



**School of Economics and Management**  
**Lund University**

**Shuttling Between Cultures**  
*Expatriation in the Context of Sweden*



# **Shuttling Between Cultures**

## ***Expatriation in the Context of Sweden***

**Master's Thesis in Business Administration,  
Programme for Managing People, Knowledge and Change**

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<b>Five key words:</b>	Expatriation, National Culture, Sweden, Knowledge Workers, Cultural Saliency
<b>Purpose:</b>	The aim of this study is to explain the expatriation process in Sweden from the cultural saliency perspective. The utmost aim of this study is to develop a "Swedified" version of the generally accepted expatriation process. Since expatriation is a journey among cultures, the process as a whole is highly idiosyncratic. This study tries to illuminate the expatriation process in Lund/Sweden from the knowledge workers perspective. The problematic aspects of the process will be highlighted and suggestions will be given as a conclusion.
<b>Methodology:</b>	Main research domain of this study is qualitative. Research design is inspired by inductive ethnography. Empirical material is generated by conducting semi-structured interviews with the participants about their observations, thus the method is labelled as "indirect inductive ethnography." Reflexivity is sought throughout the analysis by the support of hermeneutics.
<b>Theoretical perspectives:</b>	The research based on the processual view of expatriation. Cultural saliency approach is used in order to find out the peculiar aspects of expatriation process in Sweden. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are used for conducting comparison among different national cultures.
<b>Empirical foundation:</b>	Expatriation in Sweden is mainly conducted for knowledge transfer purposes. Companies have structured plans for expatriation. Technical adjustment to work in Sweden is not problematic but on the other hand, human side of socio-cultural and work adjustment is found to be problematic due to the rigid distinction between home-life and family-life and closed loop socialization.
<b>Conclusions:</b>	Expatriation process should be customized according to the cultural saliencies. Swedish national culture should be compared with the expats' national culture and idiosyncratic expatriation process for each expat should be offered. A refined model of expatriation process is provided.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1. 1. Foundations of Expatriation

Business literature, especially the strategic management, views firm as a bundle of resources (Penrose, 1959). The firm should be centred on the management and improvement of those resources (Itami, 1987). Since these resources are highly important and a firm is built around them, there is strong need to define what they are. According to a rather general definition, resources are anything that can be thought of as a strength or weakness of a given firm (Wernerfelt, 1984). Likewise, Barney (1991) defined them as all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc., controlled by a firm that enables the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness. Many authors have provided different categorizations for resources. Penrose (1959) classified them as land, labour, capital and equipment. Hofer and Schendel (1978) identified five types of resources namely; financial, physical, human, organizational and technological. One of the most frequently cited classification is provided by Barney (1991) as physical capital, organizational capital and human capital. According to a more recent classification, there are four types of resources-financial assets, tangible resources, human resources and intangible or information based resources (Løwendahl, 2005). All classifications and definitions are a way of viewing the same phenomenon from different perspectives. Among all, human resources have been given a “must” place. Either as a manager or an employee human is the main building block of all types of organizations.

Having underlined the importance of the human within the organizational context, the environment in which those human resources act is also noteworthy. The contemporary business world requires firms to compete on a global level. The new type of economy is knowledge-based and highly networked. In this kind of environment, human resources play a pivotal role, because all other resources cannot be mobilized effectively and efficiently without them (Tung, 2004). Being a successful global business player depends on firm’s ability to mobilize its resources worldwide. For this reason getting the right people with the right skills, at the right time, at the



right place is crucial (Selmer, 1999) and makes *expatriation* one of the most important issues of today's business world agenda.

Expatriation is not as simple as sending an employee to get the job done for you in some part of the world. First of all, expatriation does not take place in a vacuum. Expatriation takes place within a cultural (national culture) framework. It can be viewed as a journey from one culture to another. What is valid and accepted in one culture may be totally wrong for the other one. For this reason expatriation requires individual adjustments on various levels. On the other hand, this cultural adjustment is not actualized easily. Cultural values are learned at very early ages and tend to stay with us forever. This situation makes the issue of expatriation more complex and difficult to manage. Expatriation is then considered as a "process" that needs to be managed properly. Since every culture is idiosyncratic, there is no universal panacea for this phenomenon. The expatriation should be seen as a process and this process should take the context-the national culture, into account.

