



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
HANDELSHÖGSKOLAN

Repatriation Adjustment

- A study on Swedish expatriates and repatriation
adjustment(s)

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June 7, 2013

Master Thesis

Business Administration, Management

Thesis Supervisor: Richard Nakamura

Abstract

Summary:

The ubiquity of business climate had led to an increased international competition, which subsequently has culminated in companies using international assignments in order to gain competitive edge in the inexorably changing global arena. One phase, amongst many others, of the expatriation cycle is repatriation, which is the phase of returning home from an international assignment; this phase is considered to be cumbersome and difficult to manage for companies. However if handled sufficiently the company can enjoy omnipotent qualities of dyadic nature. Adjustment is a force to be reckoned in regard to repatriation, thus this thesis wishes to explore the former and the latter and the resulting outcomes. By exploring the factors associated to repatriation adjustment in a qualitative case study approach, exclusively focusing on Sweden, we hoped to shed light upon the conundrum. What we found was that repatriation adjustment is a very individual and irregular phenomenon which is challenging for both the individual and the company. However our constructed research model managed to capture the phenomenon which aided us in the elaboration of the topic.

Title:

Repatriation Adjustment - A study on Swedish expatriates and repatriation adjustment(s)

Course:

Master Thesis – Business Administration, Management

Authors:

Victor Bördin and David Ingvarsson

Research question:

How do Swedish expatriates perceive and manage repatriation adjustment?

Purpose:

Repatriation adjustment processes has gained strength during the last years of research and the later contributions to the academic field have contributed to a better understanding of the complex

phenomenon. Nevertheless, the research is mainly based on quantitative approaches and there is a lack of research regarding Swedish repatriates in general. Hence, our purpose is to, in depth; enlighten the phenomenon of Swedish repatriates by applying existing theories and frameworks in combination with qualitative methods.

Abbreviations: International Assignment (IA)

Target group: Companies that send Swedish expatriates abroad

Theoretical perspectives: We have compiled existing and seminal academia with emphasis on repatriation adjustment. Most prominently, we have focused on applying the credited work of Black *et al* (1992) and the more recent extension provided by Hyder & Lövblad (2007).

Methodology: The study includes a qualitative approach in which we collected our empirical data through interviews.

Keywords: Repatriation, Expatriation, Adjustment, International Assignment, Individual, Variables, Interview.

Acknowledgements

We would like to send our regards to our respondents, Jens the Manager, Johan the IM, Tommy the Vice president and CFO and Lars-Erik the President for participating in this study. Without their consented collaboration this thesis would remain unfinished and therefore we give them our sincerest recognition.

Further, we would also, in particular, send regards to our supervisor Ph.D. Richard Nakamura for his constructive insights and assiduous guidance and mentoring.

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1. Introduction

The following Introduction chapter presents background and problem discussion. Ultimately, this describes the phenomena of repatriation and expatriation to elucidate the problems it might encompass. Further there incorporation in a Swedish context will be postulated which will result in our purpose and research question.

1.1 Background

Within the realm of international business studies, expatriation is a phenomenon that has increasingly drawn scholarly and academic attention (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Scullion & Brewster, 2001). In a sense, the ubiquity of international business, has resulted in a smaller world (Nummela, Loane & Bell 2006), which ultimately has entrenched researchers to shed light upon the conundrum of expatriation. Hence, as companies see an increasing amount of their revenues coming from international markets, vast opportunities can be exploited. As a result a company must transfer its critical capabilities on an international scale; expatriate managers (often opted for) that support this expansion with their expertise and understanding as subsequent critical capabilities (Dollins, 1996; Conn & Yip, 1997).

As a result, it is no surprise that international experiences are advantageous both for the individual and the employing company, as international assignments (IA) are complex, rare, valuable and hard to imitate (Black *et al*, 1992). An expatriate, is according to Deresky (2003, p.551) “one who works and lives in a foreign country but remains a citizen of the country where the employing organization is headquartered”. Sent out, traveling around the globe, these expatriates are somewhat functioning as corporate missionaries, facilitating managerial alternatively technical expertise, control over operations and developing opportunities for the expatriate both to strengthen themselves and their company (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003).

However, although the reciprocal process of repatriation has received less academic attention in relation to expatriation, the phenomenon has started to gain muscle from the realm of academia (Black *et al*, 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Peltonen, 1997; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Vidal *et al*, 2010; Nery-Kjerfve & Mclean, 2012; Kraimer *et al*, 2012). Repatriation, is renowned as the process where an expatriate has finished his IA and must return home to the employing organizations home-country headquarters (c.f. Black *et al*, 1992). Thus it is of utter salience to acknowledge that the phenomena of expatriation

and repatriation are, in a cyclical manner, in symbiosis. In accordance to Berthoin-Antal (2001) expatriation is a circular process that is comprised of different phases before repatriation takes place. In general, theory regarding repatriation focuses on different problems and important measures that have an impact on the repatriation result. A brief summary of factors that the repatriation theory in general entail, and ultimately form the repatriation cycle, are comprised as different steps that are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

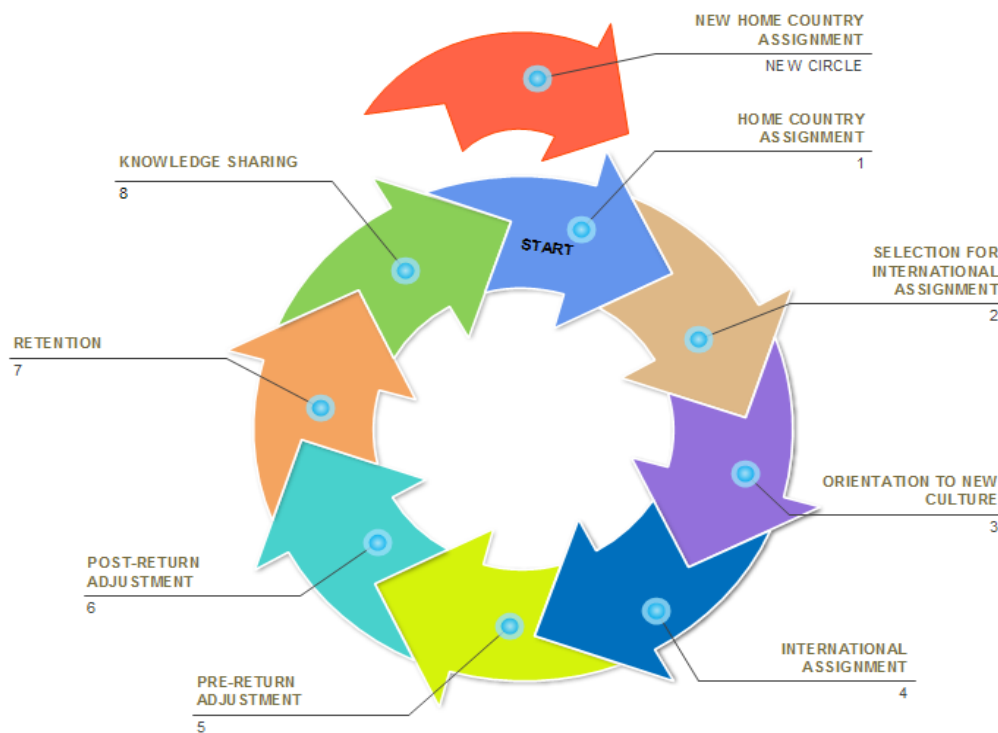


Figure 1. A combined Framework of pre-research (Authors edition, 2013)

As mentioned, for repatriation to take place it requires that an individual decides to agree for an IA and become an expatriate. The expatriation process starts with a selection of an appropriate candidate for the assignment (Berthoin-Antal, 2001). Traditionally companies appear to select candidates on the basis of successful performance in their home country. It is argued that documented domestic performance in such as technical and managerial skills is important. However, an IA and the cross –cultural environment it implies, requires further competencies for reaching success (Tye & Chen, 2005). A possible explanation for expatriate failure can be important differences between home and host culture. It is also discussed that “cultural chock” is something that exacerbates the adoption of a new culture and thus subsequently contributes to expatriate failure (Spong & Kamau, 2012). A common practice before departing is cross-cultural training where the aim is to improve the expatriate’s effectiveness. Studies suggest that cross-cultural training improves expatriates’ cross-cultural

effectiveness, reduces failures and increases the overall performance (Qin & Baruch, 2010). However, it is apparent that communication between the home office and the expatriate are important regarding success both during the IA and the future repatriation. Approaches can be to discuss future career and future position in an early stage or to keep the expatriate updated with activities at the home office. This will help the expatriate to clarify expectations of their repatriation (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008). This step is essentially crucial since the repatriation experience depends on how well the individual's expectations are equivalent with the reality upon repatriation. Hence post-return experience of repatriation depends on how well it is matching to the pre-return adjustment (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Furthermore, it is argued that the retention of the repatriate is strongly correlated with unmet expectations and lack of appreciation (Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008). It is also important to understand that a leaving repatriate not only causes the home organization financial setback; failure of retention also forces the organization to lose the employee's recently developed international competence and experience, which could have been important knowledge for the company (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Furthermore, it is argued that the knowledge repatriates acquire during their IA is a valuable resource. However, most firms do not view repatriate knowledge as a valuable resource or competitive advantage, where the result is that firms do not harvest the knowledge. It is even common that repatriates experience a lack of interest in what they have learned. An explanation of this phenomenon can be explained by the fact that much of what the expatriate acquires is tacit knowledge. Hence, the repatriates may not be totally aware of the acquired knowledge, which creates an additional challenge to transfer it (Berthoin-Antal, 2001; Oddou, Osland & Blakeny, 2009). Further, Berthoin-Antal (2001) argues that the tacit knowledge expatriates possess only can be converted to explicit knowledge through interactions with others.

Subsequently, the most prominent and seminal contribution to the field is the work of Black *et al* (1992) who propose a framework for repatriation adjustment; thus adhering to the pre and post-return adjustments factors of the cycle. Their perspective, based on an understanding of anticipatory adjustment and actual In-country adjustment has provided a basis for better understanding of the process and the methods of how companies handle repatriation. Repatriation adjustment, as described by Black *et al* (1992) is a process in which the delineated consensus is that the anticipatory adjustment are supposed to match the in-country adjustments to a large extent, so that the repatriate does not experience anxiety of loss of control. Thus, the accuracy of the anticipatory adjustments are essential in order to establish a

successful repatriation process. Further, Black *et al* (1992) propose that there is a general category of antecedent variables, in which different actions will occur and define the repatriation process. This will subsequently also have an affect on the facets of repatriation (Black & Gregersen, 1991), which will be elaborated on further on in the paper.

The subsequent studies that have contributed and complemented the study proposed by Black *et al* (1992) have schematically blueprinted a replica of their proposed model or further elaborated on it. Vidal *et al* (2010) use the exact same model but apply it to the context of Spain, thus empirically evaluating the model. Their work showed that in the case of Spain, the model did provide academically sound findings, and argue for validity for the model. Further, Hyder and Lövblad (2007) elaborate on the model as propose an alternative approach. They explicitly argue that new purposes arise from their mode: first, that their approach makes the process more understandable for firms; this is mainly achieved by including *motives* as a new variable and by focusing on experience of the repatriation process from the individual's point of view. Further earlier experience and information are complementing variables that further add to a realistic focus on the situation, where the entire repatriation experience has to be well emphasized and conceived (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). As a concluding remark, they argue that in order to have a successful repatriation experience, in opposition to Black *et al* (1992) one must identify former and current motives and recognize new and older experiences to properly evaluate the phenomenon (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007).

From the aforementioned, it is clear that that repatriation process is a troublesome key moment in IAs that are critical for companies to manage successfully in order to exploit as many opportunities as possible (Paik *et al*, 2002; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). Despite the recent attention of repatriation, there is still a growing concern among firms what happens to people upon repatriation, thus the relationship between foreign assignments and Human Resource Practices needs to be the subject for further research (Suutari & Brewster, 2003). Therefore, by conducting research within the field of repatriation the intention of this research is to further extend and apply current assumptions in regard to repatriation.

1.2 Problem Discussion

There are a considerable amount of feasible factors influencing and affecting why and how repatriates experience difficulties in adjusting back to the home organizational, cultural and social environment (c.f. Black *et al*, 1992; Vidal *et al*, 2010). The actual adjustment back to

the home-country may affect a vast array of different dimensions of the repatriate's life such as work adjustment, interaction with people, co-workers, friends and the adjustment to the general environment of the home country. These feasible factors either improve or impede the adjustment dimensions (Black *et al*, 1992; Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003).

Upon return to the home country, there is an assumption or common consensus that the repatriate and his, alternatively, her family will be able to settle and adapt swiftly and re-establish the social, cultural and business contacts without facing any form of adversity (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003). However, conversely, the direct opposite is evident and the repatriate and his, alternatively, her family experience troubles coping with the coined re-entry shock and reverse culture shock. During the extended period of the IA, an array of different changes have occur in the home country and its organization and general environment, which are not always taken into consideration (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003; Black *et al*, 1992). In unison, the individual's own values and beliefs might also be subject to change during the IA, which might stir up uncertainty and equivocalness as the individual's expectations before repatriation are not in accordance with the encounters upon returning home (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003; Black *et al*, 1992; Vidal *et al*, 2010). A prominent example of this can be the following quotation based on the account provided by a Finnish expatriate:

“Coming home was more difficult than going abroad because I had expected changes when going overseas. During repatriation it was real culture shock. I felt like an alien in my own country. My attitudes had changed so much that it was difficult to understand Finnish custom. Old friends had moved, had children, or just vanished. Others were interest in our experiences, but only sort of. Most simply could no one understand our overseas experience of just envied our way of life” (Gregersen & Stroh, 1997, p 635)

A vast amount of repatriates are discontent and feel frustrated with the re-entry phase, as the company displays a nonchalant attitude and are not given the opportunity to put their newly-acquired foreign experiences in practice (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003). During the IA period an expatriate is often given autonomous responsibility, is well waged and has somewhat of a superior position. However upon returning home, the repatriate might encounter an organization that does not know how to extract and make value or use of the

repatriate's new knowledge and skill or, as a worst case scenario, a company that does not care (Bergstedt & Lundström, 2003; Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). This ignorance of understanding and having knowledge from companies on how to facilitate adjustment, integrate repatriates back into the organization and utilize the newly-acquired knowledge and experiences may often lead to unsuccessful retention of the repatriate. As Nery-Kjerfve and McLean (2012) and Kraimer *et al* (2012) present, surveys show remarkable high figures regarding the turn-over rates of repatriates; between 20 to 50 percent leave their corporation within one year after their IA.

