, work arrangements, locations and durations of the stay are presumed to offer differing opportunities, challenges and expectations for the processes of adjustment and learning. Furthermore, distinct personal circumstances were presumed to influence the experience considerably as a whole. On the other hand, differing considerations on personal life and work further the understanding of expatriates per se.

The selected interviewees represented three different nationalities and were located in three different host countries and five different locations. During their time abroad, they worked across four different industries and four different companies. The interviewees represented different functions as well as organizational levels and they had fairly differing work arrangements. One of the interviewees was female and four were male. Their ages ranged from 25 to 47 years on their move abroad and they had stayed between a half a year and eight years. Expatriate A (Anna) and B (Sebastian) were still living abroad at the time of the interview and had no immediate plans of returning to their home country. Expatriate E (Lukas) had recently ended the assignment and had been further transferred to a new location abroad. Expatriate D (Janne) had been back to his home country several years and the assignment of expatriate C (Juha) was ending in a few months. Expatriates A (Anna) and C (Juha) had lived in the same location on two occasions, returning to their home country in-between. Since they had already once undergone the transition back to their home country, the fact that they were still abroad at the time of the interview was not considered to pose any limitation. On the contrary, the experiences of A (Anna) and C (Juha) were considered particularly interesting, as their personal circumstances had changed considerably between these two occasions. This provided intriguing comparisons between the two experiences. The interviewed expatriates are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2 Presenting the Expatriate Cases of the Study

Expatriate	Name	Nationality	Gender	Location	Age on Move	Education	Industry	Title
A	Anna	Finnish	female	Sweden	27 & 29	B.Sc. Forestry, M.Sc. Tech.	Forestry	Sales coordinator
B	Sebastian	French	male	Finland	31	MBA	Nuclear energy	Project leader/business unit manager
C	Juha	Finnish	male	Sweden	35 & 47	Agriculture and forestry	Metal and engineering	CEO
D	Janne	Finnish	male	Germany	25	BBA	Forestry	Sales coordinator
E	Lukas	Slovakian	male	Finland	30	M.Sc. Econ, MBA	Packaging	Finance graduate

4.5 Analysis of Data

Due to the tight schedule of the interviews, the data analysis only started after the last interview had been conducted. The collected data was first scrutinized in order to obtain a general sense of it. As the interviews generally contained some material which was of no direct relevance to the study, the interviews were purposefully transcribed only for the applicable parts, or for the parts pertaining to the themes. The themes and subthemes proposed by the literature supported analysis by providing scope and focus for the analysis and allowing the data to be broken down and arranged into a few smaller categories to facilitate the treatment of the sizeable data. After the initial categorization, the data items were analyzed and interconnected in the form of chronologically reconstructed accounts of the expatriate experiences of the studied expatriates to further facilitate narrative analysis as the next step in analysis. The following paragraphs will elaborate on the process.

The term narrative inquiry is used to characterize qualitative research designs which rely on stories in describing human action. Within narrative inquiry two primary types of inquiry can be distinguished: analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. While the former collects and analyzes narratives and produces categories or descriptions of themes, the latter collects actions, events and happenings and produces stories. Narrative analysis can be characterized

as the procedure by which the data elements are organized and synthesized into a coherent whole, in which the elements are connected and contribute to the development of the plot. (Polkinghorne 1995, 5-12.)

In the present study narrative analysis was conducted on the experiences of five expatriates. Each case was depicted in terms of a story, as defined by Polkinghorne (1995). Story is here understood as a combination of "a succession of incidents into a unified episode" by which the connectedness and coherence of human action, human motivation, chance happenings and changing interpersonal as well as environmental contexts can be preserved in a temporal sequence. (Polkinghorne 1995, 7.) The plot of the story serves to temporally limit the starting and end point of the story, guide the selection of events, temporally organize the events and explicate the meaning of the events to the story as a whole. The value of this approach is suggested to derive from its ability to appreciate the diversity of human action and take into account the complex interaction of various elements, which renders each situation unique. It is argued to retain the richness and complexity of human affairs. (Polkinghorne 1995, 5-8.)

The data was firstly categorized and organized. Each case was analyzed separately and the data of each case was firstly arranged along three main themes. These themes were career development, personal development and personal life. These categories were considered to support a balanced view on the multidimensionality of the experience and support analysis by providing scope and focus. Furthermore, these categories allowed for the aspects to be considered along a past-present-future continuum in a comprehensive manner. This categorization reflected the main themes of this study and the content of the interviews. After the initial grouping the data items were arranged in a chronological order.

Within and across the themes, the emerging plot of the expatriate experience account guided the selection of items from the chronologically arranged data. Items were selected as to contribute to the development of the plot, whereas items neither contradicting nor contributing to its development were disregarded. By this process of narrative smoothing, order and meaning were brought to the data by developing a plot emerging from and fitting the data. The connections between the data elements were illuminated and synthesized into chronologically organized expatriate experience accounts. These represented the life history of the expatriates limited by the scope of the expatriate experience as well as the themes and bringing forth the turning points within them.

The individual accounts of each case were then combined into a synthesis story deriving from the narrative analysis (see Polkinghorne 1995) to highlight the cross-cultural adaptation and learning of the studied expatriates. This was achieved by searching for similarities and dissimilarities across the five stories in order to highlight the central features while yet not reducing too far into generalities. Finally, this synthesis was discussed with respect to previous literature.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of a study can be evaluated in terms of its reliability and validity. The former concerns the degree to which the measurements can be replicated with corresponding results, whereas the latter the degree of accuracy of measuring what is intended to be measured. (Hirsjärvi, Hurme & Sajavaara 2009, 231-232.) Considerations on reliability and validity generally tend to rely on notions of an objective reality and truth and the way in which they can be measured. These assumptions are naturally problematic as to qualitative research and less positivistic assumptions are concerned. Due to this difficulty, disregarding reliability and validity evaluations altogether in qualitative research has been suggested. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 185.)

The traditional notions of validity and reliability present several difficulties. Validity involves the assumptions of causality and generalizability of the results. Causality in social sciences tends to be more complex and subject to various contextual and historical factors and is therefore not reducible to a few variables. Also, when highlighting subjectivity and the uniqueness of individuals generalizability ceases to be expected. Difficulties with reliability derive from the requirement of replicability. Replicability in this sense does not take into account the challenge of conducting two studies under the exact same circumstances and with two different researchers forming the exact same interpretations despite their differing backgrounds. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 186-188.)

Although the traditional measures of reliability and validity are arguably inapplicable to evaluate qualitative research, qualitative research too needs to strive for as accurate representation as possible. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2000, 188-189.) Due to the challenges associated with the classic evaluation criteria, qualitative research is suggested to require evaluation criteria of its own. Reliability and validity have been suggested to be replaceable by the parallel concept of trustworthiness, containing the aspects of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility refers to familiarity with the topic and whether the data is sufficient to ground the claims, whether strong logical links between observations and categories are made and whether based on the material, similar interpretations can be made. Transferability refers to the responsibility to illustrate some degree of similarity to other research contexts in order to establish a connection with previous results. Dependability refers to the requirement of explicating the research process for the reader to be able to determine whether it has been logical, traceable and documented. Confirmability refers to establishing the linkages between findings and interpretations in a manner which can be comprehended by others. (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 294-295.)

The trustworthiness of the present study has been evaluated and ensured throughout the research process. Prior to conducting the research, the research topic was familiarized with in order to form an understanding of the prevalent theories and previous research made on the field. The interviewees were select-

ed from several countries of origin, locations, companies as well as industries in order to form an understanding as diverse and unbiased as possible. Sufficient data was ensured along the requirements of data saturation as already described. All the stages of the research process have been disclosed in a detailed manner. A detailed description of the data collection and analysis procedures was provided and the decisions made with respect to these matters were elaborated on and justified. The collected data was presented in a clear and comprehensive manner and the interpretations developed were expounded and illustrated with direct citations from the interviews. The research findings were finally connected with previous studies.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the interpretation of the findings is shaped by the background of the researcher. I have, for instance, personal experience of expatriation and a few of the host countries in question. Furthermore, my national culture provides a particular frame of reference which the researcher is necessarily not fully aware of. Three of the interviewees were employed or had been at some point employed at companies at which the researcher had been employed as well.

The above mentioned aspects were considered to facilitate the research in that the interviewees appeared eager to share their stories with someone who they considered to understand their point of view. Imposing any thought patterns on the interviewees was assumed to be inhibited by offering them loosely structured themes upon which they could reflect.

5 RESULTS

This chapter discusses the experiences of the interviewed expatriates by focusing on their career, personal life and personal development considerations prior, during and after the expatriate experience. This chapter proceeds as follows: the first five sections will illustrate the individual expatriate experiences, while the sixth section will synthesize the findings and discuss them in light of previous literature.

5.1 Expatriate Anna - Changing Perspectives

Anna was a 27-year old Bachelor of Science in Forestry with a few years of work experience in a couple of different positions and organizations after graduation. She had started to study in a two-year Master's program to get a Master's degree in technology, which she hoped to help her further in her career. She was then contacted by one of her former employers with a job offer in Sweden: *"I didn't apply for the job. They called me and asked if I'm able and ready and if I want to start to work in Sweden. Which I was then."*

Anna was confident in her professional abilities and the prospect of moving abroad did not particularly faze her. Besides trusting her professional abilities, her confidence could be attributed to her good language skills and her previous international experience as an exchange student in Austria and Italy. She considered that she had a fairly realistic idea of what it would be like, living abroad. She was delighted to be, in a way, hand-picked by the organization which she took as an indication of being proficient in her work. This feedback was of great importance to her, especially, since she was still early on her career and was yet to establish herself. Furthermore, Anna was intrigued by the challenges the work would offer and being able to leave her mark on the develop-

ment of the processes and procedures. She was expected to set up the work and develop the way of working after an organizational rearrangement:

It was work that I had already been doing before in Finland, so I knew at least more or less what I was going to do there. But it was challenging because the tasks were moved from another place to this new place and the number of personnel were decreased. So my tasks besides doing the work, was to try to make it more convenient, the way of working.

Anna very much considered the work and Sweden a temporary arrangement and had plans to return to Finland and finish her studies as soon as she would see her work done:

It was a permanent job but I told already in the beginning to the employer that I'm not going to stay there for the rest of my life. So everyone in the organization understood that I was only going to start up the work there.

She considers herself to be treated more or less as a local employee and did not really expect anything else. She received only slightly higher pay compared to the other employees and the organization assisted her with the apartment during the first couple of weeks of her stay:

Otherwise I was on the same line as the rest of the people there. Because it wasn't just me, it was quite many people [foreigners] who were hired there in the same organization. So they tried to keep it on the same level for everyone. Or more or less on the same level, the salaries, bonuses and everything.

In the beginning Anna's greatest focus and time was spent at work and therefore most of her initial frustration was work-related, such as lack of management or communication. The differing working styles also created contradictions within her closest working group. She learned to quickly appreciate how Swedes always tended to be kind to each other, despite the stress they were all under. On the whole, Anna did not feel like she had that many problems in Sweden in the very beginning: *"Sweden is a very easy country to live in, if you're a Finn."* Although initially, she was simply happy with the basics and the irritation with the differences developed a little later:

Everything was working for me. I could buy stuff I needed, I had a place to sleep in and I knew where I was working and the days just went on. But a little later on, it's always a little frustrating because you're used to the good Finnish way, so you get irritated by the way another country perhaps works... Even though it may be a better way.