As illustrated, there are many reasons to why and how repatriation adjustment is imperative to acknowledge. However, although the repatriation process has started to gain muscle within the realm of academia and research, and the existing, aforementioned, body of research has approached the conundrum explicitly, the research is oblivious in regard to Sweden and its conditions. Research such as Suutari and Brewster (2003) and Suutari and Välimaa (2002) have studied the relations in regard to Finland, Black and Gregersen (1991) have studied the repatriation of American expatriates, Hunt (2001) investigated the process in regard to Malaysian expatriates, thus taking a developing-nations approach and Vidal *et al* (2010) applied their repatriation studies to the context of Spain and its repatriates. Thus, research has tried to apply the existing body to different nations, this as cultural implication imply deviations in regard to findings (c.f. Hofstede, 2001). As a result, it would be of unequivocal interest to elaborate and apply the existing body of research through the lens of the Swedish context and its repatriates as this would provide new overall insights and perhaps further increase knowledge in regard to existing research. We argue that Sweden is a country that has strong ties to IAs, has many multi-national operations and has expatriate positions worldwide. Thus, conducting research through this lens is both pragmatically imperative and fruitful.

Further, much of the research conducted in regard to repatriation has chosen to primarily or exclusively focus on quantitative accounts as a source of information (Suutari & Brewster, 2003; Vidal *et al*, 2010; Osman-Gani & Hyder, 2008; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Black & Stephens, 1989; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997; Harvey, 1989). Although more empirical studies, both containing quantitative or qualitative, in regard to repatriation are essential and will identify suitable and valid applicability to different cultural settings, qualitative approaches are stressed, as they will adhere to existing research by identifying different dimensions

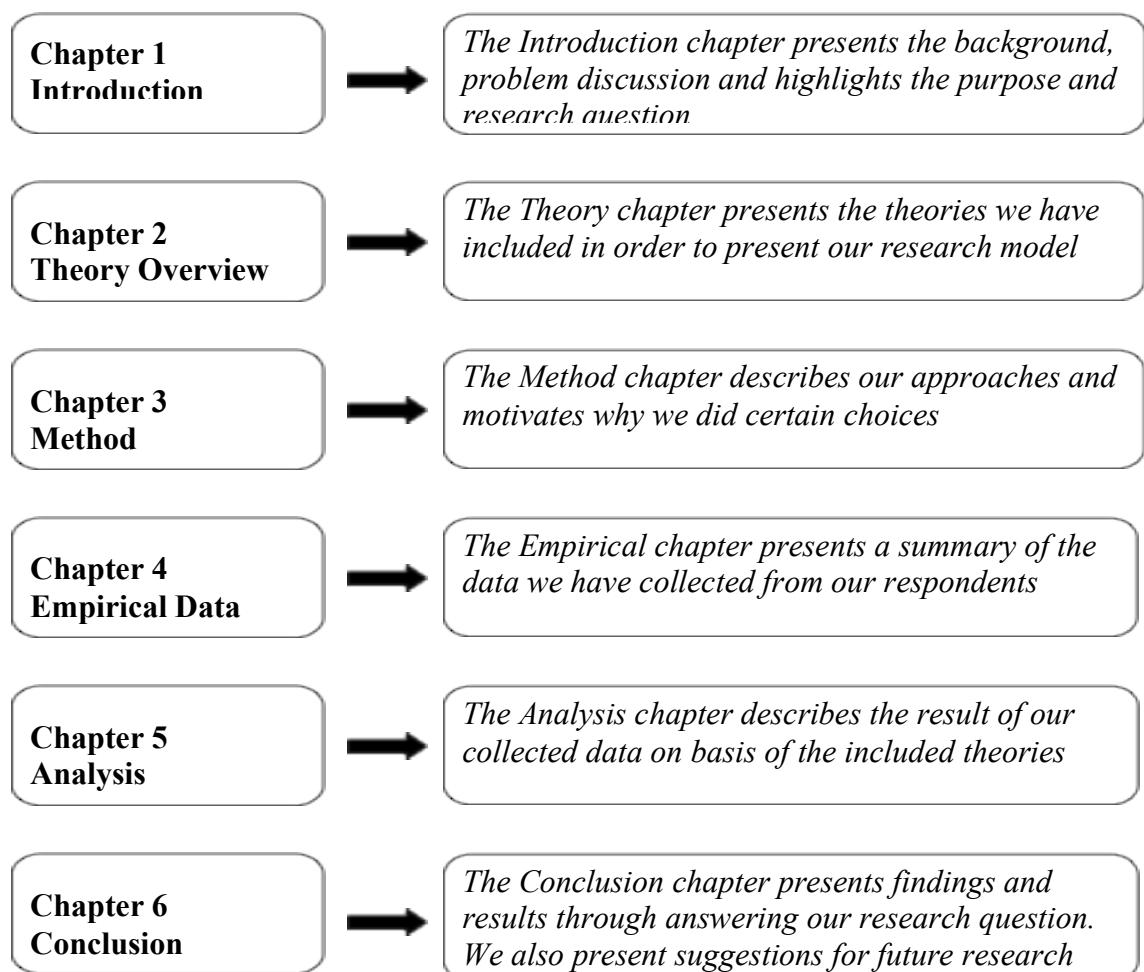
(Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012). Thus, conclusively, there is a lack regarding repatriation research in the Swedish context in combination with qualitative approaches. Subsequently, we argue that there is a need to supply new insights to the field.

1.3 Purpose & Research Questions

Based on the problem discussion above, repatriation adjustment processes has gained strength during the last years. Further, later contributions to the academia have contributed to a better understanding of the complex phenomenon. Nevertheless, the research is mainly based on quantitative approaches and there is a lack of research regarding Swedish repatriates in specific. Hence, our purpose is to, in depth; enlighten the phenomenon of Swedish repatriates by applying existing theories and frameworks in combination with qualitative methods. Thus the following research question is formulated:

- *How do Swedish expatriates perceive and manage repatriation adjustment?*

1.4 Thesis Disposition



2. Theoretical Framework

The following Theory chapter presents the theories we have included in order to present our research model. Emphasis is focused on the seminal work presented by Black et al. (1992) and Hyder and Lövblad (2007) who both explicitly explore the implications of repatriation adjustment. Further, we present our research model, which is based on the latter along with other academic postulations.

2.1 Repatriation Adjustment Process

One of the most seminal contributions to the study of repatriation is credited to Black, Gregersen and Mendenhall (1992) in their repatriation adjustment paper. Throughout the years, the witnessed increase in internationalization has subsequently focused more scholarly attention to the process of adjusting to abroad assignments, however the process of repatriating, *id est*, returning home has comparatively received less attention (Black *et al.*, 1992). Although previous research has started to touch upon the latter conundrum (Harvey, 1983; Napier & Peterson, 1991) they have been somewhat atheoretical in their approaches, thus ultimately not aiming to theoretically conceptualize the phenomenon. Evidence proposed by Hofstede (2001), in his cultural dimensions certainly delineates that differences among countries is substantial, which makes expatriation and repatriation lucrative endeavors to investigate. Black *et al.* (1992) adhere and suggest that since the outlined differences are evident between countries, repatriation should, theoretically, attain more scholarly attention to guide future research (c.f. Vidal *et al.*, 2010; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). They further propose that repatriation is multi-faceted. This suggests that there are more than one facet influencing the following adjustment, which, theoretically implicates that all facets can be related to a given antecedent and that these facets can be more, or, less strongly related to a given outcome (Black, *et al.* 1992). These facets are: adjustment to work, adjustment to interaction with host nationals and adjustment to general environment and culture. Theoretically, Black and his colleagues further argue that the repatriation process can be divided up into adjustments prior to return (anticipatory adjustments) and adjustments made after returning (in-country adjustments); this is based on the fact that unless an individual is given warning upon entering a new environment, the person will make do with anticipatory adjustments. Finally, the antecedents can be categorically placed within the theoretical framework. The first category is labeled individual variables. These variables are the function of an individual's attitudes, norms, values, characteristics etcetera. The second category is job variables which comprises of the task and characteristics of the individuals job. The

following, third, is organizational variables. The policies and practices conducted and endorsed within the organization can be placed within this classification. The fourth, and final category, namely non-work variables are usually outside the organizational and work-related domain and refer to family and general environment. Based upon the previously stated, Black *et al.* (1992) ultimately devise a model illustrating the theoretical relationships between the presented variables and facets of repatriation adjustment (See Figure 2).

2.1.1 Predictive Control and Behavioral Control

When people are placed in a new, unfamiliar situation or environment, people have a tendency to try to reduce the level of uncertainty that is created in these situations (Black *et al.*, 1992). Seminally, Bell & Straw (1989) argue that when people are placed within these situations they need to reestablish a level of control. This can be done by predictive control or behavioral control. Where predictive control is the ability to predict, or make sense of one's environment in terms of how to behave and understand rewards alternatively punishments associated with different behaviors, behavioral control is the ability to control ones behaviors that have a salient impact on the environment in question (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.2 Anticipatory Repatriation Adjustment and Expectations

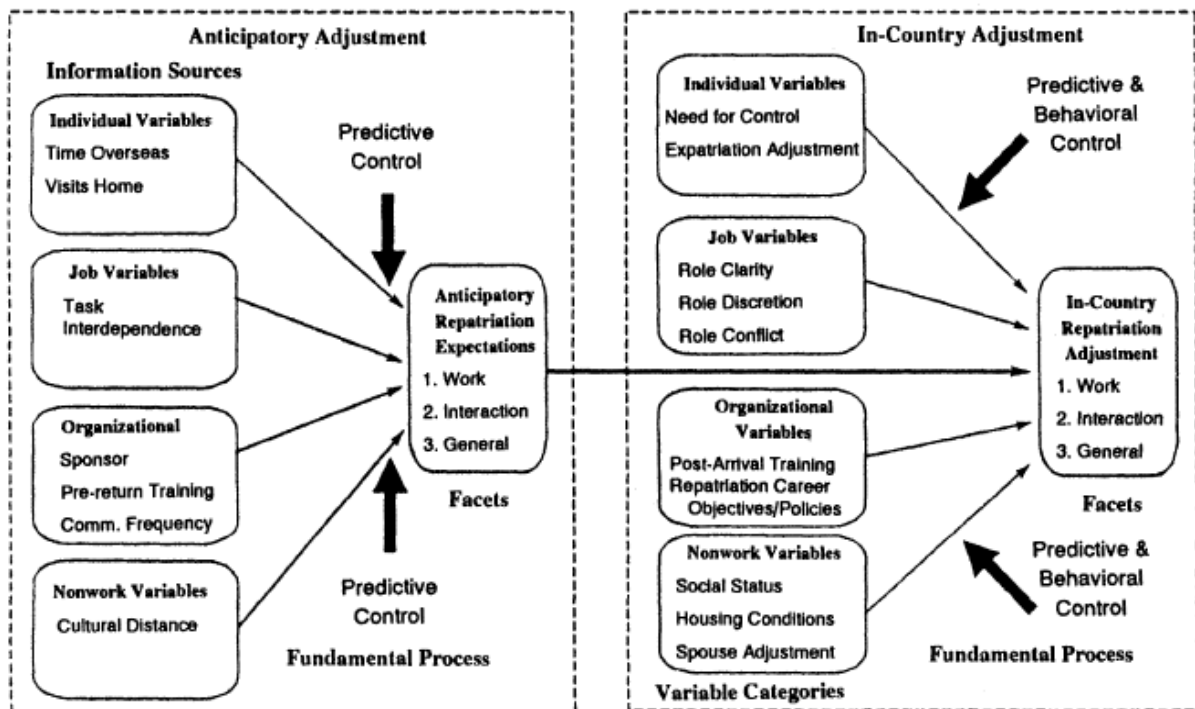


Figure 2: A Framework for Repatriation Adjustment; Black *et al.* (1992) pp. 745

Although it is plausible for individuals to make behavioral changes before and upon the return to the home-country, it is the common consensus that the anticipatory changes will mostly consists of changes of cognitive-adjustment nature (Black *et al.*, 1992). The three facets presented are conceptualized as repatriation adjustments. Hence, Black & Gregersen (1991) suggest that the most salient anticipatory expectations would be the ones revolving around the dimensions of work, interaction with host nationals and general environment and culture. Thus, ultimately, the individuals in question would therefore likely engage in manifestations of predictive control which dictate that they would try to mold, alternatively, form the three facets: work, interaction and general environment and culture by modifying expectations and perceiving consequences of their various behaviors (Black *et al.*, 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991).

According to Black *et al.* (1992) several adjustment theorists have argued that the relationship equation postulating that accurate expectations will, in general, result in actual adjustment to the actual circumstance, is valid. This is based on the logic that when accurate expectations meet actual adjustment, surprises and their associated uncertainty are diminished. Also, it is argued that an expectation within a specific facet will have the strongest relationship with its corollary counterpart, thus the in-home outcome (c.f Ashford & Taylor, 1990). Logically, this should dictate that accurate work expectations should have its most positive relationship with in-home work repatriation adjustment; accurate interaction expectations to have its most positive relationship with in-home interaction repatriation adjustment; and accurate general expectations to have its most positive relationship with in-home general repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.2.1 Individual Variables

If one were to postulate that as time passes, changes will occur in the home-country, then time away from the home-country would suggest that an individual might have trouble in the formation of accurate anticipatory expectations, as they are someplace else (Black *et al.*, 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Harvey, 1983). Although, determining this rate of change is an elusive endeavor, it is possible to argue that the faster the rate of change, the more inaccurate expectations are likely to be. As repatriation is defined as returning home, this suggests that they have been away for some period of time. Thus, the period of time and rate of change are variables of utter salient character. Ultimately, it would be rational to argue that the longer an individual has been away and the greater the rate of change equates in more inaccurate

expectations (Black *et al.* 1992). Expanding this logic, one obligingly, should add that longer away-time and greater rate of change equate more inaccurate expectations; however the entire equation suggest that this would also make the individuals repatriation adjustment more troublesome (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

Moreover, another variable of salient character and which could have a great impact on the accurate anticipatory expectations is the amounts of visits back to the home country and the home office (Adler, 1986; Black *et al.*, 1992). This suggests that the visits back to home during the duration of the IA could be an important source of information in regard to all the anticipatory facets. The influences attained could transcend the boarder of both predictive and behavioral control, and one would further expect that the frequency and duration of these visits would positively influence the latter and former control mechanisms.