The initial frustration revolved around organizing the many practicalities and dealing with different authorities.

Anna found company in fellow young Finns who were in a similar situation in life, which helped her adjustment. She was grateful to have people to share experiences and tackle problems with. With her new friends she also felt fairly content with her life outside work, as she always had fun things to do and

company to explore Sweden with. Interestingly, she found her lack of Swedish language abilities to have aided her in the beginning:

I didn't speak Swedish that well when I moved here, so I was speaking English. And it helped a lot, because the people were talking in English to me and it wasn't their mother tongue. So it felt like we were on the same level. It was easier to me to ask in English how something worked and how I was supposed to behave. I asked help from my colleagues who were Swedes.

In the long term, learning the language, nevertheless, helped her to function. Her comfort with the new environment partly derived from not worrying too much: *"Perhaps people got irritated by me. But I never realized it. But I'm that kind of person, I don't care that much."* Luckily, she is also very calm and does not easily get stressed, which was by far her greatest strength in overcoming many different situations. She only wishes that she had been more social from the beginning.

After about a half year, as Anna was more familiar and more deeply involved with the culture, she began to dislike some of the very Swedish traditions:

I remember a phase when I thought everything, the Swedish traditions and the way they behaved was stupid, that they were stupid. And it was irritating... there are still some traditions and behavior I am not comfortable with... One thing is the singing thing. I don't like to sing. And all the Swedish people love to sing.

Although she did not fully appreciate all the differences, she by time got more and more used to them and they eventually ceased to irritate her as much as they used to. Perhaps she simply learned to overlook these aspects more effectively. After about a half year she was able to function quite well without help. Life in Sweden became easier, as she developed greater structure and normalcy in her life:

Things become everyday. When everything is just normal life. When the shop you go to everyday is called ICA instead of K-supermarket, and that's normal for you. Things like this become more natural to you.

After a year and a half in Sweden, Anna returned to Finland in order to complete her remaining studies, which she did in a matter of a year. Contrary to her initial plans, she returned to Sweden and to her old job after her study leave. This was because she had met a Swedish man the last month of her previous stay the year before:

It definitely was not my plan to stay in Sweden. Rather to move to Finland or even some other country... [But] I met my man. So it was the private life that brought me back to Sweden... The experience changed the path of my life... It was a rational choice led by my heart.

This change of heart altered not only Anna's plans for her future but also forced her to reconsider Sweden and her life in the country, as her stay had now become of more permanent nature. During her first stay in Sweden she had fo-

cused on her work and arranging all the practicalities. She had also enjoyed the sense of euphoria of her new life in the new country:

For me it was ok in the first period to be abroad... Because it was something exciting and new that was happening in my life and I got friends in Sweden. So at the time I didn't think that much, except for enjoying my life.

On the contrary, during her second stay in Sweden she actually was forced to seriously consider the fact that she was now living in Sweden and be more realistic about the challenges and limitations:

I have always considered myself to be a Finn... When I moved more permanently to Sweden, it required more thoughts considering life not being in the place that you have born in and where your family lives and so on... Let's say it required more mental work to accept the situation.

Anna considers life in Sweden to have become easier and to become easier every day. Her Swedish boyfriend has been a great support even in the smallest things she needs help with, such as reading the newspaper. Although she has become more content in living in Sweden, the one thing that she considers never to change is terribly missing her family and friends back in Finland: *"The only thing that never changes is that I'm alone here, I don't have my family and friends here... The people, you always miss the people."* This is, by far, the most difficult aspect in living abroad for her. She is confident that life will change and she will get more social contacts by time. Her family and friends in Finland are, however, the people who truly know her and her entire history. She is skeptical that any new contacts could ever really compare.

Apart from the people, she cannot say she misses Finland in itself particularly much. She is fond of Sweden, although at times of melancholy she still plays with idea of moving back:

I'm in any case quite happy with my life here, despite all the small difficulties. But I have to admit that I still dream about moving back to Finland with my family. It helps me to continue living here. Even though it probably never happens.

She is uncertain if she actually would ever move back to Finland even if she had the chance. She simply has hard time with the idea of "never" living there again and therefore she likes to think that there is always a possibility. She immensely enjoys the Swedish mentality and considers life to be easier and more carefree in Sweden. She appreciates how one is allowed to enjoy life to the fullest and not to be expected to behave in a certain, accepted way:

[In Sweden] they just enjoy their lives. In Finland if you have 10 000 euros on your bank account, you need to keep it safe in case of an emergency, if something bad happens. But in Sweden you think 'ok, what fun can I do with this money?'

Yet she considers her relationship to Sweden to be somewhat superficial, as she lacks some of the historical background information and emotional associations.

She therefore considers it easier to follow, for instance, Finnish news, politics and entertainment. Not being a Swedish citizen also has its drawbacks:

The authorities are always suspicious of everything where money is involved, because there are so many foreigners living in Sweden. [Not being a Swedish citizen] it feels I still need to do double work sometimes to keep up with my rights... compared to a normal Svensson, in terms of anything that has something to do with the authorities.

Anna feels she has learned a lot from the experience, not least the language, and gained confidence in her abilities. Professionally, she feels that she would have gained more from the experience had she moved back to Finland. The international experience would definitely have furthered her career. As far as her career is concerned, she is slightly regretful about her decision to stay in Sweden. In Sweden she is considered an immigrant and especially as she is not a native speaker of the language, she considers it to have hindered her career. She is currently employed by a Finnish company.

Anna feels now is a good time to settle at least for a while, since she will be giving birth to their first child in a couple of months. She nevertheless considers herself curious and considers moving abroad possible, if an interesting opportunity emerged. This would, however, have to be temporary arrangement, since a permanent move seems rather unlikely and unwelcome at least at this point: *"If there is something for a year of two, then I'm definitely ready to move forward. The only country I could think to move more permanently to is Finland."* She is confident that her past experience of living abroad would help in that she holds more realistic expectations of the challenges and requirements. It would probably also be easier to get a job abroad, since she already has international work experience to show.

Narrative Analysis of Expatriate Anna

Anna's initial move to Sweden was motivated by the professional challenge she considered the work to offer. Although having a permanent contract, she considered Sweden a temporary arrangement on her part and focused on returning back to Finland as soon as she would perceive her work done. Besides the strong focus on work, she excitedly explored the new surroundings and ensured to enjoy her new life to the fullest. She considered her adjustment to have been facilitated by her language skills, previous international experience, confidence, calmness and the support she received from both countrymen and locals. Her plans were altered, once she met a local man and the focus shifted on building a life in the new country. By time, she has learned to appreciate the host country mentality and lifestyle and achieved greater structure and normalcy in everyday life. However, as her stay has become of more permanent nature, she places higher requirements for her own integration and understanding of the host society, which has induced frustration. She struggles in accepting the new path in her life along with the challenges it entails. She, for instance, terribly

misses her family and is uncertain if any social relationships in the host country could ever compare to the ones she has back home. Although she identifies professional growth as a result of the expatriate experience, she considers her career handicapped by her non-native status. In spite of the challenges, she is yet committed to settling down in the host country and building a family. She would nevertheless be willing to consider another stint abroad in the future.

5.2 Expatriate Sebastian – Seizing Opportunities

Sebastian had studied physics and business in France and had a Master's degree in Business Management and Entrepreneurship. He had a long-standing interest in an international career:

I think I have, since I was in high school, been very interested in an international career and how to work in an international context. Because I felt that being in France is very narrow. I have been interested to live this life and see how the world was outside France... I really wanted to work in English and with different people... I wanted to have a different kind of experience... I wanted to do something unique, that very few people do.

After graduation he nevertheless felt that his dream should remain in the background, since he did not want to take any risks. After all, the French were not traditionally very internationally oriented, as Sebastian characterizes: *"They don't see how the world is big around them... They live with French and they only speak French."* He also lived in a wonderful, vibrant city which he thoroughly loved. He was very French in the sense that he enjoyed the French lifestyle, cuisine, architecture and countryside above all. Thus far his life in France had not offered many opportunities for international exposure or improving his English skills which concerned him slightly as well.

A few years into his career he was swept away by a beautiful Finnish woman, who had studied French and was on a three-month exchange in France. She was educated, fluent in the language and fond of the French culture. She was therefore a fascinating combination of familiarity and cosmopolitanism. This made life abroad only more intriguing. As their relationship developed, Sebastian's interest in moving abroad transformed into an interest in moving to Finland:

I started to work for a big international company and when opportunities came to work in Finland, I applied... I really fought for it... It took several years but finally I got green light to transfer to Finland and start a new project there.

The opportunity presented itself in form of the Olkiluoto nuclear power plant. The French company he worked for was looking for people for this project and French speaking people in particular were alluring for the company. It was an

unbelievable coincidence, especially as it was a win-win situation for both Sebastian and the employing company. He had worked as a safety officer in France and in his new position as a project leader he was offered considerable professional challenges. Originally Sebastian considered himself to be treated as an expatriate by neither himself nor the company HR. After all, he had resigned from the French entity and signed a new contract with the Finnish entity according to local standards. Although the company had covered his moving expenses, otherwise the salary negotiations had been based on Finnish standards and any additional benefits were comparable to all other employees in the same branch. Although he held a permanent contract, the project was of limited duration, which guided his initial expectations as he describes: *"The project was originally supposed to end 2010, so we had the expectation that this is for five years max."*

At the time of the move, Sebastian was 31 years old and had been together with the Finnish woman for almost seven years. They had got married the year before, so it was time to take the next step. Moving abroad therefore provided him with a perfect combination of professional development, balancing family life and personal development. Sebastian anticipated the move to Finland to be relatively easy. After all, he had become familiar with the country after dating a Finn for the past seven years. During this time he had also had the pleasure of socializing with his in-laws, by which he assumed to have come to understand Finns as well. He felt that he more or less knew what he was getting into and that he could rely on the help and support of both his wife and the wife's family should he need it. As a person, he considered himself rather flexible and not to complain easily, so he considered the move with careful optimism.

The beginning was very exciting as Sebastian reminisces:

It was actually a honeymoon. It was very exciting. It was in June, so, you know how it is, there was light practically the entire day and it was warm. And people were very nice and friendly and the workload was not that high in the beginning, so it really was great.

The first couple of years passed rather effortlessly: *"This [the honeymoon] maybe lasted a year or two."* He had been fairly prepared for Finland and the excitement of finally fulfilling his dream of living abroad and together with his wife smoothed out the difficulties he experienced. He was beyond excited for the professional value of the experience as well. He first started alone and eventually built up a team of ten people. By this time he had been promoted into a business unit manager. His career took several steps forward: *"When I moved to Finland, I really had the opportunity to push my career... It was a good opportunity to rise faster."*

Sebastian was motivated and determined to adapt and learn from Finns:

I really wanted to fit into the society... My wife asked me many times why I wasn't interested in contacting other French. In the beginning I felt like I didn't want to because I wanted to live as a Finn... Because I know that many expatriates go abroad

and they live among their own people and I felt that I didn't want that. I was very interested in having another cultural input.