2.2.2 Job Variables

Black *et al.* (1992) argue that another variable that might have a salient impact on the anticipatory expectations is the notion of task interdependency between the expatriate and the home-country operational duties. What can be discerned is the relationship between interdependency and accurate expectations; the greater interdependency would plausibly result in an increase the exchange of information between the dyads, which, ultimately, could lead to the formation of accurate expectations (Black *et al.*, 1992). Additionally, due to the job-related content of this information, one could consequently argue that the areas being primarily affected in this case are the task-related expectations and the work repatriation adjustment (c.f. Boyacigiller, 1990; Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.2.3 Organizational Variables

Another phenomenon that could have an impact on the acquisition of information and the formation of accurate expectations is an organizational practice targeting the training and orientation prior to one's repatriation (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). If the rigor and framework of the training is adequately sufficient, and can cover all the different aspects of work, interaction and general environment, then this could potentially aid the formation of accurate work, interaction and general environment expectations in the home-country (Black *et al.*, 1992). If the training were to provide content relevant to all three repatriation adjustment facets, then one could expect effects within all tree facets. However if the training only were to focus on one of the facets, *exempli gratia*, the work-related facet, then it would mostly

influence the work repatriation adjustment, and perhaps not at all influence the others (Black *et al.*, 1992).

The sponsor, which is an individual or group, who is assigned to the expatriate and is responsible for keeping in touch with the expatriate throughout the IA and updating and conveying imperative information, *id est*, strategic shift, political changes in organization, competitor moves etcetera, is a phenomenon that can facilitate the formation of accurate expectations (Black *et al.*, 1992; Harvey, 1989). As the sponsoring is limited to conveying work-related information one would expect that this phenomenon is positively related to the work expectations and work repatriation adjustment, exclusively.

Another organizational variable that can aid the reduction of uncertainty associated with returning home is the frequency of the communication between the dyads; the home office and the subsidiary (Black *et al.*, 1992). Logical conventions dictate that the greater the frequency of communication is, the greater the flow of information will be, which conversely aids in the diminishment of uncertainty. Once again the content of the information will dictate where the reduction of uncertainty will be evident; if the information focuses on work, it will influence the accurate work expectations, and if the information also focuses on non-work issues, such as housing, schooling etcetera, then the frequency of communication would also affect the general environment expectations (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.3 In-Country Repatriation Adjustment

In-country repatriation adjustment differs somewhat in regard to anticipatory adjustments. If the primary focus of the latter is on predictive control and accurate expectations, the focus on the former is on both predictive and behavioral control (Black *et al.*, 1992). As previously stated, predictive control focuses on the ability to predict, or make sense of one's environment in terms of how to behave and understand rewards alternatively punishments associated with different behaviors. And behavioral control focuses on the ability to control ones behaviors that have a salient impact on the current environment. As we have already clarified, that more accurate anticipatory expectations lead to easier behavioral adjustments, is imperative to acknowledge for a successful repatriation (Black *et al.*, 1992).

One way in which adjustments are made is through simple trial and error. This implies that people, over time, learn what is expected of them, and they learn the reward and punishment

contingencies commonly associated with the specific behaviors (predictive control), more resembling a sing-loop learning pattern (Black *et al.*, 1992; Bandura, 1983; Argyris & Schön 1978). Similarly, work, organizational, job, non-work variables that would influence predictive control would also influence individuals' in-country repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992). In addition to predictive control, individuals going through the process of repatriation adjustment would be expected to additionally exert properties of behavioral control during the actual repatriation adjustment. Black *et al.* (1992) argue that through adjustments in behavior, individuals try to influence its surrounding environment. Thus, variables that would affect an individual's ability to adjust behavior are salient in regard to behavioral control. Similarly, work, organizational, job, non-work variables that would influence behavioral control would also influence individuals' in-country repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.3.1 Individual Variables

As one can imagine, there is a vast array of individual variables that are considered to assert properties of salience in regard to adjustment process (c.f. Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Mendenhall *et al.*, 1987). However there seems to be a common consensus that two variables, systematically have shown that their importance is of particular interest in regard to control theory in a adjustment process; the need for control and self-efficacy (Black *et al.*, 1992). However this should not compromise the possible selection and salience of other variables.

As stated above, one of the individual variable dyads is the need for control; what subsequently determines the need for control is based on the relationship between how much predictive control an individual has is how much control the individual desires. Thus, Black *et al.* (1992) argue that unless an individual is in a state of helplessness, a higher than actualized need for control will culminate in greater attempts to attain control. Hence, one would anticipate the following, that, greater attempts to attain predictive control will subsequently lead to actual greater predictive control, which, consequently leads to a greater in-country repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992).

The other dyad of the individual variables is the self-efficacy. If need for control was attached to the paradigm of predictive control, then self-efficacy is, conversely, related to the behavioral control paradigm. This determinant aims to aid us in understanding how tenacious individuals are in attempting to gain behavioral control. Thus, in opposition to the need for control reasoning, one would expect that the faster an individual enter a state of helplessness,

the earlier the individual will give up in his efforts to gain behavioral control and readjusting to the home country setting (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.3.2 Job Variables

Role clarity, role discretion and role conflict are variables that are argued to have a substantial impact on the job-related uncertainty and subsequently, thus also salient impact influencing effects on the repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Peltonen, 1997). The first variable, role clarity, is concerned with to what extent the individual is aware of what is expected from him in regard to the job he is assigned to. Thus, if the role clarification is clear, one would expect to see a reduction in uncertainty associated to the job situation, which ultimately should smooth the progress of repatriation work adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992). The consensus that the clearer the role is, the more improved the predictive control becomes in regard to the role. The second variable, role discretion, postulates that individuals might adjust to their new role by altering the role to fit them more properly, thus making it possible for the individual to incorporate and utilize past, familiar behaviors (Black *et al.*, 1992). By immersing oneself into the previously discussed, one could discern that role discretion both aids predictive and behavioral control. Predictive control is enhanced as the individual can utilize past familiar behaviors, with relating past cause-effect contingencies while behavioral control is enhanced by the utilization of behaviors which they are most proficient in (Black *et al.*, 1992). As a result of the aforementioned, one would expect that role discretion reduces job-related uncertainty and thus aids repatriation adjustment. The third variable, role conflict, is related to the equivocal and conflicting signals exerted in regard to what is expected from the individual in his new role (Black *et al.*, 1992). One would expect that the greater the conflicting signals are, the greater the uncertainty will be in regard to the new job, which inhibits predictive control and repatriation work adjustment.

2.3.3 Organizational Variables

Just as pre-return training, as presented as an antecedent within the organizational variable in anticipatory adjustment, can improve predictive control; the same accomplishment can be achieved by post-return training in in-country repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992). Andreason and Kinner (2005) present post-return debriefings, personal and career counseling, stress management and other assistances as possible training methods to increase the possibility of met expectations. It is further postulated that if the content of the training is extensive and covers all the aspects of the work, interaction and general environment facets,

then it could improve predictive control within all the three facets of repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992; Black & Mendenhall, 1990). However if the training were to exclusively focus on one of the facets, *exempli gratia*, the job slot the individual occupies upon repatriation, then it is expected that most of the influence will subsequently be directed towards work repatriation adjustment, and not influence the interaction or general environment facets of repatriation adjustment at all (Black *et al.*, 1992).

Furthermore, it has been argued that congruence between expectations and reality back home can have a profound impact on the repatriation adjustment. Elaborating on the latter, the congruence between the desires of the individual and the organization's repatriation procedures and policies is a salient within repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992). As an example: when an individual conducts an IA it is possible that he has had considerable autonomy during the operations, and would enjoy the same level of autonomy upon repatriation. The organization can clearly communicate that the individual will enjoy or not enjoy the same autonomy upon repatriation. Thus, as long as the career implication are clarified, there can be incongruence between the individual's and the organization's career objectives (Black *et al.*, 1992).

2.3.4 Non-Work Variables

It has been argued that factors related to family and housing issues have a salient and proper impact on the repatriates' adjustment; social status, spouse adjustment and housing conditions are only a few that are stressed (Vidal *et al.*, 2010; Black *et al.*, 1992; Kendall, 1981). Seminally, the consensus that couples who experience a downward shift in their social status upon returning home experience subsequent anxiety has legs. What can be stated is that as one is placed in a new and uncommon social strata, new expectations will be formed in regard to related roles, which all increase uncertainty (Black *et al.*, 1992); as a result of the misfit of past cause-effect with current social context, predictive control become impeded and behavioral control impairs as past behaviors cannot be applied within the new social context. Furthermore, Black *et al.* (1992) argue that a chink in social status not only affect the interaction and general facets of repatriation adjustment, but also work related adjustment.

Further, the spouse of the repatriate and the repatriate himself are thought to experience severe disturbances in regard to the housing situation upon repatriation (Black *et al.*, 1992; Kendall, 1981). The uncertainty created by these disturbances comprises of possible housing arrangements, in which suburbs alternatively areas families or individuals can live in and what

comparable housing in available alternatively affordable upon return home, compared to before expatriation. Housing conditions thus are regarded to primarily affect the general environment facet of repatriation adjustment and to a lesser, but not excluding, extent affect interaction and work repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992).

Furthermore, it is also evident that cross-cultural adjustments are not only experienced by the repatriate but also the spouse; that would be to say that if the repatriate experiences difficulty in repatriation adjustment, the same will usually be experienced by the spouse (Black *et al.*, 1992; Black & Stephens, 1989; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gregersen & Stroh, 1997). Usually the spouse does not commence work upon repatriation so the work adjustment variable is not relevant in this case. However, studies have showed that spouse and employee interaction alternatively general environment repatriation adjustment were strongly correlated with each other (Black & Gregersen, 1991).

In conclusion the revised theory conceptualized by Black *et al.* (1992) shed some light upon the conundrum of repatriation adjustment. As postulated the model applied proposes to facilitate the repatriates' adjustment upon returning home, which will have an ultimate impact on their performance back home. Although, Black *et al.* (1992) contribute to the paradigm other researchers have also made academic efforts to further elaborate upon this conundrum. One of these is Hyder and Lövblad (2007) who have devised an extended model of the work made by black *et al.* (1992). They propose a focal shift from repatriation adjustment to the individual's experience of the repatriation process. This approach emphasizes an adjustment for the individual rather than creating a homogenous and standardized model.

2.4 The Repatriation Process – A Realistic Approach

As mentioned Hyder and Lövblad (2007) have created an extension of the repatriation adjustment model devised by Black *et al.* (1992) (Figure 3). Their work distinguishes somewhat from the adjustment focus as there are two major purposes in their extended model. The first purpose is to make the repatriation process more understandable and applicable for firms that are dependent on expatriates and international establishment. This is mainly achieved by including *motives* as a new variable and by focusing on experience of the repatriation process from the individual's point of view. Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue that personal motives must be identified and conceived in order to understand the expectations a repatriate have and how significant they are in order to retain them in the organization.

Motives over time are therefore essential for evaluating repatriation (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Stroh, Gregersen & Black, 2000). The second purpose suggests methods to solve issues regarding the retention of expatriates upon their return. In contrast to Black *et al.* (1992) where focus is on the individual readjustment, Hyder and Lövblad (1992) takes a company perspective of the repatriation process. By proposing a realistic approach to a situation of the individual, the probability that the company will retain returning expatriates will be higher. This requires that the total repatriation process is emphasized and well perceived by the individual. Furthermore, what drives the individuals to stay within the organization is not the adjustment itself, rather the experience the individual has accumulated of the total repatriation process (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Moreover, the repatriation experience depends on how well the individual's expectations match with the reality, which can be described as the perceived quality of the repatriation process (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). High turnover rates are often a result of mismatch of the repatriate's expectations and the reality upon reintegration to the headquarters organizations. This is mainly explained that expatriates often change during their sojourn but also by a change in the home environment and organization (Nery-Kjerfve & McLean, 2012).

2.4.1 Anticipatory Adjustment, Expectation Based on Variables

The repatriation model devised by Hyder and Lövblad (2007) illustrates that a person's expectations can be divided into the facets Work, Interaction, and General expectations. These are basically the same variables that Black *et al.* (1992) refer to as anticipatory adjustment and imply expectations that are formed before meeting reality. When the repatriation process starts, reality will be measured against the expectations and the quality of the repatriation process will be evaluated through how well the expectations are met. Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue that these expectations in turn are based on three main factors, Motives, Earlier experiences and Information. These factors constitute the basis for understanding an individual's expectations about the repatriation process. The main contribution in the repatriation process model is Motives, which refers to why a person has decided to accept an IA. These motives can differ between individuals, where one may have a motive of exploring future career opportunities while another has accepted the assignment with the motive to learn and live in a new culture. Findings proposed by Stahl, Miller and Tung (2002) imply that a majority of expatriates have career advancement as reason for expatriation. However, Stahl, *et al.* (2002) elucidate that positive career outcomes are highly uncertain upon return and unmet expectations correlate with repatriation distress. The person

with career motives will therefore have higher expectations on the position he or she will achieve upon return (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Further, Pinto, Cabral-Cadosso and Werther (2012) argue that there often is a lack in the organizational knowledge about individual's motives for going abroad. Other research has enlightened that there is a disparate between the motives of human resources and expatriates, both regarding going abroad and the perception of a successful repatriation process. It is argued that the difference depends on different objectives for expatriates going abroad. Many companies send expatriates with the motive to meet global challenges and opportunities, in contrary to expatriates' motives that are often personally driven. A common mismatch is that companies send the expatriate to bring the home corporate culture to the host country while the expatriates motive is cultural adventure or high compensation (Paik, Segaud & Malinowski, 2002)

Moreover, Hyder and Lövblad (2007) discuss how Earlier experiences before and during the actual assignment have an impact on the expectations of the repatriation process. As an example, there is a clear difference between an expatriate repatriating for the second time compared to an expatriate with no previous repatriation. Experience from earlier repatriation provide the employee with more comprehensive understanding in the events one might encounter.

The next variable, Information is seen as a key issue in managing and understanding expatriates expectations of repatriation processes (Black et al., 1992; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). It is emphasized that receiving information is important but also to maintain an effective communication with the home organization and home environment. This is dependent on both the communication behavior of the individual and the support and practices of the company. Different types of contacts and communication will have an impact on the expectations. A close communication with the home country will provide the expatriate with information regarding social, political and economical aspects. This will make the person more aware of the situation he or she returns to, hence increased probability of meeting expectations (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Today it is argued that communication technology and Internet, plays an important role and promotes this type of communication (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). A survey conducted by Cox (2004) showed that use of communication technology is related to repatriation adjustment. Mediated technology such as email and Internet can actually be just as satisfying or even more satisfying than some types

of face-to-face communication. This phenomenon may be explained by that the cognitive appraisal matters more than the type of communication (Cox, 2004).

2.4.2 Expectation Diversification Towards Reality

Based on these three variables (Motives, Earlier experiences and Information), the expatriate will form expectations before returning home; thus how one will be treated by the home organization and life outside the organization. Positive expectations will help the repatriate and the organization to interpret each other's behavior in a positive way and the opposite will take place if the expectations are negative. These expectations are as mentioned formed into the categories Work, Interaction and General expectations (Black *et al.*, 1992; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Work expectations imply the relevance of the task in the organizational context such as role discretion, promotion opportunities and skill utilization (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Research on repatriation success shows that repatriates often are dissatisfied with offered assignments upon return. It is also evident that absences of promotion opportunities have a negative impact on the repatriation process (Nery-Kjerfve & Mclean, 2012). Further, Paik *et al.* (2002) observed a difference regarding the appreciation of promotion between Scandinavian and US organizations. They found that companies in Scandinavian countries have a flatter organization structure in contrast to US organizations that are more vertical. There is therefore a greater emphasis on being promoted within the US companies. Furthermore, it is usual that repatriates report that gained experience during their IA disappears and are not utilized by the organization (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Expectations about Interaction often concern interactions with former colleagues and the home organization. Many variables can change during the assignment, colleagues can resign, leave the country or the organization can undergo a structural change. Eventually, General expectations refer to the environment outside the organization. This involves social network status upon return and the family readjustment. Furthermore, research has showed that the expectations will be influenced to different extent by the perceived support and readjustment of expatriates spouse and family as whole (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007)

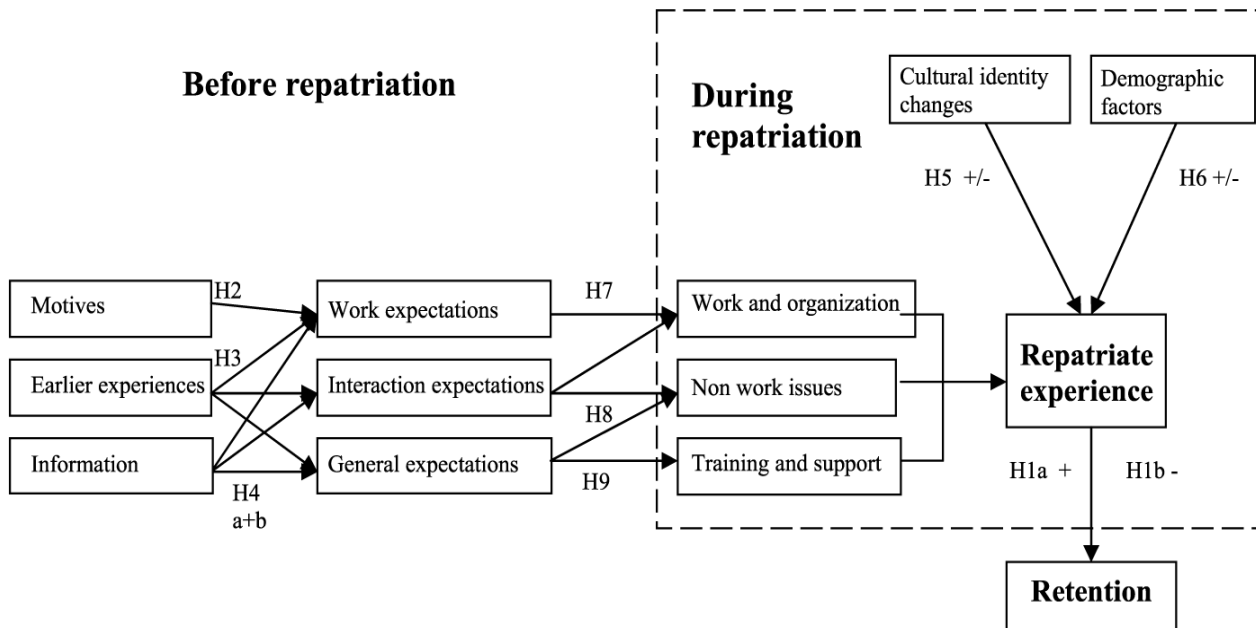


Figure 3: A Framework for Repatriation Adjustment; Hyder and Lövblad (2007) pp. 269

2.5 Focal Shift from Standardized Repatriation to Individual

The repatriation model created by Black *et al.* (1992) has mainly focused on repatriation adjustment. In contrast, Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue that the central focus while creating repatriation programs should be the individual's experience of the process as whole. A repatriate can be successfully adjusted to the home environment but it does not mean that the individual is satisfied with how the organization has treated him or her. In turn, this can lead to that the person is not interested in serving this employer and the organization any longer. Failure of retention often has its origin in a discrepancy between expectations and the reality at the headquarters upon reintegration (Nery-Kjerfve & Mclean, 2012). It is also possible that the individual experience the opposite and has a positive experience with the employer after return but has difficulties to adjust to the surrounding environment; an occurrence that can be explained by an identity change caused by the expatriate living and working abroad (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007; Sussman, 2002; Nery-Kjerfve & Mclean, 2012).

Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue that their model contribute with a new perspective containing new and revaluated variables. Further, their shifting focus from repatriation adjustment to the individual's experience of the repatriation process enable practitioners to be better in describing and managing the process. Two main factors are essential for evaluating the experiences of the repatriation experience. First, the resemblance between the actual

repatriation process with the expectations of the repatriate. Second, the impact of demographic factors and cultural identity change. Furthermore Hyder and Lövblad (2007) emphasize the importance of grasping every individual's situation rather than creating one repatriation program that is suitable for any repatriate. It is therefore recommended for organizations to set up of checkpoints, contact persons and other procedures in order to maintain close contact with the employee during the assignment and the repatriation process.

2.6 Cultural Identity Changes and Demographic Factors

While the variables Motives, information and earlier experiences can contribute with understanding for a person's expectations about the repatriation process, cultural identity changes and demographic factors have a direct impact on the repatriation experience. Cultural changes arise slowly, which may lead to that repatriates are not always aware about changes that have appeared and first upon return it becomes evident that they have changed (Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). Different cultural identities have a great impact on the outcome in the repatriation process. Sussman (2002) highlights four different types of cultural identities that can occur after adopting to a new culture.

2.6.1 Affirmative

According to Sussman (2002), an affirmative identity implies a strengthening of the positive feelings for the home country identity. Affirmative Individuals' would evaluate themselves and have strong connection with other persons from their host country. Further, they will perceive compatriots as typical members of the culture. This implies that the adoption to the host country during the assignment is low and returning home is seen as something positive. Affirmative identities may therefore see repatriation as a relief and distress are expected to be low (Sussman, 2002).

2.6.2 Subtractive

Sussman (2002) argue that subtractive identifiers will develop a feeling of alienation and estrangement towards the home nation during their sojourn. Hence, they will be less positive to their home country and believe that compatriots perceive them as less typical of the home culture. Further, individual's with a subtractive identity will integrate to the host culture to a larger extent and feel less attached to their home country. According to Sussman (2002), subtractive individuals may therefore suffer from an identity loss upon return and repatriation distress as a fruition of that.

2.6.3 Additive

As the case of subtractive, Additive identities also run a great risk of repatriation distress. This depends of high adoption to the host country just as in the case of subtractive identity. However, in contrast, the additive identity does not depend on identity loss. They still identify strongly to their home culture but embrace many aspects of the host culture, such as culture-values, customs, social rituals, emotion and thoughts. This leads to an enhanced identity but also to a changed identity, which in turn implies a greater risk for repatriation distress (Sussman, 2002).

2.6.4 Global

Global identity is synonymous with multiple international experiences. Moving in and out of cultures enhances their sense of belonging to a global community. Facing and adopting a new culture is nothing dramatic for this category. Similarly, repatriation back to the home country is predicted to be moderate and less stressful. They will therefore have a positive influence on the repatriation experience (Sussman, 2002; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007).

Furthermore, demographic factors such as age, gender, marital status or education have an impact on the repatriation process and should be considered (Hyder & Lövblad 2007). Expectations and preparedness can according to Cox (2004) be affected by training to different extent. In addition, research implies that background variables such as younger age, female gender, marital status, higher education level, time abroad, fewer previous transitions or few visits home are associated with higher repatriation distress and cannot be altered by training. However Cox (2004) enlighten the importance of considering the variables in the selection procedures and to be monitored during repatriation.

2.7 Research Model – Piecing the Parts Together

The following model (figure 4) is subsequently constructed by us after considering existing academia with emphasis on the Repatriation Adjustment devised by Black *et al.* (1992) and the extended model constructed by Hyder and Lövblad (2007). We have thus created an applicable model by combining these two models and the variables and factors that a repatriation process implies. Cultural descent as a variable is our contribution to the model and takes Swedish repatriates to account. However, the variable is universal and can be addressed to various cultural origins in further research.

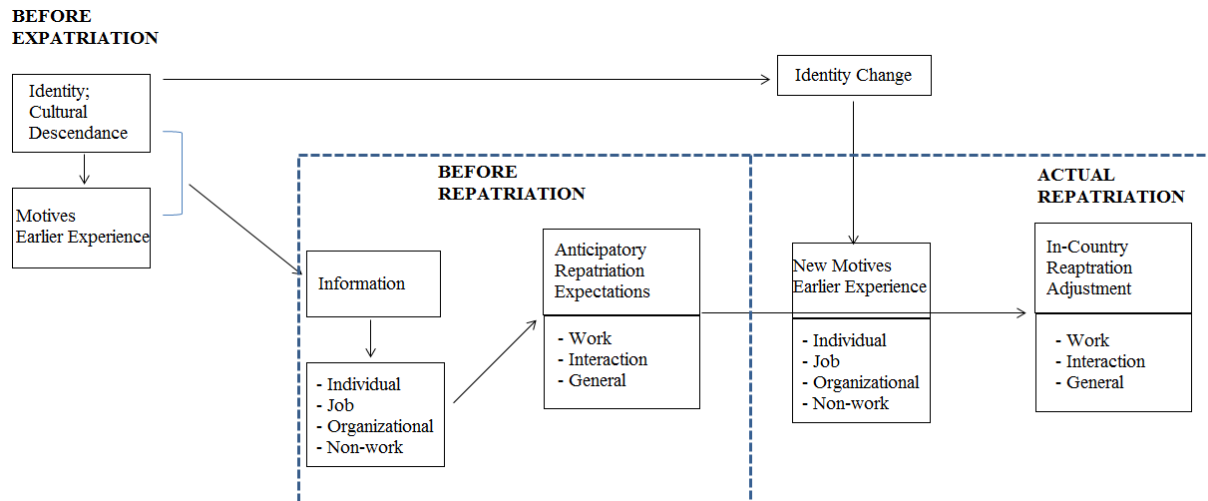


Figure 4: A combined Framework for Swedish Repatriation Adjustment (Authors edition, 2013)

There is a variety of research regarding repatriation processes. Nevertheless, a great part of academia has its root in the work of Black *et al.* (1992). Further, the extended model by Hyder and Lövblad (2007) reinforce the actuality of the theory. It was therefore obvious to use these two as a basis for our model in which we build our research upon. The model is divided into three stages; before expatriation, before repatriation and actual repatriation.

Before expatriation: This stage implies identity and cultural descendance, which in our case includes taking into account that the repatriates are of Swedish origin. Further, we include the variables motives and earlier experience already before the expatriate leaves for the IA. This implies a modification in addition to Hyder and Lövblad (2007) who discuss these variables as impacting variables first when the expatriate is abroad. We argue that the decision of expatriate often is of greater extent and careful planning and clear motives often are formed in advance. Regarding earlier experiences, it appears evident that these are events that people possess before accepting an IA. These variables shape the people before expatriating and can have an impact on future expectations

Before repatriation: It is plausible that a person who accepts an IA forms motives based on cultural origin and earlier experiences. This may have an impact on how a person receives information during the sojourn. Information regarding the variables; Individual, job, organizational and non-work that Black *et al.* (1992) refer to as variables that implies the foundation and form expectations about the repatriation. When rich information is practiced

regarding the facets; work, interaction and general adjustment, which Black *et al.* (1992) refer to as anticipatory adjustment the probability of met expectations upon return will increase.

Actual repatriation: This stage stems from what Black *et al.* (1992) refers to as In-Country Adjustment or Hyder and Lövblad (2007) as during repatriation. Earlier formed expectations are validated against the reality. The success of the repatriation process is highly dependent on the resemblance of formed expectations and how the repatriate is actually treated upon return (Black *et al.*, 1992; Hyder & Lövblad, 2007). The variable Identity Change as Hyder and Lövblad (2007) in consensus with Sussman (2002) argue has major impact on the repatriation process also have an essential role in our model. However, we take into account that the repatriates' origin from Sweden and their subsequent cultural implications.

3. Methodology

The following Method chapter describes our approaches and motivates why we did certain choices regarding theoretical and empirical data. We will present the design of our approach, introduce the case companies and how we have sampled them, how we have collected and analyzed our data. Definitively this will culminate in a discussion in regard to the quality of our methodological endeavors.

3.1 Research Design

We decided to use a qualitative approach, which emerged as a choice based on our research question. Jacobsen (2002) suggests that a research question where the researcher is not enlightened or has a large amount of information about the phenomenon should be approached by a qualitative method. Further, Jacobsen (2002) discusses how the qualitative approach allows the researcher to examine complexity of the problem in a deeper context.

Accordingly, qualitative research strives to describe life-worlds from the inside and out. Hence, from the people who participates' point-of-view in order to gain a better understanding of social realities, processes, patterns and meanings (Flick, Von Kardoff & Steinke 2004). The qualitative approach was therefore an obvious choice since we did not possess prior knowledge and information about repatriation. This allowed us to study few units but at the same time assemble as many nuances as possible from these. We perceived this procedure as necessary since our aim of the study is to create an understanding of how the phenomenon repatriation affects the individual.