He was genuinely curious of the cultural differences and attempted to meet these differences with humility:

[It was important] to be humble, to be able to think that you are not the best. Some French in the beginning, the true expatriates, were very arrogant and they thought that the Finns live in the forest and that they don't know anything... I feel that we have to respect and try to understand why we are different... And to be curious, I'm always curious. I think it helps.

He observed other people a great deal and copied their behaviour. By this he learned to understand the codes and norms, which often differed considerably from the French ones:

I noticed that people don't always talk, there can be silence in the discussion. This is something I learned to do. And not to disturb during the lunch and the dinners... The Finns are very much attached to rules and this was something I felt quite difficult to adapt to in the beginning... People queue and they wait and they don't try to cheat. In public they always behave the same, try not to make any noise, they don't speak loud.

After the first two years Sebastian began to have negative feelings towards his life in Finland. The initial excitement began to subside and his perspective on Finland altered. In the beginning he had treated Finland more as an assignment of limited duration, which was a consolation at times of difficulty. His wife loved France and they had initially entertained the idea of returning to France after a few years. They were, however, content in living in Finland and were planning on starting a family. The realization of having no immediate plans of returning made him reconsider how well he actually had adjusted to Finland: *"Normally expatriates are limited in time... We can consider that from 1 to 5 years it's an expatriate experience. After that it's more trying to live in the country."* He began to experience loneliness and sadness. He missed his friends and family and simply a good conversation in French. Whereas in the beginning it had not bothered him to ask help, he became increasingly frustrated and insecure by the amount of help he still needed and how dependent he was of other people:

You feel that I will never survive here because I have to ask every day something... I realized that I feel like a little kid... Sometimes I felt like maybe I don't do anything then.

His almost complete lack of Finnish language skills complicated his daily life considerably. Sebastian experienced strong pressure to fit in and he did not want to make any mistakes in public. He was worried that people would point fingers at him. This derived mostly from the perceived homogeneity in Finland which he experienced very discouraging:

In France we have so much diversity and people can be different. In France you can be not wearing a scarf in the winter because you think it's not that cold and it doesn't matter, people won't pay attention to that. But in Finland if you don't have a scarf,

people look at you... And I noticed I look different... Conformity is a good word. I couldn't be natural. I was always asking if this was ok, if I shouldn't have said that.

After six years in Finland, Sebastian was forced to reconsider his position:

It was a permanent contract. But after six years the top management decided that I could be transferred back to France. And this was not the deal. I felt that this was a breach, not in the contract but what we had agreed on... I had made a new contract locally, so I of course lost a little bit of the benefits of being an expatriate. Then they decided that I could be transferred back to France, like an expatriate. So I felt like this was very unfair. I lose in both directions... Expatriate by definition is limited in time.

During these six years in Finland, his personal situation had changed quite drastically. Whereas he in beginning he was focused on perhaps 5 years in Finland, advancing his career, gaining new experiences and then moving back to France with his wife, he now had a family with two kids and had grown fond of the cold and dark Nordic country:

We changed the strategy because we thought that we can stay like ten more years. The time schedule became then more like I can live here forever... We had made a family in Finland. It, of course, brings new things to the situation. It's easy to move when you don't have kids, but the situation changed when we had kids. We don't take the same risks... Without kids, you only think about yourself and your wife. So the goals are rather selfish. But now it's not only about me but about four people.

Due to this disagreement over the nature of the assignment and the fact that he was not ready to return to France, Sebastian decided to switch jobs. He started working for a competitor with similar tasks and on the same project. Unfortunately this could also be considered as a step back on his career, as he ceased to have managerial responsibilities. He was nevertheless extremely grateful to get a new job, since he was a foreigner and did not speak the language: *"It's very rare... It's difficult for a foreigner to switch jobs [in Finland] and get a new job as a Finnish employee."*

At present Sebastian has lived almost ten years in Finland. Despite the challenges, he is content with how everything has turned out: *"I don't regret anything. This was the right choice and I'm happy with it, very much so. I wouldn't change anything now."* He is fond of Finland, as he experiences life in France to be more hectic and complicated. Most importantly, his family has found home here. Although he has learned a little Finnish and is better equipped to tackle the everyday challenges, he feels certain aspects are still missing in his life in Finland:

There are many parts missing still and it may sound pessimistic and sad but it's true. It's hard to fill the gap. And find the hobbies and everything. Well, at least I have more time with the family... Because I don't have any friends."

He feels he can never be fully included in the society, since he lacks the historical information to be able to participate in, for instance, political discussion. He is not shy to admit that the years in Finland have changed him and the prospect of moving back to France concerns him:

This [moving to France] would be difficult, I know. Because the cultural differences exist. Especially at the work place. I think it would be difficult for me to come back... I like to work with Finns. Maybe I have become more Finn than French.

The past ten years have come with both advantages and disadvantages: *"I feel that I have gained a lot in human values. In how to see people. And I'm definitely richer, spiritually. But I have also sacrificed other things."* One of the major drawbacks at this point is his career. Whereas moving to Finland enabled him to advance his career by several steps, he now finds it difficult to move forward from his current level, as he now competes as a foreigner on the Finnish job market. He regards his career opportunities as fairly limited: *"That's the downside of expatriates I feel. You may rise suddenly but there is also stagnation. And this is what I'm feeling now."*

The future remains undecided. Sebastian continues to occasionally contemplate returning to France. He is grateful that this option exists and that his wife is open to the idea as well. Career development is the main reason for this:

If I moved to France, I would suddenly be able to take another step up because of the expatriate experience, if this is how we call this, as it would be seen as a benefit... I think France would be good one day, because there are more opportunities and professionally it is more challenging.

On the other hand, he is uncertain if he will ever be fully comfortable living in Finland. He doubts that he will ever find the motivation to put an effort into learning Finnish. However, Sebastian considers it possible to avoid moving to France if he had the right job here in Finland:

Maybe living in Finland and having an international job. This would actually be my next wish. Then I could still work with other countries but stay here, so this would actually be perfect.

Most likely this would yet require moving to Helsinki. As a result of his experience in Finland, he has become more aware of the world outside France, become more comfortable with English and confident with his abilities. He would be better aware this time what moving abroad requires. He would be willing to consider as a third option moving yet to another country, such as the United Kingdom or the United States.

Narrative Analysis of Expatriate Sebastian

Sebastian had a long-standing interest in experiencing life outside his home country and having an international career. His desire to live abroad transformed into a desire to live in Finland, as he met and later married a Finnish woman. After years of trying, an opportunity presented itself within the company to start a project at host-country subsidiary. Besides the personal reasons, Sebastian was motivated by the professional challenge the position would offer. The project was originally scheduled for five years and compensation was

based on local standards, although the company covered his moving expenses. The initial excitement of finally fulfilling his dream smoothed away the initial challenges and increased his motivation to adjust to the host society. Sebastian considered his adjustment to have been facilitated by his familiarity with the host country prior to move and the support he received from host country family members as well. Furthermore, as a person, he is humble and curious, both qualities he considers to have aided his adjustment. His difficulties began after the first few years, as he experiences frustration and insecurity due to the everyday difficulties as well as lack of full inclusion in the host society. Despite the continuing challenges and missing his home country, he has built family and the host country has become home. Sebastian considers many parts of his life to still be missing and experiences sadness and loneliness, as he reminisces about his family and friends in France. He still struggles to accept the new perspective on the stay in the host country. This is partly explained by the limited job market opportunities. Although he initially advanced his career by several steps and experienced considerable professional growth by moving to host country, he now experiences stagnation due to his non-native status. Sebastian considers his career to have benefited more from the expatriate experience, had he moved back to France. Consequently, he from time to time entertains the idea of moving back.

5.3 Expatriate Juha - Returning to Where it All Began

Juha had an inquisitive mind and he never passed an opportunity to learn. His curiosity and go-ahead mentality lead him to travel a lot and to capitalize on every opportunity to experience life abroad. Even before receiving his Master's degree in Agriculture and Forestry, he had worked in Switzerland and Canada, been on student exchange in France and participated in several language courses abroad. At this point the experiences were, however, only couple of months at most and generally occurred during breaks from the University, as he was determined not to delay his studies.

After earning his Master's degree, Juha soon found his place in forestry. He worked for a few different employers in a few different positions and largely succeeded to maintain some international aspect in his work. For the most part he worked with foreign trade, which provided him with much appreciated opportunities to travel and maintain his extensive language skills. Despite the thirst for international experiences he had had during his studies, he was eventually content with his life in Finland, balanced by the internationality his work provided.

In 2000 when Juha was 35 years old and had roughly ten years of professional work experience, he was offered an opportunity to reconsider his position:

I was approached internally. I already worked in the company as a product manager and enjoyed it very much. Then the CEO of the Swedish unit transferred from Sweden to Finland and they needed a CEO to Sweden. And he started convincing me to do it.

Juha enjoyed his life and work in Finland and in spite of the several attempts of convincing, Juha was reluctant:

I didn't really get excited... [But] I suppose he knew how to push and sell it to me and was so convincing in his story that I thought that I'll try it... It wasn't a rational decision by any means. It was more like a momentary lapse like 'alright, let's do this then'.

He initially regarded the move to Sweden and especially the CEO post with some degree of uncertainty. Eventually he came to the conclusion that there were more positives than negatives associated with the opportunity:

I thought I could give it a try. If it doesn't work out, then I'll come back with my tail between my legs. It doesn't really matter. I don't have anything to win or lose. Or I have more to win than to lose.

Juha signed a permanent contract which was more or less based on local standards. Besides certain small perks, he was on the same level as everyone else. Due to the sudden and perhaps even irrational nature of his decision, he held few expectations as for the move. His main focus was his work, which offered him considerable professional challenge. His work was not only varied due to the small size of the company, but also demanding as the company was yet to establish itself on the Swedish market. Focus was on stabilizing the operations, achieving growth as well as building the company reputation:

My goals were not that personal by nature. They were more focused on the company, its development, the markets and so on... I didn't have any expectations for my career or how I would change as a person. I didn't have any that type of reasons when I came here.

For Juha it had always been fairly easy to adapt to new situations and places. In his early twenties, it had been difficult to move from the small rural town he had grown up in to Helsinki but after surviving this change, adjustment had always been rather effortless. Consequently, he did not experience distress when moving to Sweden. Sure, everything was new around him: Water taps had warm water on the wrong side and the doors opened to the wrong direction. There were many things that were different and he had to get used to them. Fortunately, rather than being disturbed by the differences, Juha enjoyed the new things. His curiosity led him to excitedly explore these new things and try to understand how they worked, as he explains:

I've always had this approach 'This works differently, but exactly does it work?' I like to investigate. I may realize that it's actually a better way to do it and that it's actually an excellent thing. It may also be that I eventually think that something is just stupid but they do it this way and let's go with that.

Although he was not particularly fazed by Sweden as a country, the beginning was by no means easy for him. There were cultural differences and his Swedish was less fluent than he would have hoped. The biggest challenge was, however, his work:

I thought the situation in the company would be better... I came to a situation where everyone was uncertain... And I had no leadership experience. Practically no work experience abroad. So I thought it during the first weeks that this isn't going to work out. That this was a mistake. That I simply can't do it. I pitied myself a few days until I decided that I'll go as far as I can. There was no one else and no one to step in. If I leave, the company will be even worse off. I mean, I couldn't really make matters any worse than they already were.

In time things got easier. Juha was determined to learn the language and forced even his Finnish colleagues to speak Swedish when he was present. He became more confident in his language skills which facilitated the daily matters, both on and off work. Although he did not initially consider Sweden and Finland to differ that much, he slowly started uncovering deeper level differences:

It's an easy country because the systems, infrastructure and all work the same way. It was easy to come in that sense. On the surface it's very similar but when you go in a little deeper that's when you begin to find differences. Sweden is a bit deceptive in that sense.

After the initial hurdles at work, Juha began to learn the ropes and finally be on top of things. He learned to appreciate the Swedish dialogic, albeit unhurried, decision making. The company showed positive results. On the other hand, his free time was less eventful: *"I did sports mostly. And the things single guys do... A couple of weekend trips alone... I had many friends visit me from Finland, that was always great."* Although Juha was in a sense relieved that he was only responsible for himself and his work, he was frequently very lonely:

It's the ultimate experience of loneliness... You're alone in a foreign country, manage a company such as this and you have few, if any, normal friendships to vent your feelings to.

Although he worked and lived in Sweden, he never felt included in the Swedish society and continued to live his life as in Finland. He regretted not having put more of effort into it by seeking Swedish associations, for instance.

This loneliness was one of the reasons for why Juha started seeking work in Finland. He had also met a Finnish woman in Finland quite soon after moving to Sweden and their relationship had developed to the point where they planned a future together. This naturally involved living in the same country. Juha had managed to set the company on a positive course and achieved many of the goals he had initially set, so he felt it was a convenient time to leave in

this sense as well. Having lived roughly two years in Sweden, Juha got a new job at a new employer in Finland and moved.

Besides returning to Finland, Juha returned to the town he grew up in. Although he had been eager to leave almost twenty years ago, he was delighted with the return and turning over a new leaf. They eventually married and had children. He happily settled down. Juha continued to be ambitious for his work and career but it was balanced by his family life. He experienced the value of the work experience, as he describes:

The effect was dramatic. Before that I had solely worked in expert positions. In Sweden I had my first managerial position and after that I haven't had anything but managerial positions.

Although the managerial position as such advanced his career, he considered the fact that it had been abroad to have been particularly useful, in some recruitment processes more than in others.

Exactly ten years after his return to Finland, Juha was offered the same position at the same company for which he had worked in, first in Finland and then in Sweden. The decision was even more difficult this time. He experienced a sense of nostalgia, as he was intrigued by the opportunity to return to the old employer of which he had fond memories. He would also have the opportunity to see where the company he had helped to build was now. He was also delighted with the fact that after ten years a member of the management team had personally called him. Although he had worked in managerial positions the past years, a CEO post would offer more challenge and responsibility as well. This time, however, it would not be just him making the decision:

The decision was more affected by how the family takes it and what kind of opinions they have. The discussion was more on that front and not on the job itself, like it was the first time... It was more a question of whether the family is interested and how we can make it happen.

Juha and the company were finally able to agree on a three-year stint: *"I made a three year contract... I didn't agree on more and they didn't agree on less. It was kind of a compromise."* This time the arrangements were slightly more complex, as his family would be following him. It was planned so that Juha would be alone in Sweden slightly over a half a year in the beginning as well as in the end of the assignment, and his family would join him for the less than two years in between. His wife was to take a leave of absence from work. His compensation reflected the challenge of moving the entire family and was more extensive this time. The company covered all moving expenses and assisted with the arrangements as well. Despite it being the same position as during the first round, his tasks had changed considerably. Whereas during the first round focus was on establishing the operations and reputation of the company, this time he could focus on increasing sales and the more traditional aspects of management.

The second round has been easier in the sense that Juha is already familiar with the country, language and company. All in all, it has been fairly effortless for him to slip into the new, yet familiar situation. This time he did not experi-

ence the same feeling of loneliness as he now had a family with him. Having a family has also perfected the experience in the sense that he now feels more included in the Swedish society and has more local contacts: *"We indeed got better in the society this time when we had the kids with us."* But having a family has had its challenges as well:

This time has been challenging in both directions. Coming here was not easy and leaving was not easy. And of course, this last part when I'm here alone has been difficult. I would say that this is not easy for someone with a family... Maybe it's so that the pluses and minuses are much bigger when you go with family. The successes and joys are much bigger than when you live alone... All in all, the scale of emotions is wider.

The family initially struggled with adjustment and Juha struggled with the fact that he could only observe and not be able to really help. They put an effort into enjoying Sweden and led a very eventful life in Sweden. Juha considers their life to have been richer and more varied than it has ever been in Finland. Eventually they became so comfortable that the children actually did not wish to leave.

Today Juha has a few months left of his assignment in Sweden. He feels he has gained considerably from the two stints in Sweden. He has become more open as well as accepting and has learned to appreciate and adopt different perspectives. The greatest value has been in becoming adept at working across cultures:

In Finland there are certain things that work and make people do certain things, and in Sweden the rules are completely different... People often have their own justified reasons to why they do the things the way they do.

Although he is very fond of Sweden, there are still some things that irritate him. But then again, there are some things that irritate him in Finland as well. The one thing that keeps him from considering living in Sweden on a more permanent basis is language, the intonation in particular:

I became irritated by the fact that I can never be a Swede... Otherwise I maybe could adapt perfectly with time but as soon as I start talking people will know I'm not a Swede... It's not nice to be an outsider for the rest of your life... In their eyes I would have never fully become a Swede, no matter how well I would have learned the language. It just isn't enough.

When the three-year assignment ends, Juha will have a position waiting in the company headquarters in Finland. While the first experience abroad greatly contributed to his career, this one, in all likelihood, will not have as significant of an influence or may even turn out to be a negative one: *"The effect of this experience will not be that big. It might rather be a step back towards expert tasks."* Although he is happy to return to Finland, he does not dismiss the possibility of doing another stint abroad at some point. After all, he sees the value of such experience for both him and his family and he is confident that they would be better equipped to tackle the difficulties this time:

We could do so that we all leave together [the family] and stay the same time in the host country. We have talked about it. But not going separately like this. This will not happen again, ever... It would most likely be another country. Or why not even Sweden, we liked it here alright.

Narrative Analysis of Expatriate Juha

Although Juha had always been internationally oriented, his initial move abroad was based more on a whim than any rational consideration. He was transferred within the company and employed on a permanent contract based more or less on local standards. Juha struggled in the beginning as the combination of language difficulties, cultural differences and challenging work proved overwhelming. He was yet determined and treated the differences with excitement and curiosity, by which he eventually learned to appreciate the differing working style and gained confidence in the language which facilitated daily matters. Nevertheless, he experienced loneliness, since he lacked social contacts. He returned to his home country after meeting his future wife. Ten years after the first stint abroad, Juha was contacted by the same company with another job offer abroad. This time the compensation was more extensive and the contract made for three years, in order to facilitate moving the entire family. By having the family follow him, he considers life to have been richer and allowing for greater integration in the host society. This time the array of challenges and joys was yet wider, as the entire family struggles with adjustment. Due to the experiences abroad, Juha considers himself to have become more open and accepting and learning to adopt different perspectives. From a professional perspective, the first stint abroad entailed a transition from expert to managerial positions, a development which he considers to have been aided by the international experience as such. Now as his assignment ends, he will be returning back to his home country and to expert tasks within the organization.

5.4 Expatriate Janne - Experiencing Something New

Janne was 25-year-old and had a few years of professional experience after receiving his BBA degree. In 2002 he learned about an open position at his employer's German subsidiary: *"I heard from my superior at that time that they had an opening there. I applied for it and got it."* Janne was excited for the professional opportunity: *"I was doing tasks which I did not like at all. The job in Germany was more what I could see myself being interested in."* He was confident that an experience such as this would contribute to his career. Besides the work and perhaps even more importantly, living abroad appeared very exciting to him, especially as he had no previous international experience:

I come from a small town, where at the time a foreigner was definitely something special. So it was a big thing to gain language skills and experience abroad. So it was all in all a pretty big thing.

His German skills were poor, and thus he was determined to improve them in particular. Otherwise he had very little expectations and his decision to move was perhaps more based on a whim than any systematic plan. However, as he was young and had no strong ties to Finland, now was the time to experiment. The contract was fixed-term and originally made for two years. Although he was not considered an expatriate, he received some additional benefits to compensate his move abroad:

The salary may have been on local level, but I had housing benefit and I paid taxes and other fees to Finland, which made it more advantageous for me, compared to if I had paid them in Germany. I also had full health insurance, so basically I could use all services at the company's expense.

Once in Germany, the prior excitement quickly turned into severe stress, as he began to understand the reality of moving abroad. He struggled considerably with the language, as people were unwilling to use English and his German language skills did not suffice even in the daily matters. He was surprised by the multitude of practicalities to be arranged and was ill-equipped to deal with the German bureaucracy and the different customs. Even arranging the electricity agreement appeared so much more complex than in Finland. Everything was new and difficult:

It was very stressful. You come to a new country and nothing is organized. You are supposed to arrange things in different offices and you literally have no language skills... You start to question if this is going to work out at all.

The step from his former position proved to be a large one and he found work very challenging as well:

The work was new. Everything was new and weird and of course in the wrong language on top of everything... I was expected to answer all the company phone calls and they were 99% in German, so it was a bit challenging.

His previous work experience was primarily with purchasing and accounts payable and now he had a rather varied job description, including production planning, marketing and sales.

Luckily Janne was curious and eager to learn, as was he willing to put an effort into familiarizing with and understanding the differences: *"There are a lot of things you want to learn and go through... I suppose much depends on your own attitude on how you want learn and do things there."* He approached the difficulties with a sense of humility. He soon accepted that things simply were different in Germany: *"You adapt to it quite fast. It's simply their way of doing things."* Although he generally is fairly flexible and adaptable and did not consider adjustment difficult in that sense, he was long handicapped by his poor German language skills:

I suppose that after a half a year it was pretty clear how everything worked there [in Germany]... The first six months were simply learning. But when I learned the language and could take care of all the daily things, it of course started going considerably better, both on and off work. There were more opportunities and I could better understand how things worked.

His greatest asset in getting started in Germany turned out to be his colleagues, his Finnish colleagues in particular. He was able to follow them to grasp how things generally are done. They also proved a valuable source of advice not strictly on work-related matters:

I asked often from my colleagues, if there were some personal matters I had to take care of. There worked other Finns as well, who had worked there a long time, so I always got great advice from them on different matters.

Janne was intrigued by Germany from the very beginning and this interest only increased the more he became involved. After roughly a half a year, once he felt comfortable and "in" in the new culture, things truly became interesting and meaningful. It was not, however, until after a year that he considered himself to be entirely on top of everything and to live a life comparable to the one he would be living had he been in Finland:

It became organized in a way. I had certain hobbies, a group of friends and of course routines. Things went at their own pace and it was kind of normal life, the type of life it would have been in Finland. You didn't really even think whether you were in Finland or somewhere else.