Further, we conducted a deductive research approach in order to confirm existing and cultivate the research in the context of Swedish repatriates. Jacobsen (2002) discusses how the deductive approach goes from with theory study to empirical study. Further, the deductive approach as described by Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) implies that the theory is the first source of knowledge. The researcher uses theory as a base to understand a phenomenon and deduce one or more hypotheses, which then can be subjected to an empirical study. However, Alvesson and Sköldbberg (1994) argue that there is a risk to create preconceived notions when using the deductive approach. Nevertheless, since the subject repatriation is relatively unexplored and in the Swedish individuals context in specific, it was necessary to create a clear picture in order to determine which issues that were relevant to investigate. Thus, since the purpose in our study is to increase the knowledge in regard of Swedish repatriates, we were compelled to ask questions that stimulate the respondent to answer profoundly. Hence,

questions such as “why” and “how” were essential in order to penetrate the conundrum. Yin (2003) states that a case study is the preferred strategy when questions as “why” and “how” should be answered. The strength of a case study is that it enables the researcher to in-depth, examine a case within its real-life context (Yin, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Further, our unit of analysis is Swedish repatriates and repatriation adjustment. Emphasis has therefore been on forming an accurately specified research question; this approach correlates with what Yin (2003) highlights as in order to select the appropriate unit of analysis, the research question must be accurately specified.

3.2 Case Companies and Sampling

Upon consensus with data-collecting procedures that accompany a case study approach we set out to attain information from possible sampled case interviewees. Since our focus was to study expatriates and their repatriation process it was of unequivocal importance that the sampled interviewees from the case companies had experienced a repatriation process. When targeting the interviewees that we wanted to collaborate with, we outlined a set of criteria which had to be fulfilled in order to make them pertinent as samples in our study; this is in consensus with Yin (2003) who states that a proper screening procedure must be in place before one starts to collect data, as this will result in relevant identification of candidates. In unison, it is also of utter salience that the formulated criteria is encapsulated with our research objectives, so that the candidates unquestionably attain the status of relevance and thus, also, result in accounts of valid nature. In consensus, Yin (2003) argues that emphasis prior to data screening should focus on setting forth a number of formulated operational criteria that dictate whether or not the candidates are deemed suitable. Building on this argument, the following criteria was devised:

- Swedish origin

The sampled case interviewees in this paper must be of Swedish origin, this since the aim of the study is to investigate the repatriation process of Swedish expatriates. Exclusively, this means that the interviewees must have been raised, living and working in Sweden for most of their lives, as this suggests, from our own interpretation, that they are acculturated Swedes.

- Been Abroad

The sampled case interviewees also need to have been abroad, and returned home from abroad. This is imperative to acknowledge, as if this criterion is not fulfilled, no repatriation can have been undertaken. Thus, we delineate that our case interviewee must have been

abroad for a period of at least 18 months in order to study the repatriation process. This further, in addition, implies that the companies that the interviewees work for must be internationally oriented; otherwise an IA would not have been possible.

From the aforementioned criteria, it is inevitable and naïve to ignore the fact that literally hundreds of possible and suitable candidates would be relevant to consider for this study. Thus, in conclusion, the candidates that ultimately fulfilled the criteria, had the scheduled time to be interviewed and wanted to be interviewed were selected. Also all the interviewees and their companies were associated with pseudonyms as anonymity was deemed necessary.

3.3 Data Collection; Secondary Data and Interviews

A collection of secondary data from earlier studies makes it possible for researchers to attempt an interpretation of the information (Jacobsen, 2007). The vast majority of our secondary data consisted of scholar articles that enlighten the conundrum of repatriation. Further, scholar articles concerning culture, knowledge management, motives and identities were also included. Jacobsen (2007) argue that credibility is to a large extent created by using reliable sources. It was therefore essential to critically review the entire collection of secondary data before taking anything into consideration. We also sought to use a combination of acknowledged articles that had been cited by a great amount of researchers together with subsequent and less confirmed theories. Furthermore, data was found and collected through different search engines such as Summon University of Gothenburg, Web of science or Scopus. The two later enabled an efficient search combination of keywords. Hence, we could narrow down search result by combining keywords as repatriation, motives and identities. We were able to find a relatively broad extent of material regarding the subject of repatriation. However, research regarding Swedish repatriates has been conspicuously absent. It was therefore of great extent to consider whether existing theory was applicable in the Swedish context.

After the process of choosing case companies we decided to interview respondents as a method of attaining qualitative information for our primary data. Kvale and Brinkman (2009) argue that a qualitative interview approach promotes the possibility to create an understanding from the perspective of the respondent. Further, according to Yin (2003) are interviews the most important source of information regarding case studies. We decided to select a small quantity of respondents in order to enable a greater understanding of repatriation. Kvale

(1997) argues that this approach increases the possibility of a deeper interpretation of the collected data. It was essential for us ensure that we asked the right questions before we implemented the interviews. Jacobsen (2002) emphasizes the importance of a structured interview in order to create a clear overview of the questions the researcher aim to enlighten. Hence, we decided to create an interview questionnaire on the basis of our constructed research model. This approach enabled us to ensure that we covered all areas within the research model. Further, we used the questionnaire as support and tried to promote an open interview in order to create comprehensive dialogue. A researcher operates on different levels while primarily asking questions fosters to answer the research question and simultaneously putting forth a combination of friendly and nonthreatening questions to ease the tension (Yin, 2003). We focused on reducing tension and the risk of that the respondent might feel threatened by starting each interview with opening questions of more general character. This was important to achieve a comprehensive dialogue and minimize the risk of the respondent moving a non-comparative state and thereby deliver distorted information.

A contextual effect may occur depending on the environment where an interview is conducted. It can either be a natural environment in which the interview is comfortable or in an artificial environment where the interviewee might be uncomfortable. Further, an environment that is uncomfortable for the respondent might have an impact on the answers (Jacobsen, 2002). We presupposed that the current workplace of each respondent could be seen as a natural environment and therefore strived to organize the interview in this context. Nevertheless, one interview was conducted by telephone since the geographical distance did not permit us to visit the workplace of this respondent. We estimated that this respondent provided exhaustive and trustworthy answers and is essential to our research. Moreover, all interviews were recorded; this as recording most prominently endorses an accurate reflection of the interview (Yin, 2003). Further, this approach enabled us to transcript an accurate version of conducted information and thus increase the creditability of the study. Imperative to acknowledge is however the fact that the interviews were conducted in Swedish and then translated into English. Reasonably, this might result in fallacious cross-lingual transcriptions, however our English proficiency is more than adequate to quench these errors.

3.4 Evaluation of Sources

The absolute majority of the included articles we have included are of academic character and published in peer-reviewed scholarly journals. It has been relatively convenient to find relevant articles regarding repatriation in an international context. A great emphasis has been on the theory devised by Black *et al.* (1992) or the extended model conducted by Hyder and Lövblad (2007). It can be argued that some sources may be of old character and are not longer applicable. However, after a substantial literature research we found that Black *et al.* (1992) still is the foundation for today's research. Hence, we argue that the model to a high extent had to be included in our research model. It has been remarkably more difficult to find relevant articles about repatriation in a Swedish context. Therefore, we decided to integrate factors and facets that may have an impact on Swedish repatriates in specific.

Further, we are aware of that the theories we include mainly have been confirmed within the USA and in some exceptions within a few countries in Europe. We have therefore carefully evaluated if some factors may not be applicable in the Swedish context. This is however not a major problem, since the aim of our study was to test existing theories and our extended research model in a Swedish context.

3.5 Data Analysis

We based our interview guide on our research model, an approach where the aim was to create evident and useful empirical data that could be connected to the theory and thereby facilitate the analysis process. Collected data must be organized in a structured way in order to enable an analysis (Backman, 1998). Further, Kvale (2006) discusses that there are different methods to analyse an interview. After completing the interviews we decided to transcript all collected data. Transcription is according to Jacobsen (2002) a time intense process but it creates an organized data and facilitates the analysing process. We read the interview transcripts carefully before analysing them in order to be familiar and understand what was accounted from our respondents. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) suggest a process where the researcher first gets familiar with the material and then starts looking for patterns, connections, similarities and contrastive points. Our progress involved a process where we evaluated the empirical findings in relation to our conceptual framework and proposed research model. Thus the theory was of significant importance to our empirical and theoretical sections.

3.6 Quality of the Study

When conducting research, which is of qualitative nature, the concepts of reliability and validity can be somewhat ambiguous and equivocal in their application. Thus, these aforementioned concepts have been replaced by a reciprocal and parallel concept, commonly renowned as the concept of trustworthiness; which makes juxtaposing more pertinent in the case of qualitative research (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2008). Seminally, the work proposed by Lincoln & Guba (1985) elaborates on the concept of trustworthiness and transcends its implications. They argue overall trustworthiness can be illustrated as an umbrella category which consists of four aspect sub-categories which all represent overall trustworthiness, namely: *Dependability*, *Transferability*, *Credibility* and *Confirmability*. Thus, conclusively, these aspects will be subject for elaboration in our study.

The Dependability of this study is reinforced by having presented a methodological chapter where the different incremental and leap steps have been clearly illustrated and presented, thus showing how our procedures have been taken. Further, the interviews that were conducted were all recorded, as step one, and then, as step two, transcribed. All of this to ensure an accurate rendition and documentation was possible (c.f. Yin, 2003). Overall, information in regard to our research is disclosed and nothing is consciously undisclosed, all to improve dependability. The Transferability in this study is also of unequivocal nature. It is clearly delineated that the aim of this study is to contribute to existing research as no research in regard to Swedish repatriates has been conducted in a qualitative nature. The conceptual framework presented clearly depicts previous papers' thoughts and are incorporated in our research model, suggesting pertinence. In addition, the symbiosis of theory (them) and empirical evidence (us) unmistakably recognizes the transferability in the analysis section. The Credibility of the study adheres accordingly to a valid nature; this is primarily exclusively based on the premise that by having researchers that are familiarized and well-acquainted with the topic, the trustworthiness gains more validity. The familiarization process, where a considerable amount of research has been scrutinized and evaluated has further embraced the credibility aspects of our study. Although the assiduous efforts, which are portrayed in our work, the time-span of the study was to our disadvantage. The four interviews we managed to conduct were rich in content, however more interviews more have been opted for. However, the amount of interviews does not discredit the study's findings in anyway. The Confirmability of this study is reinforced by having a clear linkage between our

findings and interpretations to the conceptual data. This is of utter salience to acknowledge, as this reflection leads to the diminishment of non-relevant and imaginative conclusions, which has been our intent to ensure. Also, our proposed research model has acted as a mid-passage for our dialectical argumentation and thinking.

Overall, in conclusion, we argue that the trustworthiness of this study is of unquestionable nature, as the aforementioned concepts depict. However, sub-conscious fallaciousness should not be neglected, as this might have contributed to errors. However, it has been or foremost intent to ensure that such inexorable actions have been quenched, to a non-existent level.

In summary, this chapter has outlined the different methodological aspects and methods that we have applied in our research. All of this can be graphically illustrated by the following figure 5:

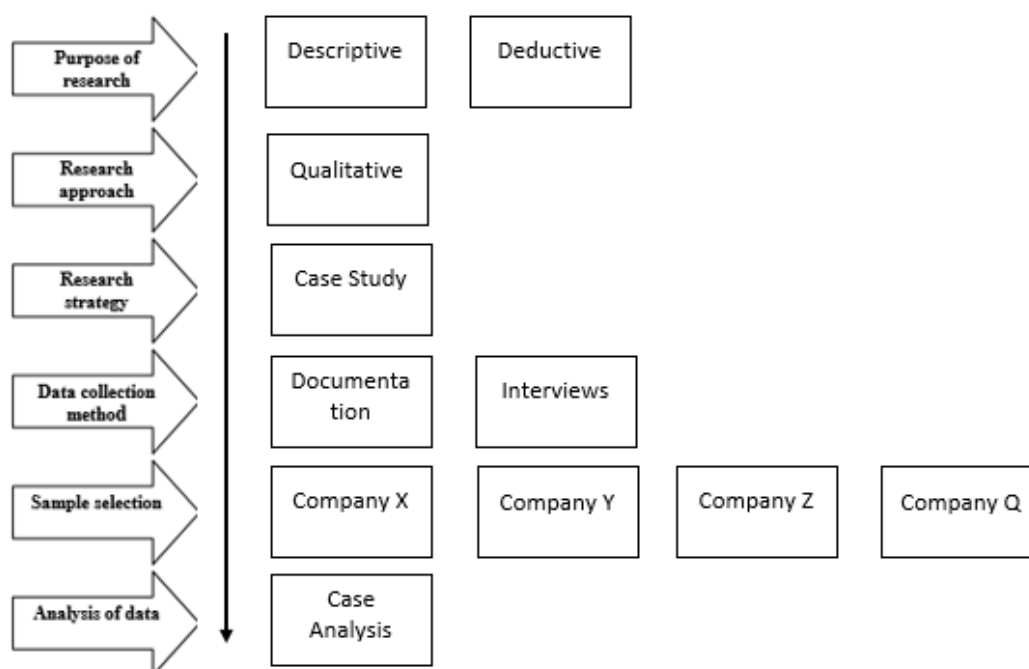


Figure 5. Approach of research (Authors edition, 2013)

4. Empirical Data

The following Empirical chapter presents a summary of the data we have collected from our respondents. First we present an introduction of our respondents. Following, the answer will be presented in the order of our research model.

Lars-Erik President	Johan Investment Manager
Company Q Personal Interview, Ångelholm	Company X Personal Interview, Göteborg
AGE 58 EXPATRIATE COUNTRY AL' KHOBAR, SAUDI ARABIA YEARS ABROAD 18 MONTHS	AGE 32 EXPATRIATE COUNTRY SAN FRANCISCO, USA YEARS ABROAD 18 MONTHS
Tommy VP and CFO	Jens Manager
Company Y Telephone Interview	Company Z Personal Interview, Helsingborg
AGE 39 EXPATRIATE COUNTRY SUZHOU, CHINA YEARS ABROAD 36 MONTHS	AGE 27 EXPATRIATE COUNTRY WASHINGTON, USA YEARS ABROAD 24 MONTHS

4.1 Introduction of the Respondents

The respondents that have been interviewed for this study have all chosen to anonymous and have therefore been assigned pertinent pseudonyms. This has also been applied to their companies, as their anonymity was also a part of the informed consensus. However a short introduction of the respondents is adequate to get acquainted with the following interviewees in the text. Johan is a 32-year-old Investment Manager who works for a company within the manufacturing industry. He had his expatriate position on the West Coast in the USA, or more accurately in San Francisco. Jens is a 27-year-old manager who works for a company within the service industry. He was situated and had his expatriate assignment on the East Coast of the USA, more specifically in the Capital: Washington DC. Lars-Erik is a 58-year-old experienced President in Swedish companies but this was his first expatriate experience. He was expatriated to Saudi Arabia to conduct work within the technology industry. Finally, Tommy is a 38 year-old VP and CFO who works for a company within the manufacturing industry. He is an experienced expatriate and had his recent IA in Suzhou, China. Jens and Johan are still working in the organization that sent them abroad.

4.2 Motives

Johan accepted the assignment mainly to confirm his early experiences in an international context. It was tempting to live and work professionally in another country. Further he describes that he desired to possess a similar position upon return. Tommy has had many years of expatriate experience before his latest assignment in China. Living abroad was therefore not the main motive and he refers to factors as interesting job and that China in specific was exiting. Even Lars-Erik refers to the excitement as the main reason for accepting. Further, he emphasize that he had no ulterior motive by going abroad and discusses that this might have to do with the fact that he was a bit older when he accepted the IA. Jens is very clear by explaining that going abroad to a large extent was a career move. “The main reason for going was to give my career a “boost”. My thought was that the IA should be the key for either other IAs or great opportunities in Sweden”.

Johan declares that the confirmation of his knowledge was evident and that it was truly tested. He emphasize that it meant a great amount of work but he possessed knowledge that will be useful in the future. Further, he argue that the IA definitely has been positive for his career and discuss how living and working abroad has developed him and various skills. He is also clear to describe that his position today is similar to the one he had as expatriate. Jens has a comparable perception regarding personal development but is drastic in his statement regarding the current position. He describes how he had a great remit and autonomy during his IA and that the motive was to acquire a similar position after experience upon return. He argues that this has not been fulfilled and has thought that his time abroad would benefit him more. Jens explains that he felt more important in USA in contrast to his current job in Sweden where he refer to himself as a cog in the machinery. However, he stresses that this might be a feeling that has to do with the fact that the overall result of performed tasks appeared more evident during his IA. Further, he describes that it is too early to state if his motives will be fulfilled or not. He is confident that the time abroad will be positive for his future career and that he will benefit from it in the future. Jens argues that he is confident that he has developed his personally and is more open-minded today. He has also gained invaluable professional knowledge and expanded his network. These factors will be positive for my future career concludes Jens. Lars-Erik and Tommy are of dissident in opinions. Thomas emphasize that you do not want to switch to a lower position upon return. He also describes that his company could not offer him a position he found attractive in Sweden as

reason for resigning. Further, he discusses how his jobs today are similar to the one he had in China because the company is of international character and that he is satisfied with that. However, when he describes his IAs in general he emphasize that they have been positive for his career. He stresses that the experience and assigned responsibilities that he has accumulated abroad are useful to a great extent from a career viewpoint upon return. Going abroad was not a career motive for Lars-Erik; therefore he did not have the intention of attaining a specific position upon return. He is satisfied working for a small company today and argues that the cultural knowledge and process thinking he possessed during his IA are useful in his everyday work.

4.3 Cultural Identities

Two of our respondents had previous experiences from the host country through different reasons. Jens and Johan had visited USA a great amount of times and considered themselves familiar with the culture before going abroad. Both argue that this probably made the acclimatization abroad easier and they describe that they had no specific problems to adjust. Tommy and Lars-Erik had never been to their host countries and both of them were invited to “look and see” trips. Lars-Erik describes his preparing trip as peculiar since he, because of visa regulations, was not permitted admission to Saudi Arabia. Instead the company invited him to Bahrain, which Lars-Erik is clear to describe was very different to Saudi Arabia. Tommy valued this trip and explains that it gave him and his wife a preview of the culture before accepting the IA.

Two of our respondents had expatriate experience before accepting the assignment. Jens was confident that his previous experience facilitated his sojourn and highlights personality traits as a strong reason. Furthermore, he argues that former experiences of living and working abroad have enriched his adaptability and understanding of different cultures. Furthermore, Jens describes how his former expatriate experience contributed to certain awareness of what was expected upon return. He is however eager to emphasize that it is impossible to compare his latest repatriation with his former since it was two totally different situations. Tommy has a similar view as Jens and describes how his experiences of working in an international context have increased the capability to lead and cooperate with people from different cultures. Further he describes that he, from previous experiences, knew that it is of great importance to have a well-constructed contract upon return. According to Tommy a contract

that helps you with temporary housing and everything essential is what you need to readjust upon return.

The answers vary when we ask our respondents if they believe that their cultural descent might have had an impact of their behaviour abroad and upon return. Jens believes that his Swedish origin was positive for him during his assignment. He describes that his perception was that Swedish people have a good reputation in USA. Further he highlights that the general perception is that we are down to earth and structured. However he emphasizes that he does not refer himself as a typical Swedish stereotype. Tommy explained that he had strong ties to Sweden and felt and feels very Swedish in many contexts. He adds, however that he cannot answer if it had an impact on his behaviour or actions either abroad or upon return. Johan argue that this is very individual and that he does not consider and associate himself with Swedish behaviours as “Jante-Law”. He believes that each individual's personality affects how he or she handles situations. Lars-Erik is very clear and mentions several times that he does not refer to himself as Swedish. However, he emphasizes that his western origin had a great impact during his sojourn. “Everything was extremely different and I had to adapt both privately and professionally”. Further, Lars-Erik adds that much of what was different was it in a bad way, thus it was a relief to come home in that sense.

4.4 Individual Variables

When being stationed abroad and conducting IAs, there are a vast array of different aspects and factors influencing the individual both before going abroad and upon returning home. All the respondents where abroad and the duration was at least 18 months; where the longest was 36 months. During the period of time away from one's home country one can expect certain changes to surface, and since the individual in question is not present, this might add confusion upon returning home, as one is not familiar with the changes. As a response, it might be important to have contact with the home country during ones IA. All the respondents in our case state that they had contact with their home country. The amount varied from now and then, often, constantly and some even had their family or girlfriend with them, which apparently helped. Many platforms were used such as: Skype, Facebook, Telephone, Mail, Internet, Virtual meetings etc. Both Johan and Jens state their connection to their home country: “Since my mission was to start a new subsidiary of the business, I had a lot of contact with my home office in Sweden. There were many meetings and telephone calls with people back home in Sweden”. However on a more general level Jens states “

Sometimes you were in contact with the home office, but mostly by mail. With family and friends however, you had a lot of contact. It is so easy to Skype, Facebook etc. You are always connected.”

All the respondents indicated that they never returned home during their IAs. Instead they were gone for the entire duration of their assignment. However, this did not result in an exclusion of difficulties and problems, *au contraire*. The respondents clearly state in their accounts that there were difficulties for them, personally, both upon going away and upon returning home. The fact that everything is new and unfamiliar raised concerns for all the respondents. Especially Johan and Lars-Erik who both state that the new environment and the new adjustments posed certain obstacles upon international arrival. As Lars-Erik adheres “Foremost, learning what not to do and that everything was so overwhelmingly different, that was hard to learn and adjust to”. Moreover Jens adheres to the previous notions and adds that all the mundane daily things do not function to the degree in relation to how they function in Sweden and states “You do not think about it before you leave, but when you leave Sweden you realize all the necessities you take for granted don't work out here, and when you return home you realize how well Sweden functions”.

All respondents also indicated that returning home was not easy for them personally. Many of them accounted vast reasons for why; transcending borders of many aspects, which will be elaborated throughout the following sections. However, Tommy explicitly describes how one must handle such situations. He argues that it is up to you as an individual to take charge and make things happen, if you want to see outcomes, as he argues” You have to realize that it is up to you!, you have to make the best out of the situation if you want your desired outcome”. Although the other respondents did not explicitly account such an adherence Jens clearly aims to depict the same phenomenon “Nobody said anything was going to be easy, so when I returned home I just did what I had to do, dealt with it”.

In the end however all of the respondents truly felt that they overall had gained positive experiences from their international assignments. Tommy states “for my career, it was indeed a boost” and furthermore also points to growth that comes from working in an international surrounding, which is priceless. Both Jens and Johan talk about the personal and professional growth. On a professional level they feel that it has improved them, in the sense that they have dealt with new things in a new environment, but also personally they express growth.

“You learn a great deal. I believe they exchange between me and people from different countries whom I worked with was of great benefit for me personally” Johan states whilst Jens concurs “I am pretty open-minded so my web-of-contacts has clearly expanded because once you are abroad you want to meet new people and learn new things. You also get some kind of understanding for different cultures which is useful for me”.

4.5 Job Variables

When arriving to the destination where the IA was set to be and when returning back home again from the latter, it is inevitable to disregard the factors concerning work. All the respondents were overall relatively content with the positions they received during their IA and their position upon arrival back home. Overall the respondents were given more autonomy and free hands, and when arriving back home they filled positions, which were satisfactory. Both Tommy and Johan were very satisfied with the positions they filled abroad and at home. However Jens and Lars-Erik hinted some disappointment. “The position I have today differs from the one I had in the US. I had more variation, broader tasks and my authority/responsibility realm was significantly larger” Jens stated. Lars-Erik also adheres and states “The position I have today is at a much smaller-scale, which is in some cases can be frustrating”. However both of them further state that they today are facing the challenges the position entails to prove themselves. When asked whether the expectations prior to returning home had been accurate to the fallout the respondents all had different answers. Interestingly ones problem was not another ones problem and vice versa. Johan states in his accounts that “I did not really know if I was going to have a job similar to my international job upon returning home. But I worked hard and hoped for the best. I got a similar job in the end, but it was frustrating and I felt insecure during”. Also Jens comments “I don't want to say my new job is a not a step back, but it is not a step-forward, which is what I hoped for” suggesting his discontent with the expectations he had. Interestingly, all the respondents clearly indicate that the tasks their position entails have changed somewhat upon arrival back home. Most characteristic has Jens in his statement “It is definitely a negative thing, you feel less important, even if that is not the case. You simply have less responsibility and do not get to see the fruits of your labor”. However, both Johan and Lars-Erik adhere to the idea that changes have occurred but they still work with similar tasks. “Since I am not working in the US anymore the tasks are not the same, however my position today is similar to my IA, hence my task resembles somewhat” Johan declares.

Furthermore a majority of the respondents also mention that the work both abroad and upon returning home entailed substantial adjustment. Both the job itself and the work that was needed to be executed took some time for the respondents to situate themselves with, which created some anxiety. How to conduct business in Saudi Arabia and in the USA posed some initial problems for the respondents, which also was frustrating. Tommy concretely and simply exemplifies by answering what he felt “it is CHAOS” and both Johan and Lars-Erik point out that “One should not underestimate the effects and chaos of returning home. It is harder than you think”.

4.6 Organizational Variables

During the IA and upon returning home it is often seen as a beneficial action that the company somehow aids the individual in any fashion. A majority of the respondents indicated that they knew what was expected of them upon arrival to the international destination. Many of them had before departure been briefed on what their professional itinerary would include. However Lars-Erik disagrees with the latter and instead states that he had no clue what to do upon arrival “I had no idea what I was going to expect. There was an infinite amount of work, no structure, unbalanced employment, uncoordinated etc. It was more or less constant chaos”. All the respondents seem to indicate that companies in fact did have similar actions before departure. Both Tommy and Lars-Erik concur and even underline that their companies sent them abroad on a look-and-see trip. “They sent me down to Bahrain for a week or so to get a feel for it” Lars-Erik states whilst Tommy argues “No, I had not been there before so they sent me and my family on a look-and-see trip. We got to feel the vibe and the culture, which was quite rewarding”. However, Johan and Jens also indicate that their companies had preparatory actions, however trips were not included. Here, instead, meetings, briefings and virtual-meetings seem to have been the primary option, for both of them.

Regarding pre-arrival action programs, all the respondents in this matter interestingly stated that their companies did not organize such efforts. Johan cleared stated “ No not really, instead when my time was over I basically went home without any information on what next (expect minor changes back home)”. And Jens also states “No, when my IA was over, I had no preparatory training, I just went back home”. Thus, one might suggest that knowing what to expect might have been a difficult endeavor for the respondents? A majority of the respondents adhere to that previous motion and give statements of negative nature. Johan exclaims “I was most of all really insecure. I was going to have a meeting with my boss about

the future” and Jens states, “I lost a lot of freedom, responsibility and the social aspect, which is not what I had in mind”. Interestingly both Lars-Erik and Tommy use the term “chaos” to describe the realized outcome to the expected. Although only Tommy had a well-articulated contract, he still says it was complete pandemonium. “The contract met all my expectations, and was extremely helpful since we had no connection to Sweden anymore. But it was still complete and utter chaos that one cannot expect” Tommy proclaims in conclusion.

4.7 Non-Work Variables

Our respondents had different social status during their IAs. Jens had a German girlfriend that has lived in USA most of her life. Johan also had a girlfriend but he describes a different situation since he went by himself. Tommy had a wife and a three-year-old daughter, which followed to China. Lars-Erik had a different situation since his wife and two daughters stayed in Sweden during his time in Saudi Arabia.

Jens explains his situation abroad as perfect since he met his girlfriend during his assignment. She was studying in Washington during that time and it was therefore the natural place to be for both of us. She is practically American and I am already used to the culture, so the private adjustment went very smooth. He describes that he missed his family but also that it was really hard to go home when his contract was over since his girlfriend had one year left in school. This was also the hardest part by leaving Washington according to Jens. Another variable he mentions is the quietness of going from a big American city to a small town in Sweden. He describes the first weeks as fidgety and that he did not know what to do at weekend and evenings. He adds that he had many friends left at home but the way to socialize is different. Further Jens describes how the tempo is much higher and there is more pulse in a big city, and how that was a big challenge. “I could not sit down for a minute, I guess my friends got a bit tired of me in the beginning since I was calling them everyday without realizing that they had a life as well“

Johan lived in USA by himself but his girlfriend came to visit him numerous of times during his sojourn. He describes that it was fairly easy to acclimatize since he mastered the language and that the culture is not that different to Sweden. Johan does not describe the repatriation process as problematic. He describes that he notices several differences upon return and

mentions that some friends had moved or had become parents. However, he emphasize that most of the changes were already known to him through social media.