As it turned out, Janne immensely enjoyed Germany. He enjoyed the culture and was increasingly fond of the city he now lived in. The city suited a young person like he was, as there were always plenty of options to do and people around. The same could not be said about Finland and the village he came from. It perfectly met his needs. Although, at the time he was fully content if he had good food, cheap cars and cold beer. As far as his life was concerned, he was happy with his work, his private life and the country: *"All in all, it was the sum of all the things [keeping me in Germany]... I believe all the pieces have to be in somewhat the right place for it to work."* There were still aspects which he was not fond of but they no longer seemed overwhelming as he was accustomed to them:

The apartments always had some sort of mold problem and I never really learned to live in them properly. And if you wanted to close a telephone subscription, you never succeeded the first time. It always required five phone calls and three emails and even then they billed you for six months after the cancellation... The Germans were very polite on the surface, so you never really knew what they meant in the end. So it always required a whole lot peeling to come down to the bottom of things.

After the two-year-period of his original contract, the contract was extended twice. Janne was grateful that he had the opportunity and chose to stay more than the original two years. He feels that he would have regretted if he had come home earlier: *"Two years is, in any case, a rather short time. At least it felt so at the time. It felt like I hadn't seen enough yet."* He ended up staying in Germany roughly five years altogether. The assignment ended when the subsidiary was

sold. At that point Janne was forced to decide between staying in Germany and being employed by the new Swedish owner or returning to Finland and continuing his employment with his employer at the time. He decided to return to Finland. At this point he was thirty and it was also time to start seriously considering his future. It was perhaps time to start building something of more permanent nature. After all, he was thirty and still single. As regards work, his return was facilitated by the fact that his primary contacts remained to Germany and that his superior was German. Otherwise the return might not have been as smooth as it was.

Thinking back, Janne considers the experience to have been extremely valuable in many respects. Above all, his language skills improved considerably which he is satisfied with, although he has not been using German in several years and it is not as fluent as it once was. Furthermore, he is convinced that the international experience has advanced his career and will continue to do so in the future. The experience also opened the door for him to sales with which he still works:

I believe that it's an important thing to have as much as five years international experience in your CV. I am sure it will have an effect in the future as well... I got language skills, international experience and experience in sales, which definitely has helped afterwards in the how things have developed.

Being in a different culture and being forced to consider alternative courses of action developed sensitivity to different perspectives. This has made him more tolerant and understanding towards diversity in people, views and behaviors. How this personal development has contributed to his life afterwards is unfortunately difficult to estimate.

Janne is optimistic that if the right opportunity arose, he would be willing to take on a new assignment abroad. But this time he would have more requirements for the assignment as a whole. Whereas the first time could be characterized by excitement and experiencing something new and perhaps very little to lose, any future assignments would likely be more strongly dictated by professional development and greater caution:

It would have to be a very challenging task... This time it would have to be tempting and interesting as a whole. I suppose it would be in Europe. I don't know if I would take the children to god knows where... I suppose it wouldn't be the country that would matter that much though.

Despite there being more factors to consider with family and career, Janne still considers it to most likely be easier the second time, since he has already experienced it once: *"I'm sure it would be much easier because I have already been there and done that. And I learned a lot from it. It would definitely be much simpler this time."*

Narrative Analysis of Expatriate Janne

Janne considered the internal transfer to the German subsidiary to provide him with the much desired opportunity for professional development and career advancement. Furthermore, he was excited to gain new experiences abroad and improve his language skills, as his life so far had provided limited opportunities to do so. His contract was originally constructed for two years and included minor additional benefits. Despite the initial excitement, Janne experienced severe stress from the very beginning. Due to his poor language skills and lack of previous international experience, he was unprepared to deal with the challenges of the new environment. He treated the differences with curiosity and was eager to learn, which together with his humble attitude and help from his Finnish colleagues facilitated adjustment. Learning the language and practicalities provided more opportunities for involvement, which increased the meaningfulness of the experience. By time all the pieces in his new life found their place and he considered to live a life comparable to one he would have lived in his home country. He was fortunate in that his contract was flexible enough to be extended, as after the two years, he considered that the host country still had more to offer him. Eventually after five years in the host location, Janne returned to his home country to continue employment with the parent company after the subsidiary was sold. At that point in his life, it was also time to settle down and build something of more permanent nature. Janne is very appreciative of the experience, as it opened the door to new types of tasks. He considered the international experience as such to have facilitated career development and to continue to do so in the future as well. On the other hand, the experience allowed him to appreciate different perspectives and become more tolerant of diversity.

5.5 Expatriate Lukas – Internationality as a Lifestyle

Lukas as a person has always been determined to get ahead. He realized early on that this would require effort and he was willing to work hard to learn. He has had jobs as long as he can remember: *“My high school wasn’t a normal high school, it was a hotel academy. I had to work 2000 hours for free to get the experience and certificate there.”* Early on he turned to internationality as a means for experiencing, and most importantly learning, new things. He had his first international experience at the age of sixteen in 2001, when he moved as an exchange student to Australia during his high school studies. Throughout the year in Australia he worked at a local restaurant and later on engaged in stock trading as well.

After graduating from high school in 2004, he moved from his native Slovakia to the Czech Republic to earn a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Interna-

tional Trade and Business. As he was committed to improve his international opportunities, he conducted part of his university studies in German. By this time trading was no longer only a part-time activity and an extra source of income. He considered himself an entrepreneur as he managed funds for investors worth over a million US dollars. During his university years he won a green card in a lottery which granted him permanent residency in the United States:

In order to maintain the status as permanent resident you need to stay there most of the year. It was a must to stay there. And I intended to live in the United States at that time in the future.

Lukas spent on average 4 to 5 months per year in the States in order to maintain his residency status. During the following years, he spent a total of 2 years in the States. He mostly stayed at different places and worked a few odd jobs as well as continued his trading activities. Luckily the school system at the Czech University was flexible, which allowed him to make progress on his studies, while travelling and working. In 2007 he met his girlfriend, who was Czech and lived in Prague. This changed his plans as for his future in the States: *"The US was like I was half American but then when I got engaged to my girlfriend who is Czech, then I sort of gave up on US."* Although the States was attractive and he identified as half-American, he still missed the idea of Europe as it was something inherently different in his mind. He did not consider himself to fit in the American culture in certain practical senses:

This is why I actually didn't want to live in the US... All their cars are ugly from the inside, this must tell something about the culture. All their portions have to be huge. Nobody is able to eat them. What's the point, you throw it away anyway... I don't get it, don't be stupid... So this way of living wasn't really close to me.

The financial crisis of 2009 ceased Lukas' trading activities. He finished his BSc and MSc degree in Czech Republic in 2010 and considered his next move. Still the same year he enrolled at a Californian University for an MBA degree. He had become accustomed to juggling multiple countries and priorities simultaneously and became restless. Despite starting the MBA studies, he applied for a large multinational company for a graduate program and was accepted. This program was to offer him a junior position but considerable international exposure as he explains:

It's global so I can have exposure of different, cosmopolitan people but also more experience... To gain a very solid ground for further promotion within that company.... I knew how much it means when you have a solid ground, solid network where you can ask questions but still get quite a bit exposure and experience. I'm ready to learn at a fast pace. Those were the things that motivated me to join... [The international aspect] gives you the opportunity to learn more.

Lukas was intrigued by both the company and the program and therefore decided to put his MBA studies on hold. Lukas began the graduate program with a six month rotation in Ireland doing finance. He had been able to influence the

location choice and he was very excited for the opportunity. His salary was based on the company's global standards but he also received some additional benefits: *"I got local salary... It wasn't higher than other Irish people's salaries... And they provided great other stuff. Car, of course, and a flat."*

After the six months in Ireland Lukas was transferred to the Czech Republic, which was more or less a home base for him: *"That was sort of back to country, back to my culture... That's where my fiancée and cat are."* While he enjoyed the responsibility and exposure to senior management the position offered, he was discouraged by the workload, especially since he had hoped to complete some of his MBA studies while in Prague:

I had done a few courses in Prague [distant learning] during the weekends but it didn't work because they made me work so much, like also on the weekends... It wasn't feasible for the future.

After the six months in Prague when the company was to further transfer Lukas to London, he had already made his decision to leave the company. As much as he was intrigued by experiencing yet another country and wavered on his decision, he was focused on completing his studies as well. He knew that with the increasing expectations of his employer, this would be unlikely to happen otherwise, as Lukas explains:

The challenge there was that combining it with the MBA was problematic. And that was actually the reason I quit. There was a plan that I would move to London, but at that time I had already made my study arrangements. So I couldn't skip it because the school was paid in advance and I would have lost it [the money].

During the next two years, Lukas focused on completing his remaining MBA studies while living in California. Towards the end of his studies, he came across a graduate program at a global packaging company. The program was based on three 6-month rotations in different locations familiarizing with different aspects of the business and business levels. This fit Lukas like a glove and the company noticed his potential as well. He was recruited and he started his first rotation in November 2014:

In my case it's plant site, secondly business group or cluster finance, and the third, so far planned is internal audit in headquarters... In the end it should give you sort of an experience which should enable you to be a more financially conscious manager for the future role... My contract is set-up the way that it's not limited to 18 months, it's a permanent position. It's just drafted the way that you go through some phases and pick-up most of it. Then what you want to do is really up to you... Also the business needs and location limit it.

Lukas was originally supposed to be sent to Britain for his first rotation but Finland was suggested at the last minute. This change was welcomed: *"I was immediately into that because this is a once in a lifetime experience. I want to meet something that I don't know or read anything about."* Financial considerations were never among his primary motivations. In Finland he was under a local contract. While he was quite content with the deal, it did not provide him with anything extra. However, the company has promised to employ him under a headquarters con-

tract once he would transfer to Britain. This would then also represent a considerable rise in his salary.

Today, Lukas is 31 years old and has almost finished his assignment in Finland. In two days he will be transferred to Britain, where he will continue his rotation. To date, he has permanently lived abroad twelve years, studied in four different countries and worked abroad in six different countries. Besides this, he has travelled considerably. The extent of his international experiences has left its mark on him: *"I have changed location a lot. I started doing this when I was quite young, sixteen. It was too young for me. What is left on my soul is that I keep my eyes open always."* Internationality has more or less become a lifestyle for him, to the extent that he has lost track of home: *"My parents live in Slovakia and I believe that home is where your parents are."* He is unwilling to settle in any place for a longer period of time, as he is concerned that he would miss out on something:

I want to live you know. If you're stuck in one place for like five years and you're 89 and it's the last day of your life and somebody asks you what did you do in 2003 and you have no idea because you were watching TV every night. But if you're somewhere else every six months you might remember some days of the six months like I was doing this. Because the excitements are then written into your brain so deeply... I'm excited about the fact that I'm able to live abroad.