Lars-Erik and his family decided that he should conduct the IA by himself since the timing was not right for the whole family to move. The Idea was that they should join when his daughters were finished with elementary school but Lars-Erik decided to resign before that was actualized. Lars-Erik describes the acclimatization process abroad as problematic and slow. He thought that it was going to be easy since he was on his own but describes that everything was different and claims that he probably did not acclimatize during his whole sojourn. Subsequently, he describes that returning home was a relief on some levels. He discloses that it was “chaos” on many levels as well. It becomes most evident when he explains differences between living standards. “You live like a president and it is impossible to maintain that level at home. The company finances everything and upon that you earn up to five times more. You get used to this and it is not easy to adjust back”. Further he mentions that he was concerned about what people would think of his decision of returning. He describes how he was worried that people believed that he failed or got dismissed. Tommy describes that his family adjusted to China fairly easy and emphasizes that the young age of their daughter contributed to that. He says that many things were different and emphasizes the ability to adjust and realize that things that are self-explanatory at home might not be it abroad. “You know, you are Swedish so you adjust as good as you can but the life in China is different. Further, Tommy describes that returning home therefore was a readjustment. Tommy describes how they lived in an expatriate complex during his sojourn. Hence they were surrounded by people like themselves which he believes eased the repatriation process.

Lars-Erik was the only respondent that had a permanent living upon return. He describes that he kept his house since his family lived there during his IA. He explains that this was convenient since it was one less of a problem upon return. The other respondents had similar situations with no permanent housing upon return. Tommy describes the situation as “we had nothing left in Sweden, especially housing became chaotic”. He emphasizes however that his organization helped him with temporarily housing, which helped. The situation for Jens and Johan was different and they both have similar explanations. Johan explains that going abroad was convenient; he had people assisting him with housing and other practical things; in contrast to upon return were he had to fix everything on his own. Jens is of the same opinion and describes that he moved with his mother upon return.

5. Analysis

The following Analysis chapter describes the result of our collected data on basis of the included theories. Theories and collected empirical data are presented and scrutinized against each other in the order of our research model. This approach facilitates an excavation of findings and arguments.

5.1 Motives

All our respondents mentioned different reasons and motives for going abroad and they appeared to have a fairly clear picture of what they wanted to achieve from the IAs. This is partly aligned with Hyder and Lövblad (2007) discussion regarding identification of personal motives and its necessity for a successful repatriation process. However, Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue that it is essential for the organization to identify the individual's motives and how significant they are in order to understand and retain the repatriate within the organization. The empirical data indicated that the respondent's motives had a more individual character and not shared between the organization and the individual. This is aligned with Pinto *et al.* (2011) who argue that there often is a lack in the organizational knowledge about individual's motives for going abroad. Further, it is also strongly correlated to what Paik *et al.* (2002) enlighten; that there often is a disparate between motives of the individual and the organization and that motives usually are personally driven. Hence, it is suggested that organizations should focus to identify individual motives and strive to fulfil them in order to retain repatriates upon return.

Further, the motives varied between our respondents, Johan and Jens asserted that their motive(s) of working abroad were in correlation with future career development. Johan stated that he sought to develop and deploy his proficiencies in an international context and attain a similar position at home. Jens was explicit by explaining that the motive for his IA was to "boost" his career and create opportunities in the future. The fact that Johan and Jens are remarkably younger than the other respondents and thereof are in the beginning of their careers might explain why they have a more evident focus on career development. Tommy and Lars-Erik had different motives, more related to proffered job or position abroad and excitement of working in foreign countries. Variation in motives among our respondents can be linked to Hyder and Lövblad (2007) discussion that motives often differ between individuals; hence one might accept an IA to exploring future career opportunities while another sought to acquire cultural experiences or excitement. In our case, we could identify

three different factors that all respondents indicated at different levels as motives for accepting IA; focus on career development, interesting position abroad or excitement of living and working in an uncommon culture. However, the hierarchy of what was most important varied greatly between our respondents. Hyder and Lövblad (2007), Stahl *et al.* (2002), Nery-Kjerfve and Mclean (2012) argue that an expatriate with strong career motives will have higher expectations on the position upon return. Subsequently, the repatriate will suffer from repatriation distress if he or she does not possess an expected position. There was a clear pattern regarding the correlation between career motives and position expectations upon return, where it was in particular evident among the respondents with high career motives. Johan mentioned how he developed professionally and attained a similar position upon return, which was in line with his motive. Further he also emphasized that he is satisfied with his job and position today. In contrast is Jens, who clearly indicates dissatisfaction with his position today. This is aligned with the importance of motives expectations meeting reality that Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue as essential for a repatriation process to be successful. It was apparent that Johan's expectations were fulfilled upon return whereas Jens' expectations were not met to an entire extent. This implies that Jens's high career motives might be a driving factor for his disappointment since they were not fulfilled by the organization.

Tommy and Lars-Erik who did not emphasize career motives and they, like, Johan are satisfied with their positions today. It is however vital to mention that none of them are longer working in the organization that sent them abroad. Both of them decided to resign before returning home. Tommy explains that his company could not offer him a position he found attractive in Sweden and Lars-Erik refers to social factors for resigning. Hyder and Lövblad (2007) and Nery-Kjerfve and McLean (2002) argue that high turnover rates often are a result of a mismatch of the individual's expectations and the reality upon reintegration. It is evident in the case of Tommy that his expectations could not be met by the organization and hence the driving factor for resigning. Nevertheless, these two respondents deficient career motives as reason for going abroad and resigned voluntarily. Instead, cultural exchange, personal development and excitement during the sojourn were mentioned instead. There were evident indications that all these factors were fulfilled and both argue that they developed during the IA, which they emphasize are of value today. Subsequently, their answers indicate that their motives for going abroad were fulfilled. In conclusion our respondents' answers are partly in line with Hyder and Lövblad (2007) and Stroh *et al.* (2000) who argue that motives over time and that expectations meeting the reality upon return are essential for evaluating a successful

repatriation process. Only one of our respondent's answers indicates that motive expectations were not met upon return and this resulted in a clear dissatisfaction. In contrary, the respondents that experienced that their expectations were met to a great extent were clearly more satisfied regarding this extent. Subsequently, this suggests that motives that are fulfilled or matched upon return might be a driving factor for positive repatriation experience.

5.2 Cultural Identities

Jens and Tommy had previous expatriate experiences before accepting the IA. Both of them argue that this in different ways made the acclimatization abroad more convenient and upon return to a certain extent. They mention how personal development and understanding of different cultures has increased during their IAs. Further, they mention knowledge of preparing actions as fixed contracts and awareness of expectations upon return as contributing factors for a convenient return. However, both emphasize that repatriating is not imaginable and Tommy even mention the word chaos. This is in consensus with Hyder and Lövblad (2007) that argue how earlier experiences before and during the IA have an impact on the repatriation process. However, it is not totally aligned since Hyder and Lövblad (2007) describe a clear difference between an expatriate repatriation for the second time compared to an expatriate with no previous repatriation. Tommy and Jens discussion indicate that it made the repatriation process more convenient on some practical levels but the difference between our respondents with previous experience was not as evident as Hyder and Lövblad (2007) argue.

The discussion by Hyder and Lövblad (2007) regarding earlier experiences could be more applicable regarding expatriate adjustment among our respondents. It was evident in the cases of Jens and Johan who were the only respondents with previous experiences from their host countries. Furthermore, both describe that they actually had visited the country numerous of times before the IA and were familiar with the culture. In contrary, Tommy and Lars-Erik had no previous experience of their host countries and indicated a more cumbersome process. However, Tommy had, as mentioned, numerous of expatriate experiences and Lars-Erik described how he has worked on an international level in previous jobs. It can therefore be argued that all of our respondents on different levels had international experience before accepting the IA, which might have influenced them.

All of our respondents can to different extent be linked with the various cultural identities Sussman (2002) discerns. Lars-Erik describes vast negative differences in Swedish and Saudi Arabia cultures and how it in that case was a relief to repatriate. This strongly correlates with the affirmative identity that Sussman (2002) argue implies a strengthening of the positive feelings for the home country. However, Lars-Erik describes his repatriation ambiguous since he mentions both chaos and that it on some levels was a relief.

It was considerably more difficult to identify our other respondent's cultural identities. Jens and Johan describe how they have developed during their sojourn, which indicates an enhanced personality and possibly changed personality. This is strongly correlated to what Sussman (2002) refers to as additive identity and can lead to repatriation distress. Subsequently, this can be a driving factor for Jens repatriation distress but is not applicable regarding Johan since his enhanced identity actually is used in his position at home. Tommy could be addressed as additive since he clearly explains how his international experiences have contributed to his way of acting. However, it is evident that Tommy has created a certain habit of moving between different cultures. Further he describes the importance of adjusting and his answers indicate that this process was relatively seamless for his family. This is in consensus with the global identity, which according to Sussman (2002) and Hyder and Lövblad (2007) implies a sense of belonging to a global community, hence adjust and readjust cultures are nothing dramatic. However, Tommy uses the word chaos to describe the first time upon return, which indicates repatriation distress. He is also the only one of our respondents that mentions that he has strong ties to Sweden and feel Swedish in many contexts. Interestingly however, the other respondents discuss that they do not identify themselves as typical Swedish people.

5.3 Individual Variables

All the respondents from our interviews mentioned that they were abroad and that the duration ranged from being away at least 18 months to being away as long as up 36 months. Black *et al.* (1992) and Black and Gregersen (1991) postulate that as time passes, changes will occur in the home-country, then time away from the home-country would suggest that an individual might have trouble in the formation of accurate anticipatory expectations, as they are someplace else. During the time the respondents were abroad it is clear that challenges of various nature were manifested, however they clearly state that they had a lot of contact with their home country through an array of different platforms which eased this dilemma. The

amount of contact varied from now and then, to often, to constantly and one respondent even had his family with him, which apparently helped him. Johan stated: “Since my mission was to start a new subsidiary of the business, I had a lot of contact with my home office in Sweden. There were many meetings and telephone calls with people back home in Sweden” and “ Sometimes you were in contact with the home office, but mostly by mail. However, both Jens and Johan stated that they had considerable contact with family and friends, “you had a lot of contact. It is so easy to Skype, Facebook etc. You are always connected.” This suggests that today, where technological breakthroughs have simplified our existence, being up to date with changes in ones home-country is easier. The presence of media, social media and other platforms makes following real-time updates and changes possible, ultimately making it easier to form accurate expectations. A phenomenon, which is correlated with Hyder and Lövblad (2007) and Cox (2004) discussion; how communication technology plays an important roll regarding accurate expectations. Further, it is also in consensus Cox (2004) discussion regarding communication medias and how they can be a powerful substitute for face-to-face communication. This is especially evident in the case of Jens and Johan who are part of the younger generation. Subsequently, it is plausibly that they are more familiar with the platforms to a larger extent than the older co-interviewees. Further, Black *et al.* (1992), Black & Gregersen (1991) and Harvey (1983) argue that the faster the rate of change, and the longer the duration of sojourn the more inaccurate expectations are likely to be. As repatriation is defined as returning home, this suggests that they have been away for some period of time. The respondents from our case give no indication themselves that the rate of change would have any effect on their expectation formation. However, it is possible to argue that since the aforementioned platforms make real-time changes possible to follow, the rate of change and it subsequent expectation aftermath can be discarded, if the notion of knowing how to utilize them is fulfilled. This argument is also applicable in the case of arguing whether the longer an individual has been away and the greater the rate of change equates in more inaccurate expectations (Black *et al.*, 1992; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Harvey, 1983), we argue.

Another variable of salient characteristic and which could have a great impact on the accurate anticipatory expectations is the amounts of visits back to the home country and the home-office (Adler, 1986; Black *et al.*, 1992). All the respondents in our case indicated that they never returned home during their IAs. Instead they were gone for the entire duration of their assignment. However, this did not result in an exclusion of difficulties and problems for them.

Once again here we suggest that the technological advances with virtual contact over the internet to some extent supplant the need for having to visit back home. However it would be naive to suggest that visiting home is equal to having virtual contact, but companies might see this as an effective measure argument.

Based on the predicaments proposed by Bell and Straw (1985) and Black *et al.* (1992) who argue that one would anticipate the following, that, greater attempts to attain predictive control (need for control) will subsequently lead to actual greater predictive control, which, consequently leads to a greater in-country repatriation adjustment. All of the interviewees indicated that returning home was not easy for them. Many of them named many reasons for why; transcending borders of many aspects. Tommy explicitly describes how one must handle such situations. He argues that it is up to you as an individual to take charge and make things happen, if you want to see outcomes, as he argues” You have to realize that it is up to you! You have to make the best out of the situation if you want your desired outcome”. Jens clearly aims to depict the same phenomenon “Nobody said anything was going to be easy, so when I returned home I just did what I had to do, dealt with it”. These accounts adhere to the predictive control conundrum which Black *et al.* (1992) defines as the ability to predict, or make sense of one’s environment in terms of how to behave and understand rewards alternatively punishments associated with different behaviors. The quoted respondents state that it is up to oneself to take charge and deal with changes. Dealing with problems and learning how to predict and understand them is what the respondents here imply that they have done, whether consciously or not.

5.4 Job Variables

Black *et al.* (1992) argue that a variable that might have a salient impact on the anticipatory expectations is the notion of task interdependency between the expatriate and the home-country operational duties. What can be discerned is the relationship between interdependency and accurate expectations; the greater interdependency would plausibly result in an increase the exchange of information. What can be derived from our interviewees’ accounts is that the respondents were given more autonomy and free hands during their international duties. All respondents emphasize a satisfaction with the positions they filled abroad. However the interdependency is questionable. Jens had very little interdependency with his firm while Johan, who was starting up operations in the USA had a lot of contact with his home-office. However, the link if the latter would result in more accurate

expectations is still arguable. However Jens and Lars-Erik hinted some disappointment in regard to their realized expectations “The position I have today differs from the one I had in the US. I had more variation, broader tasks and my authority/responsibility realm was significantly larger” Jens stated. Lars-Erik also adheres and states “The position I have today is at a much smaller-scale, which is frustrating”. This might suggest that the low interdependency Jens experiences for example could have some implications in his expectation formation.