Due to his extensive international experience, he has become rather accustomed to fitting into new places. He tends to investigate the country beforehand, in order to have some kind of prior understanding of what he is getting involved in. Although he always has to adjust this original idea he has of the country, he feels comfortable from the very beginning:

When I was in Finland one month I felt fine. When I was here two months I felt even more fine. I feel comfortable after one week. After one month it's really cool... Me myself, I don't mind. Being two weeks in a country I feel comfortable. I'm not stressed, I'm sleeping great, meeting new people. It's exciting.

The aspects which bother him most in the beginning are generally strong accents which he may have trouble understanding and time zone differences. Otherwise he has lived abroad so long that he is accustomed to being surrounded by unfamiliarity. He is curious of the new things he encounters but settles to investigate them on a more superficial level. After all, there is also a time constraint, as he is not planning on staying in any place for a longer period of time. He, however, acknowledges the fact that although he is comfortable quite soon, others may not be as comfortable with him and his behaviour:

So which way we go, it's either how soon I'm comfortable or how other people see my behaviour towards them. Because I don't know how soon people become comfortable with me... Others may tell you that.

Lukas allows second-hand opinions color his perceptions of the country:

When I now leave Finland, I will not put my evaluation of Finland as done but it will remain open until somebody comes and really ruins it. So the feedback I get after I

leave Finland and something comes about Finland, it will still effect what I thought about it.

He is still searching for the place where he feels comfortable. Wherever he goes, he feels that there is something missing and that he does not quite fit in. For instance, in the States he was fascinated by the diversity and the abundance of opportunities but disturbed by the tendency to excess. In Australia he enjoyed the beautiful scenery but missed churches and did not quite understand the fascination for surfing. Whereas overseas he misses Europe which to him is something uniquely different, in Europe he finds himself yearning for greater exoticism. Besides being committed to his international lifestyle, he is also committed to his Czech girlfriend of eight years. Although the two biggest commitments in his life contradict each other to some extent, Lukas considers him and his girlfriend to have found a balance in their long-distance relationship over the years:

She has to manage. You go up and down all the time... She grew into that I guess... I try to build a natural trust... I try to show myself as a loyal partner, although of course you like other people... If you meet somebody who is the same it works. Even though you might not be together for some time. But these longer breaks strengthen your relationship. You trust each other and so on. I feel nice about the fact that I can be faithful.

Lukas is decided to maintain his international lifestyle for the time being. He has considered that perhaps sometime in the future he could be ready to settle down and have a family:

I always felt that up to certain age I can be global. I'm very flexible. I don't mind being six months now and so... No kids yet, you know. Those troubles will come and then you have to think about, like for kids it's not good to be every six months somewhere else. But unless having that I'm flexible... Ten years abroad still, I'm ok. Then maybe. This is about the feelings I believe. Once I get the feeling in my head that I don't want. Maybe in three years I'll think that the place I work in is great and I want to buy a house there but now no.

He is, however, yet to discover the location where he could consider staying a longer period of time. So far none of the countries he has lived in fully satisfies him:

I don't want to live in the US... Australia is too crazy... Not in Czech Republic, not in Slovakia. That's the least I can say. Not in Finland and not in Ireland. Not in UK number one. That's what I don't want.

Narrative Analysis of Expatriate Lukas

Lukas has long possessed a strong drive for internationality. His wish to always experience something new and unique and learn in the process made him geographically mobile at an early age. By time, internationality became a lifestyle for him, fueled by the fear of missing out on new experience and excitement.

Thus, his personal and professional considerations are governed by continual changes in location. Due to his extensive international exposure, Lukas has become accustomed to being surrounded by unfamiliarity as it therefore has ceased to faze him. He is comfortable in a new culture from the very beginning and the short stints only allow for superficial adjustment to surface-level differences. Lukas is currently part of an international graduate program, which is based on three six-month stints in three different locations and corporate functions. He already has a permanent employment contract and his salary is based on local standards. He expects the exposure to different tasks and functions to promote his career and result in a managerial role within the company. Lukas is committed to remaining international for the time being. He is still searching for the place he feels comfortable in and could potentially consider settling down in. As he has a fiancé of 8 years in Slovakia, he is forced to consider sacrificing his international lifestyle at some point in order to start a family.

5.6 Literature Analysis Combined with Narrative Analysis

The interviewed expatriates illustrate the suggested heterogeneity of the phenomenon. Although all the expatriates are well-educated and have several years of work experience in their home country prior to the move, they represent different organizational levels, functions and are at different places in their career. Concurring with previous research on traditional expatriates and self-initiated expatriates (SFEs), the expatriates who share more characteristics with traditional expatriates, tend to be slightly older and have more experience before the assignment, whereas the expatriates more closely resembling SFEs tend to be slightly younger and less advanced in their career. Similarly, the former are more likely to be more qualified and represent higher organizational levels than the latter. Regardless, the position abroad represented a career advancement for the majority of the expatriates. As opposed to existing literature on SFEs and concurring with traditional notions of expatriates, the interviewed expatriates all worked for international companies. The transfers were within Europe and between developed countries. Furthermore, contrary to literature on traditional expatriates and SFEs, considerable diversity could be found in family situation of the interviewed expatriates. Initially a few of the expatriates were single but found a partner either in home country or host country. The partner may have also been in a third country, the family in the host country or family followed from home country to host country.

The reasons behind the move abroad vary considerably between the expatriates. They often tend to be characterized by several aspects of the person's life, ranging from career considerations, personal and family life, lifestyle choices to specific external factors. Two of the interviewed expatriates appeared to merely have had one primary reason for the move, whereas with the other three

the decision was based on more extensive considerations on their life and work as a whole. As suggested by Tharenou (2013), SFEs possess a stronger desire for cross-cultural experience, including a novel culture, lifestyle, language, location and adventure. Concurring with this view, the interviewed expatriates generally exhibited a drive towards internationalism, irrespective of how much prior international experience they had. Furthermore, they were motivated by the professional challenge and opportunity to learn the experience provided but did not necessarily consider this in terms of the career opportunities within the employing organization. Consequently, the goals tended to be more personal by nature, even when they were set on company performance or one's own work. Financial gain was neither among the most important factors behind the move.

The initiative for international assignments is traditionally considered to derive from the employers (Arp, Hutchings & Smith 2013). Contrary to this view, only one of the expatriates could be considered an intra-company transfer, for which the initiative emanated from the company. The two other intra-company transfers were mainly based on the initiative of the expatriates' themselves. Two of these intra-company transfers could perhaps be considered to fulfil some of the traditional functions associated to expatriates by improving the coordination and contact between the headquarters and subsidiary and by capitalizing on their knowledge of the parent-company operations. On one instance, the assignments abroad were designed as a form of management development, as also indicated in previous literature. Although in this case, the experience was based on junior positions and designed as to introduce multiple countries and functions within the company.

All the interviewed expatriates had work arranged prior to move, which would present the expatriation as fairly planned. This contradicts with the early advances on the field beyond the traditional forms of expatriation (Suutari & Brewster 2000). The majority of the expatriates had signed their employment contract with the local units, even when they were transferred within the company. Consequently, their compensation was generally based on local standards. Although the company may have covered moving expenses or provided other minor perks, the expatriates largely considered their salary to reflect rather their position and task level than their expatriate status. Only in one case, the compensation could be regarded as reflecting the compensation of traditional expatriates as indicated in the literature. The compensation was considered extensive as well as complex and to be designed to compensate the move of the family.

For the most part, the expatriates were either employed under permanent contracts or fixed-term contracts which may have been flexible enough to be extended. This contradicts the suggestion of SFEs being more likely temporarily employed. In cases where the contract was fixed-term, the duration of the stay was agreed together with the expatriate and there either was a repatriation agreement in place or the expatriate had a permanent contract with the parent company to the least.

The interviewed expatriates were at differing places in their personal life. Being single during the assignment, appeared largely more straightforward than having family or a significant other. In this case, the expatriate was freer to lead a carefree life with responsibility solely of oneself. Of great importance appears to be, however, that the expatriate is able to form some social contacts and find activities to enjoy oneself with. This is particularly important, as the duration of the assignment increases. In the beginning and with shorter stays, the expatriate may simply be engrossed in the differences and derive satisfaction from these aspects. However, as the time spent in the host country increases, so appears to increase the requirement for a more balanced life. In line with the previous studies, the stability and the supportiveness of the family appears an important factor (Aycan 1997).

Having a local partner is considered to enable deeper involvement in the host society. Although being a great source of support and aid in dealing with the host society, a local partner or family also ties the expatriate to the host society which may result in feelings of loneliness and sadness. At this point any social relationships in the host country may not seem to compare to the family and friends in the home country. As in having a local partner or family, having a family follow to the host country can be considered to complicate the situation as well. The array of challenges and joys are suggested to be wider, as the entire family deals with firstly adjusting and then leaving the host society. Having children, in particular, is suggested to facilitate integration into the host society.

The relationship of the expatriate to the host country underwent significant changes over the duration of the stay. For some encountering the stress and challenge of the new location was immediate. These initial difficulties appeared to be facilitated by previous international experience and language skills, by which the expatriate perhaps held more realistic expectations for the challenge of the move. The initial excitement of the new surroundings and lifestyle was also considered to have smoothed the difficulties as well as increased the motivation to learn. Interestingly, this effect could last several years. With shorter stints, the expatriate perhaps never moved past this initial excitement. Furthermore, when the international experience was characterized by frequent changes in location, the expatriate could become accustomed to being surrounded by unfamiliarity and therefore instantly be comfortable with the new surroundings. In this case, scrutiny of the host culture could be considered to remain at more superficial level. Becoming more proficient in the language typically simplified daily matters and allowed greater involvement in host society, which was perceived as increasing the meaningfulness of the experience.

Generally it appeared that all pieces needed to find their place in order for the expatriates to be fully content with their life. This included, for instance, their work, hobbies and social contacts. Whereas many of the expatriates were able to find enjoyable activities for their spare time and thrived on their work, they often struggled in establishing social contacts corresponding to those at home, if having any at all. This was generally a source of great loneliness and a significant reason behind the considerations of returning to the home country.

In time the expatriates generally learned to accept aspects of the host culture which once had irritated them. Furthermore, they were able to identify characteristics of the host culture which they had grown deeply fond of. When the stay in the host country became of more permanent nature, the expatriates tended to place higher requirements for their functioning and integration into the society. At this point, frustration and insecurity were common as they considered themselves both ill-informed and to lack full integration.

The study points to several factors facilitating the adjustment of the expatriates. As suggested by previous research as well, language skills and previous international experience appear to be of great importance (Shaffer & Miller 2008, 118-119). Likewise, the lack of them was in many cases regarded among the greatest hindrances to adjustment. Inadequate local language skills in particular were believed to inhibit greater integration in the society. The perceived value of previous international experience could perhaps be mostly attributed to being more prepared for encountering differences and holding more realistic expectations of the difficulties one is likely to encounter.

Besides language skills and previous international experience, it appeared important to treat the differences encountered with humility and curiosity as well as being eager and determined to learn and understand them. This relates to the mental capabilities as well as cultural flexibility as indicated by previous research (Aycan 1997). As for interpersonal and relationship development skills, many of expatriates were able to associate with either local colleagues or fellow countrymen, even the extended family, from whom they were able to receive valuable help and support. Furthermore, confidence and strong interest in the foreign experience could be considered to have moderated the difficulties. On the contrary, a lack of confidence could result in emotional stagnation and loss of motivation.