The first variable suggested by Black *et al.* (1992), role clarity, is concerned with to what extent the individual is aware of what is expected from him in regard to the job he is assigned to. This suggests that, if the role clarification is clear, one would expect to see a reduction in uncertainty associated to the job situation, which ultimately should smooth the progress of repatriation work adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992; Peltonen, 1997). The consensus that the clearer the role is, the more improved the predictive control becomes in regard to the role. The respondents had dissident accounts when asked if returning home had been accurate to the fallout. Johan states in his accounts that “ I did not really know if I was going to have a job similar to my international job upon returning home. But I worked hard and hoped for the best. I got a similar job in the end, but it was frustrating and I felt insecure during”. Also Jens comments “ I do not know what to say my new job is not a step back, but it is not a step-forward either, which was what I hoped for” Interestingly, all the respondents clearly indicate that the tasks their positions entail have changed somewhat upon arrival back home. Most characteristic has Jens in his statement “It is definitely a negative thing, you feel less important, even if that is not the case. You simply have less responsibility and do not get to see the fruits of your labor”. The following statements clearly indicate that the role clarity has not been fulfilled. If role clarity reduces uncertainty and improves repatriation adjustment it would be wise to adhere, as the respondents clearly indicate anxiety and disappointment in regard to their position upon returning home. Both Johan and Jens seem to be unclear with what they would expect when returning home, which probably could have been avoided by communicating their role clarity and impeding fallacious anticipatory expectations. This argument is also applicable in the case of the second variable, role conflict, which is related to the equivocal and conflicting signals exerted in regard to what is expected from the individual in his new role (Black *et al.*, 1992; Harvey, 1989; Peltonen, 1997). Here one would expect that the greater the conflicting signals are, the greater the uncertainty will be in regard to the new

job, which is what can be observed from the accounts of Johan and Jens, in particular and what Tommy refers to as “it is chaos”.

The final variable presented by Black *et al.* (1992), role discretion, which postulates that individuals might adjust to their new role by altering the role to fit them more properly, thus making it possible for the individual to incorporate and utilize past, familiar behaviors. Johan was the sole respondent who clearly depicts this: “Since I am not working in the US anymore the tasks are not the same, however my position today is similar to my IA, hence my task resemble somewhat” he declares. As a result of the aforementioned, one would expect that role discretion described by Johan reduces job-related uncertainty and thus aids repatriation adjustment as he in this case can utilize previous behaviors and incorporate experiences from his international duties. However the other respondents gave no indication of the phenomenon, therefore questioning its overall applicability in this case.

5.5 Organizational Variables

The phenomenon presented by Black and Mendenhall (1990) and Black *et al.* (1992) postulates that an impact on the acquisition of information and the formation of accurate expectations is an organizational practice targeting the training and orientation prior to one's repatriation. The respondents from our case suggested that some of them had, pre-expatriation, been on look-and-see trips and been briefed on what their professional itinerary would include. However Lars-Erik disagrees with the latter and instead states that he had no clue what to do upon arrival “I had no idea what I was going to expect. There was an infinite amount of work, no structure, unbalanced employment, uncoordinated etc. It was more or less constant chaos”. However pre-repatriation training or orientation was non-existent based on the accounts provided by the respondents although it might be an interesting endeavor to consider these look-and-see trips in a pre-repatriation manner, we suggest.

Furthermore, the sponsor, which is an individual or group, who is assigned to the expatriate and is responsible for keeping in touch with the expatriate throughout the IA and updating and conveying imperative information. Black *et al.* (1992) and Harvey (1989) argue are important in the formation of work expectation and repatriation adjustment. None of the respondents indicated that they had a sponsor during their duties. Instead they were given more free-hands and more autonomy. However, as previously mentioned, some of the respondents had a lot of contact through the advances provided by technology during their IA, which could be an

indication of the sponsor being supplanted by improved and easier connections with the home-country. This argument is also applicable in the case of another organizational variable where frequency of the communication between the home office and the subsidiary that can aid the reduction of uncertainty associated with returning home (Black *et al.*, 1992).

Black *et al.* (1992) argue that just as pre-return training, as previously mentioned, can improve predictive control; the same accomplishment can be achieved by post-return training in in-country repatriation adjustment (Black *et al.*, 1992; Andreason & Kinneer, 2005). The respondents in our case interestingly stated that this was not the case. Johan cleared states that “No not really, instead when my time was over I basically went home without any information on what next (expect minor changes back home)”. Further Jens also states “No, when my IA was over, I had no preparatory training, I just went back home”. The former and latter statements indicate that the post-return training is a phenomenon, which in our case has not been evident. This is incongruent with Andreason and Kinneer (2005) who argue that such formal methods could ease repatriation adjustment. However, as previously mentioned, some respondents clearly stated that they said that it was up to oneself to handle situations and make the repatriation smooth, which might have aided their repatriation. However, although post training was not indicated, it is still arguable that it is efficient in aiding the repatriates in their adjustment.

Further, when an individual is out conducting IA duties it is possible that he has had considerable autonomy and free-hands which he would like to enjoy to the same extent upon repatriation. The organization can subsequently clearly communicate that the individual will enjoy or not enjoy the same level upon repatriation Black *et al.* (1992) argue. From our accounts we can see that a majority of the respondents can adhere to the argument proposed by Black *et al.* (1992). Johan states “I was most of all really insecure. I was going to have a meeting with my boss about the future” and Jens states “I lost a lot of freedom, responsibility and the social aspect, which is not what I had in mind”. Interestingly however both Lars-Erik and Tommy use the term “chaos” to describe the realized outcome to the expected. Although only Tommy had a well-articulated contract, he still says it was complete pandemonium. “The contract met all my expectations, and was extremely helpful since we had no connection to Sweden anymore. But it was still complete and utter chaos that one cannot expect”. Here is clear that communication between the dyad is inefficient in a sense. The fact that the respondents were insecure, disappointed and described it as chaos clearly paints a picture

where expectations can be mismatched and create disturbances, regardless of having a contract or not. This could indicate that it is important for a company to ensure that the communication in regard to autonomy is of dialectic nature.

5.6 Non-Work Variables

Tommy was the only respondent that brought his family abroad while Jens had a reversed situation since he met his girlfriend during his sojourn. It has been argued by Vidal *et al.* (2010), Black *et al.* (1992) and Kendall, (1981) that factors regarding to family, such as spouse adjustment have an impact on repatriation. It was impossible to identify patterns regarding this concern since only one of our respondents had a situation where the spouse followed to the host country. Hence, it was only current in the case of Tommy and we could not identify specific difficulties regarding spouse adjustment in that case. However, we identified a clear “reversed” spouse adjustment in the case of Lars-Erik. His wife was mentally prepared to move to Saudi Arabia and experienced a great disappointment when Lars-Erik decided to resign before it happened. This might be highly individual but it indicates that spouse expectations can be affected on different levels.

The pattern was more evident regarding housing upon return, which Black *et al.* (1992) and Kendall (1981) argue can have a salient impact on the repatriation process. Lars-Erik who still possessed his house in Sweden referred to this as convenient upon return. Tommy had assistance from the organization to organize temporarily housing and explained that it was of great help. Jens and Johan stated that they either had housing or got assisted with temporarily housing upon return. It was evident that Jens and Johan perceived housing as a problem upon return; hence it is plausibly a driving factor for repatriation distress. This is in consensus with Back *et al.* (1992) who suggests that the repatriate are thought to experience severe disturbance in regard to housing situation and downward shift in standard upon return. It appeared that Lars-Erik followed by Tommy was most satisfied with the situation. This suggests that permanent housing or assistance with temporarily housing might reduce repatriation distress.

Further, Black *et al.* (1992) suggests that repatriates that experience a downward shift in social status will experience subsequent repatriation distress. This phenomenon is according to Black *et al.* (1992) driven by expectations that will be formed since expatriates are placed

in new social strata abroad. Hence, it can therefore also be in concert with enhanced or changed personality that Sussman (2002) delineates. Subsequently, this will increase uncertainty upon return. It was possible to identify various signs among our respondents regarding this concern. The majority of our respondents indicated dissatisfaction regarding social status on different levels after repatriating. Lars-Erik is very evident by explaining that it is impossible to maintain the standard of living in Sweden. He mainly refers to the materialistic standard and explains that you live like a “president”. Further, he emphasizes that it is hard to readjust to a lower standard upon return. Lars-Erik also mentions that he was concerned that people at home thought that he returned because he failed abroad. Jens and Johan have a slightly different approach emphasizing rich and exiting socialization abroad. Jens is evident by describing a state of fidgety upon return and refers to that he felt more important and had a richer socialization abroad. Johan and his perception is similar and describes returning home as “bittersweet”, referring to a satisfaction of reunion with family and friends but indicates dissatisfaction and an absence of networking and meeting new people.

5.7 An Analytic Reflection

Using our research model as a point-of-inception to scrutinize the empirical data enabled us to create a more profound understanding of the repatriation adjustment paradigm. This was enabled by taking a qualitative approach towards the topic. However the qualitative approach hampered pattern recognition within different areas but enlightened the individuality regarding repatriation adjustment. Subsequently, conclusive remarks from the cross-respondent analysis varied in various ways, which will be processed and presented in the next chapter.

6. Conclusions

The Following Conclusion chapter presents findings and results through answering our research question. We also present suggestions for future research

6.1 Empirical and Theoretical Contributions

The purpose of this thesis was to study the phenomenon of repatriation adjustment among Swedish expatriates by utilizing a qualitative case study approach. Hence, our intention has been to ultimately increase the knowledge within the field by contributing with new insights that subsequently can be imperative for further future research. The research question formulated in this thesis aims to elucidate the purpose by answering the following:

- *How do Swedish expatriates perceive and manage repatriation adjustment?*

From our conducted case study we have excavated evidence suggesting that repatriation adjustment is a phenomenon that is to a large extent both of irregular and individual character in its results. It is apparent in our study that repatriation is exceedingly individual. It was possible to indicate certain patterns through our qualitative approach. However, since our approach urged for comprehensive answers we also achieved fluctuated results. Further, we applied theories and models that have mainly been researched through a quantitative approach. Through this we generated a deeper insight of the conundrum, which certainly highlight the individuality previously argued by Hyder and Lövblad (2007).

After juxtaposing, in an assessment-oriented fashion, the empirical data against the academia incorporated in our research model we suggest that it fulfills its purpose and thus applicable in a Swedish context. Elaborating on the latter, it was also found that all the factors proposed by our research model are of valid nature when applied in a case regarding repatriation adjustment. The factors: Work, Organization, Individual and Non-work variables managed to absorb information when applying them in a qualitative case environment. All respondents in our case gave answers within all of the variables, regardless of whether their statements concurred or digressed from the theoretical assumptions. Further by using the classifications of before expatriation, before repatriation and actual repatriation we have highlighted the findings in regard to repatriation adjustment, which was our intention. However, some of the proposals implied by the model need further review. For example we were not able to excavate strong evidence for cultural descendance since the majority of our respondents

actually highlighted that they perceive themselves as non-Swedish; this might be the result of a more globalized and inter-connected world?

It was further found that we could discern some patterns in our study. The most important is, however, that our approach really highlights and creates an understanding of each individual. This subsequently elucidates that perception and behavior in repatriation adjustment varies in different areas both professionally and privately. A quantitative investigation can clearly show the pattern but does not give space to understand each person in depth. Thus, it is recommended that repatriation be treated on an individual basis as a complement. Unequivocally this is a time-consuming process but something that we consider necessary in order to create an understanding of each individual's situation and thus increase the chances of retaining the expatriate within the organizational walls. Interestingly in our case was that none of the respondents indicated that they had a sponsor or likewise during their sojourn or upon returning home as Black *et al.* (1992) suggest. We advocate that this could serve as a preventive measure to reduce the distance between expectations and reality, thus closing the loop between expatriation and repatriation. Furthermore, we also propose that companies can conduct studies similar to ours in order to follow up repatriation for each individual and thus create feedback. Further we argue it is anticipated for companies to use sponsorship or a sponsor of some kind in order to increase the likelihood of understanding the individuality of the repatriation adjustment paradigm, as our research clearly depicts.

Conclusively, there is one final salient aspect, which is imperative to remark upon. We argue that there is no, one, accurate answer to how Swedish repatriates perceive and manage repatriation adjustment. Our research evidently enlightens that this question requires to be treated on an individual level, which is where we take our final stance!

6.2 Managerial Implications

Our study elucidates the individuality associated with repatriation adjustment. We argue that the aforementioned individuality is of essence for Human Resource Management departments to acknowledge, as this constitutes a platform where the company can have an active role in the adjustment of each individual. We mentioned earlier the resurrection of the sponsor proposed by Black *et al.* (1992) as a conclusive remark. We still firmly postulate that this can be a possible solution to create an atmosphere, which embraces individuality. This might also have a positive effect on the

retention rates and possibly lower the figures presented Nery-Kjerfve & McLean (2012). Whatever Human Resource divisions decide to establish, we digress from the recommendations of having a homogeneous and standardized repatriation program. As this is not in line with our research findings.

6.3 Future Research

We have studied the phenomenon of repatriation adjustment among Swedish expatriates and have come to the conclusion that it is very individual! An immaculate approach of research regarding repatriation adjustment for future research could be to conduct a longitudinal study. Hence, interviewing respondents before expatriating and after repatriating will aid in painting a much clearer picture of the conundrum and the attained expectations. Further proposals for future research may be in line with attempting to conduct research of quantitative nature. The combination of our qualitative findings and new findings of quantitative nature will blend in symbiosis and manifest a foundation, enabling to draw patterns regarding Swedish repatriates as whole. Conversely, the latest research has highlighted a new problem within repatriation studies. As Nery-Kjerfve & McLean (2012) and Kraimer *et al.* (2012) present, surveys show remarkable high figures regarding the turn-over rates of repatriates; between 20 to 50 percent leave their corporation within one year after their international assignment. Thus, embarking on investigating retention of repatriates might be a lucrative endeavor for future researchers.

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Tommy, Chief Financial Officer and Vice President, telephone interview, 23 April, 2013

Appendix

Interview Guide

Motives

Reasons for accepting International assignment
Expectations compared to reality during expatriation
Expectations compared to reality during repatriation
International assignment positive or negative for career
Developing factors, individual and professional

Cultural identities

Earlier visits to host country
Earlier expatriation and repatriation experiences
Effect on outcomes
Cultural descendant, effect on behavior and perception abroad and upon return

Individual Variables

Age?
Duration abroad
Communication with Sweden, How much, How
Significant problems during sojourn
Best experiences
Experiences and learning
Significant problems during repatriation
Willingness to accept more international assignments in the future

Job variables

Satisfaction with position abroad and home, expectations in comparison with reality
Change in responsibilities/position after international assignment, negative or positive
Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with outcome of responsibilities and position
Matching expectations with reality in total
Preparedness to outcome

Organizational Variables

Awareness of expectations upon return

Preparing actions before expatriation

Preparing actions before repatriation

Described expectations in relation to reality upon return

Non-work Variables

Social Status during sojourn

Acclimatization process in person and potential family during sojourn

Acclimatization process in person and potential family upon return

Help from organization with practical issues as housing, school etc.

Final question

Summarize feelings of coming home?