The interviewed expatriates were able to identify several facets of personal development and learning during their time abroad. This included, for instance, the amelioration of language skills, which in some cases applied to both local and third language skills. Furthermore, the expatriates considered themselves to have become more open and accepting of diversity as well as adept at appreciating and adopting different perspectives. This was considered to facilitate working across cultures. As the stay in the host country became of more permanent nature, it largely required a great deal of reflection on the part of the expatriate to come to terms with the new situation. Embracing the new path in life and reconsidering one's identity could be perceived as one of the most challenging and broadest forms of personal development induced by the expatriate experience. Interestingly, this process could be considered to work in both directions, as a person with a strongly international mindset and identification with no country in particular, reflects on the possibility of waiving the international lifestyle. In general, the above discussed learning outcomes involve all three categories of affective, knowledge and skill-based learning outcomes.

As suggested by literature on experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb 2005), the expatriates exhibited different tactics and emphases in learning to understand

and function in the new environment. The expatriates may have exhibited a tendency to closely observe the behavior of locals in an attempt to understand the reasons behind it. Subsequently they experimented with the behavior themselves, which provided a basis for further reflection. Reflecting on the differences was generally characterized by a respect for the differences and lack of judgement. On the other hand, learning may have begun from actively investigating the differences and gaining first-hand experience of new situations. This approach was generally accompanied with curiosity and openness to differences. In this case, the expatriate generally was unfazed by the differences and quickly learned to accept them. Largely the expatriates appeared more attracted to the practical, people and problem-solving. None of the expatriates appeared very inclined to abstract conceptualization. However, they could be considered to be fairly articulate of the differences and the reasons for the discomfort they experienced, which would indicate a certain degree of wider conceptualization.

The expatriate experience typically had a considerable impact on career development both during and after the assignment. All of the expatriates reported substantial professional growth during their time abroad. For some the move also represented a considerable step up on their career or to new types of tasks, both opportunities which they would unlikely otherwise have received. The expatriates who returned to their home country perceived the experience as greatly contributing to their career development. The international experience per se was considered to have provided added value to this development and to continue to do so in the future as well. Only one of the expatriates has a repatriation plan agreed in advance. This was a position waiting at the home country headquarters which actually could be regarded as a step back on the expatriate's career. On the other hand, the expatriates, who stayed in the host country, faced a more complex situation. Whereas the international experience had offered them considerable professional challenge and perhaps even elevated their career by several steps, they eventually encountered stagnation, as they competed as foreigners on the local job market. They felt handicapped by their non-native status and had difficulties moving forward in their career, which was a source of great frustration. They considered themselves unable to capitalize on the value of the international experience in the host country as well. They regarded their professional opportunities and career development to have been better in the home country.

As regards the future, all the expatriates expressed interest in another stint abroad, if an interesting opportunity emerged. They would, however, likely be more cautious next time and weigh the overall effect of the decision on family and career. The host locations they would be willing to consider were typically more limited as well.

Table 3 below summarizes the above discussed individual expatriate experiences. The experiences are here illustrated along the lines of motives for the move, work arrangements, personal life, relationship to host country, aspects facilitating adjustment, personal development, professional development and career and plans for future. This division was considered to cover and organize

the emerged topics well and provide a balanced view on the phenomena studied.

TABLE 3 Summarizing the Expatriate Experiences

	Anna (A)	Sebastian (B)	Juha (C)	Janne (D)	Lukas (E)
Motives for move	Professional challenge initiated first move, love the return.	Experiencing life outside home country and having an international career. Living together with wife. Professional challenge.	First time move on a whim. Return due to interest in professional challenge and nostalgia for returning to former employer.	Professional opportunity combined with interest in new experiences.	Strong drive for internationality, experiencing new and unique things and learning. Unwillingness to settle down.
Work arrangements	Permanent contract, temporary arrangement on her part initially. Employment more or less on local standards.	Intra-company transfer to start a project at host-country subsidiary. Employment on local standards, company covered moving expenses. Project originally scheduled for 5 years.	First move intra-company transfer on local standards, permanent contract. Return inter-company transfer, three-year contract. More extensive compensation, repatriation agreement in place.	Intra-company transfer. Fixed-term contract with some additional benefits to compensate to home country after subsidiary sold to continue employment with parent-company.	International graduate program based on 3 rotations in different countries. Permanent contract, salary according to local standards.
Personal life	Initial excitement of exploring new surroundings. Focus shifted to relationship with local and their life together. Missing family and friends as stay in host country more permanent.	Marrying a host-country national and building a family. Host country becomes home, although many parts of life are still missing. Loneliness and sadness, as misses friends and family.	Limited social contacts, loneliness. Returning to home country after meeting future wife. On second move family follows, deals with wider array of challenges and joys.	Finding hobbies and friends. Living a comparable life to one in home country. Host city considered to provide more opportunities. Returning to home country to settle down.	Internationality as lifestyle. Personal and professional considerations determined by continual changes in location. Committed to long-distance relationship with fiancé of 8 years.
Relationship to host country	Focus on work and entertainment transformed into broader attempt of building a life in new country. Greater structure and normalcy in everyday life. Initial irritation replaced by acceptance. Higher requirements for own integration as stay more permanent.	Initial excitement of new surroundings smoothed away difficulties and increased motivation to learn. After first couple of years frustration and insecurity due to everyday difficulties and lack of inclusion in host society.	Perceived similarity to home country, by time uncovering deeper level differences. Language difficulties, cultural differences and challenging work overwhelming in beginning. Learning language facilitated daily matters. Having children facilitated integration in host society.	Severe stress when learning to deal with differences. Poor language skills and lack of international experience hindered functioning in beginning. Perceived fit with the host culture and location outweighed negative aspects. All pieces eventually finding right place.	Accustomed to being surrounded by unfamiliarity, feeling comfortable in culture from very beginning. Meeting differences with excitement. Short stints allow only superficial adjustment to surface-level differences.

	Anna (A)	Sebastian (B)	Juha (C)	Janne (D)	Lukas (E)
Aspects facilitating adjustment	Language skills. Previous international experience. Confidence and calmness. Support from countrymen and locals.	Familiarity with host country prior to move. Support from host country family members. Humility and curiosity. Determination to fit in. Observing and copying behavior .	Determination. Treating the differences with excitement and trying to understand them.	Curiosity. Eagerness to learn. Humility. Agreeableness. Help from (finnish) colleagues.	Previous international experience. Short duration of stay. Excitement of experiencing something new and unique.
Personal development	Accepting new path in life.	Accepting new perspective on stay in host country. Greater identification with host country nationals.	Becoming more open and accepting. Learning to appreciate and adopt different perspectives. Ability to work across cultures.	Improved language skills. Ability to appreciate different perspectives. Becoming more tolerant and understanding of diversity.	Considering sacrificing international lifestyle at some point to settle down and start family.
Professional development and career	Professional growth but career development limited by non-native status. Career not benefiting from expatriate experience in host country.	Advancing career by several steps by moving to host country. Stagnation due to non-native status. Career not benefiting from expatriate experience in host country.	First assignment transition from expert to managerial positions. International experience boosting career development. Current repatriation plan step back to expert positions.	More varied and challenging tasks on different field. Opening door to new types of assignments. International experience facilitating career development.	Familiarizing with different functions and tasks within the company. Experience expected to boost career and result in managerial role within company.
Plans for future	Settling down in host country and raising family. Considering possibility of new stint abroad at some point.	Entertaining idea of moving back to home country. Alternatively relocating in host country to improve career opportunities. Open for stint in third country as well.	Returning back to home country. Open to another stint abroad at some point.	Open for new assignment abroad. Future considerations more dictated by the overall effect on career and family: professional challenge and greater caution due to family.	Remaining international for the time being. Search for place where feels comfortable and could potentially settle down in.

6 DISCUSSION

The objective of the present study was to explore the changing face of expatriation and illustrate the heterogeneity of the phenomenon. The study investigates the expatriate experience together with the interrelated phenomena of cross-cultural adjustment and learning. In particular, the study discusses how the expatriates consider the expatriate experience as a part of their personal life as well as career and how they perceive their adjustment and learning and its effects on the experience abroad. The increasing number of employees working outside their country of origin and the relatively few advances made on the alternative forms of expatriation support the importance of further study on this emerging topic.

The findings of this study, based on semi-structured interviews of five former or current expatriates, point to increasing heterogeneity in the nature of expatriation. The expatriates had varying work arrangements, which for the most part could not be considered to fall under the traditional notions of expatriation. Even the more traditional forms of intra-company transfers appear to be less straightforward than previous literature would suggest (see e.g. Tharenou 2013). Furthermore, the reasons for the move can be characterized as diverse, generally encompassing several aspects of the person's life, ranging from career considerations, personal and family life, lifestyle choices to specific external factors. In general, there appeared to be a shift from companies to individuals, as the expatriates appeared more in charge of their assignments and careers. On the other hand, the expatriates were at different places in their personal life, which affected their relationship to the host country as well. The expatriate experience was generally perceived as entailing professional growth and facilitating career development. This effect was, however, limited in cases where the career continued in the host country. In the following paragraphs I will discuss the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of this study in greater detail.

The study makes a theoretical contribution by illustrating the heterogeneity of expatriation and shift beyond the traditional forms of expatriation. As regards the heterogeneity, considerable variation could be identified in the organ-

izational levels and functions the expatriates represented as well as their qualifications. The assignments were varied, including both inter-company and intra-company transfers, for which the initiative could have originated from either the expatriate or the employing company. The same diversity applied to the family situation of the expatriates at the time of the experience. Furthermore, the expatriates disclosed diverse motives for the move, which generally were numerous and pertained several different aspects of the person's life. On the other hand, as opposed to traditional literature on company-assigned expatriates (Suutari & Brewster 2000), the expatriates had generally signed the employment contracts with the local units and were consequently treated more or less as local employees which was also reflected in their compensation. Furthermore, fixed repatriation agreements were typically uncommon and employment often ceased on the initiative of the expatriate, as they either decided to change employers or return to the home country.

All in all, there appears to be a subtle shift from companies to individuals as regards expatriation. The expatriates studied typically appeared much more in charge of their assignments and careers than traditional expatriate literature would suggest (see e.g. Inkson et al. 1997). They were discovered to devise individual plans for their future, which potentially even contradicted those of the employing company. Even the expatriates studied, who were transferred within the organization, may be regarded as bearing greater resemblance to SFEs than traditional expatriates, due to their compensation and perspective on the assignment. Despite the above discussed advances of the present study, the present-day expatriation still requires further exploration due to its varied nature and increasing importance in today's workforce. In particular, of great importance is to understand the changing nature of international assignments as regards career and professional development as perceived by the expatriates.

The study makes a methodological contribution by utilizing narrative approach on the data to illustrate it in form of a coherent storyline. Narrative analysis can be argued to preserve the completeness and complexity of happenings, while simultaneously providing scope for the inclusion of events. (Polkinghorne 1995, 5-8.) With this approach the expatriate experience could be expressed as embedded in the life and career of the expatriate. In this sense, the study provides a rich exploration into expatriation while also taking into account the external circumstances contributing to the phenomenon. This approach allowed the individual accounts to be combined into a synthesis story in order to highlight the cross-cultural adaptation and learning of the studied expatriates, which could then be further discussed with respect to previous literature.

The study makes a practical contribution by characterizing the expatriate experience as a part of the life and career of the individual expatriates involving considerations on their learning and adjustment during the time abroad. The expatriate experience appeared to result in both personal and professional development, as the expatriates learned to understand and function in the new culture. The expatriates could identify a variety of affective, knowledge, and

skill-based learning outcomes, which were typically achieved by practical, people and problem solving oriented learning tactics. Concurring with previous research, several aspects facilitating adjustment could be identified, most common of which were language skills and previous international experience (see e.g. Shaffer & Miller 2008, 118-119). Likewise, the excitement of the new surroundings could carry over the initial hardships, the effect of which could last several years. However, as the stay in the host country lengthened, the expatriates appeared to place higher requirements for their integration in the host society. This typically involved a desire of a more balanced life, including work, hobbies and social contacts. Among these, fulfilling social contacts appeared the most difficult to achieve for the studied expatriates. Family appeared a complex issue altogether. While a family or partner lessened the loneliness experienced, it could be more challenging as there were more people to concern oneself with. A family, children in particular, was nevertheless considered to facilitate greater integration in the host society. On the other hand, while a local partner could prove a valuable source for help and support, they also tied the expatriate to the host country which often resulted in feelings of loneliness and sadness, as they had no immediate plans to return to their home country.

The position abroad typically either represented a career advancement or a transfer to new types of tasks, which was often considered to have contributed to later career development. The international experience as such was perceived as providing added value to this development. The expatriates staying in the host country considered themselves unable to benefit from the international work experience and considered their career opportunities as limited due to their non-native status. Likewise, potential dissatisfaction could be caused by the repatriation agreement, which may have represented a step back on the expatriate's career. In any case, all the expatriates were willing to consider another stint abroad should the right opportunity emerge. Despite the above discussed findings of the present study, further research on the complex processes of cross-cultural learning and adjustment is required in order to attain deeper understanding of the phenomena *per se*.

REFERENCES

- Adekola, A. & Sergi, B. S. 2007. *Global Business Management: a Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing Group.
- Adler, N.J. 1997. *International Dimensions of Organizational Behaviour*. Boston: PWS-Kent.
- Adler, N.J. 2002. *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*. 4th edition. Cincinnati, OH : South-Western.
- Armstrong, S.J. & Mahmud, A. 2008. Experiential Learning and the Acquisition of Managerial Tacit Knowledge. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 7 (2), 189-208.
- Arp, F., Hutchings, K. & Smith, W.A. 2013. Foreign Executives in Local Organizations: An exploration of differences to other types of expatriates. *Journal of Global Mobility* 1 (3), 312-335.
- Aswathappa, K. 2010. *Organisational Behaviour*. Mumbai: Global Media.
- Aycan, Z. 1997. Expatriate Adjustment as a Multifaceted Phenomenon: Individual and Organizational Level Predictors. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 8 (4), 434-456.
- Banai, M. & Harry, W. 2004. Boundaryless Global Careers. *International Studies of Management and Organization* 34 (3), 96-120.
- Baskerville, R.F. 2003. Hofstede never studied culture. *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 28, 1-14.
- Bennet, J.M. & Bennet, M.J. 2004. Developing Intercultural Sensitivity. An Integrative Approach to Global and Domestic Diversity. In Landis, D., Bennet, J.M. & Bennet, M.J. *Handbook of Intercultural Training*. London: Sage, 147-163.
- Black, J.S. & Mendenhall, M. 1990. Cross-cultural Training Effectiveness: A Review and a Theoretical Framework for Future Research. *Academy of Management Review* 15 (1), 113-136.
- Bowen, G.A. 2008. Naturalistic inquiry and the saturation concept: a research note. *Qualitative Research* 8 (1) 137-152.
- Brewster, C. 2002. Expatriation. In Redman, T. & Wilkinson, A. (eds.) *The Informed Student Guide to Human Resource Management*. London: Thomson Learning, 84-85.
- Brewster, C., Sparrow, P. & Vernon, G. 2008. *International Human Resource Management*. London: CIPD House.
- Brown, R.J. 2008. Dominant Stressors on Expatriate Couples During International Assignments. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 19 (6), 1018-1034.
- Burrell, G. & Morgan, G. 1979. *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis*. Surrey: Ashgate.
- Cassell, C. & Symon, G. (eds.) 2004. *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*. London: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. 2009. *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed*

- methods approaches. London: Sage.
- Crowley-Henry, M. 2007. The Protean Career. *International Studies of Management and Organization* 37 (3), 44-64.
- Gold, J., Thorpe, R. & Mumford, A. 2010. *Gower Handbook of Leadership and Management Development* (5th Edition). Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Group.
- Goodwin, R. 1999. *Personal Relationships Across Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Hirsjärvi, S. & Hurme, H, 2000. *Tutkimushaastattelu: Teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö*. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.
- Hirsjärvi, S., Remes, P. & Sajavaara, P. 2009. *Tutki ja kirjoita*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Holopainen, J. & Björkman, I. 2005. The Personal Characteristics of the Successful Expatriate. In Brewster, C. & Suutari, V. (eds.) *International Experience and International Development*. Bradford: Emerald Group Publishing Ltd, 37-51.
- Howe-Walsh, L. & Schyns, B. 2010. Self-initiated expatriation: implications for HRM. *The International Journal for Human Resource Management* 21 (2), 260-273.
- Huang, T-J., Chi, S-C. & Lawler, J.J. 2005. The Relationship between Expatriates' Personality Traits and Their Adjustment to International Assignments. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 16 (9), 1656-1670.
- Inkson, K., Pringle, J., Arthur, M. B. & Barry, S. 1997. Expatriate Assignment Versus Overseas Experience: Contrasting Models of International Human Resource Development. *Journal of World Business* 32 (4), 351-368.
- Jackson, T. *Cross-cultural Management*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Jokinen, T., Brewster, C. & Suutari, V. 2008. Career capital during international work experiences: contrasting self-initiated expatriate expatriate experiences and assigned expatriation. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 19 (6), 979-998.
- Kauppinen, M. 1994. *Antecedents of Expatriate Adjustment – a Study of Finnish Managers in the United States*. Academic dissertation thesis for for Licenciante of Science in Economics Degree. Helsinki: The Helsinki School of Economics Press.
- Kolb, A.Y. & Kolb, D.A. 2005. Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 4 (2), 193-212.
- Lee, H-W. & Liu, C-H. 2006. Determinants of the Adjustment of Expatriate Managers to Foreign Countries: An Empirical Study. *International Journal of Management* 23 (2), 302-311.
- Llewellyn, S. 2007. Case Studies and Differentiated Realities. *Qualitative Research in Accounting and Management* 4 (1), 53-68.
- McNulty, Y. & Hutchings, K. 2016. Looking for global talent in all the right places : A critical literature review of non-traditional expatriates. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 27 (7), 699-728.
- Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, G. 1991. *Readings and cases in international human resource management*. Boston : PWS-Kent.

- Mendenhall, M. & Oddou, G. 1995. Expatriation and cultural adaptation. In Mäkelä, K. & Suutari, V. 2009. *Global Careers: A Social Paradox*. The International Journal of Human Resource Management 20 (5), 992-1008.
- Ng, K-Y., Dyne, L.V. & Ang, S. 2009. From Experience to Experiential Learning: Cultural Intelligence as a Learning Capability for Global Leader Development. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 8 (4), 511-526.
- Näsholm, M.H. 2014. A comparison of intra- and inter-organizational global careers: Repeat expatriates' and international itinerants' subjective experiences. *Journal of Global Mobility* 2 (2), 183-202.
- Oberg, K. 2006. Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments. *Curare* 29 (2+3), 142-146.
- Peltokorpi, V. 2008. Cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates in Japan. The International Journal of Human Resource Management 19 (9), 1588-1606.
- Peltonen, T. 1998. Expatriate Experience and Career. *Studies on Cross-cultural transfers, modern ordering, and the limits of career management in multinational corporations*. Helsinki: HeSe Print.
- Polkinghorne, D.E. 1995. Narrative Configuration in Qualitative Analysis. *Qualitative Studies in Education* 8 (1), 5-23.
- Shaffer, M. & Miller, G. 2008. Cultural Intelligence: A Key Success Factor for Expatriates. In Ang, S. & Van Dyne, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence: Theory, Measurement, and Applications*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 107-125.
- Shim, I. & Paprock, K.E. 2002. A study focusing on American expatriates' learning in host countries. *International Journal of Training and Development* 6 (1), 13-24.
- Siljanen, T. 2007. *Narratives of Expatriates in the Middle East: adaptation, Identity and Learning in Non-Profit Organizations*. University of Jyväskylä. School of Business and Economics. Dissertation.
- Siljanen, T. & Lämsä, A-M. 2009. The changing nature of expatriation: exploring cross-cultural adaptation through narrativity. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 20 (7), 1468-1486.
- Steers, R.M. & Nardon, L. 2005. *Managing in the Global Economy*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
- Suutari, V. & Brewster, C. 2000. Making their own way: international experience through self-initiated foreign assignments. *Journal of World Business* 35 (4), 417-437.
- Tarique, I. & Takeuchi, R. 2008. Developing Cultural Intelligence: The Roles of International Nonwork Experiences. In Ang, S. & Van Dyne, L. (Eds.) *Handbook of Cultural Intelligence: Theory, Measurement, and Applications*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 56-70.
- Tharenou, P. 2013. Self-initiated Expatriates: An Alternative to company-assigned expatriates? *Journal of Global Mobility* 1 (3), 336-356.
- Wu, P-C. & Ang, S.H. 2011. The Impact of Expatriate Supporting Practices and

- Cultural Intelligence on Cross-cultural Adjustment and Performance of Expatriates in Singapore. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 22 (13), 2683-2702.
- Yamazaki, Y. & Kayes, D.C. 2004. An Experiential Approach to Cross-Cultural Learning: A Review and Integration of Competences for Successful Expatriate Adaptation. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 3 (4), 362-379.
- Yamazaki, Y. & Kayes, D.C. 2007. Expatriate Learning: Exploring how Japanese managers adapt in the United States. *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 18 (8), 1373-1395.
- Yin, R. 2014. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

APPENDIX 1

Interview Outline

A. Background Information

1. Name:
2. Age:
3. Nationality:
4. Educational Background:
5. Language Skills (please also indicate skill level):
6. Prior non-work international experience / training:

B. Expatriate Experience

7. Where abroad have you been located during your career?
8. Describe your work during the stay(s) abroad and its effect on your career?
9. What was your personal/family situation during this period?
10. Describe the expatriate experience in terms of the initial expectations and perceived value and how these changed during the assignment.

C. Questions on learning and adjustment:

11. How would you describe your initial impression of the host country during the first couple of weeks of your stay?
12. How would you describe the experience towards the end of the experience?
11. Describe how you learned to understand the differences and function in the new environment.
12. What changes did you witness in yourself during adjustment and how did they affect the overall experience?
13. Where to now?