## 1. 2. A Pragmatic Definition of Expatriation

Expatriation is not a new phenomenon. The concept of expatriate embraces a wide array from religious missionaries to scientists, who lived in USA during the World War II. Although the primary aim of these journeys was accomplishing the task and turning back, some of them were never able to turn back to their home countries.

Expatriate or shorter, expat, has been defined in many different sources. One may find a poetic and very impressive definition of expat in the lines of famous novel called *Fiesta: The Sun Also Rises* as "You are an expatriate. You have lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés (Hemingway, 1927:100)." As being an expat himself; Hemingway's strong and sentimental sentences create valuable and live insights about the concept. According to a more dictionary-based definition; an expat is a person who is temporarily or permanently residing in a country and culture other than that of the person's upbringing or legal residence. The word comes from the Latin "ex" which means out of and "patria" meaning fatherland or country

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Expatriate>). In the business literature, expats are defined as *individuals who, irrespective of their national origin, are transferred outside their native country to another country specifically for employment purposes* (Edström and Galbraith, 1977). Argumentation in this study is going to be based on the Edström and Galbraith's definition.

### 1. 3. Context of Expatriation-The National Culture

There is a tendency to view expatriation as a journey. However expatriation requires a physical journey between countries, another and maybe a more important journey happens between cultures. National culture is the context of the expatriation process. National culture is defined as the system of values, beliefs, and assumptions distinguishing one group of people from another (Hofstede, 1980). This distinction affects most of the expatriation process, so that expatriation process requires cultural adjustment. In order to understand the aspect of cultural adjustment, a decent knowledge about the national culture of the expatriated country is needed. In this study Hofstede's value theory of culture will be used in order to provide the fundamental characteristics of the each culture which is being studied. As a host country, Swedish culture is going to be the building block of the expatriation process in this study.

### 1. 4. Recent Situation of Expatriation

Expatriation is a world-wide accepted phenomenon. In order to provide a broader picture of expatriation in contemporary business world, an overview of the recent situation supported by the recent survey results (GMAC, 2007) will be presented here. Throughout the thesis, different aspects of expatriation will be discussed and GMAC 2007 results will provide background information.

GMAC 2007 is the 12<sup>th</sup> version of the longitudinal survey report about the global relocation trends. It is published from the year of 1993 by the GMAC Global Relocation Services. The survey is applied on 180 respondents throughout the world and it is expressed that in most cases respondents were senior human resource professionals and/or managers of international relocation programs. 2007 survey reflects the result of the 2006 survey report (GMAC, 2007).

According to GMAC 2007, expatriate population is increased for the 69% of the respondents and 65% of them expecting an increase for the year 2007. Only 20% of the expatriate population is

composed by females. Most of the expatriates (68%) are coming from the ages between 30 and 49. 82% of the expatriates take the foreign assignment with the spouse accompaniment.

In terms of destinations, 58% of the expatriation activity is taken place “to or from” headquarters’ country. Top five destinations for expatriation are found to be the USA (21%), UK (17%), China (16%), Germany (5%) and France (4%), Singapore (4%), Japan (4%). Emerging new top five expatriate locations are China, India, Russia and United States. Expatriate program managers are found China, India, Russia, Brazil and UK as the countries which present the greatest assignment difficulties. On the other side, countries like China, India, Russia, the USA and Japan are found as the countries which present the most assignment challenges by the expatriates. Finally, it is found that China, UK, the USA, Japan and India are found to be the countries with highest rate of expatriate failure (GMAC, 2007).

## 1. 5. The Choice of the Topic

I have individually experienced a quite similar version of expatriate adjustment process twice in my life as a student in Norway and Sweden. Additionally, I also participated in an education project which was aimed to train Turkish immigrants’ basic computer skills in Norway. This participation has given me a chance to familiarize myself with foreigners in foreign environment and the problems they are facing. I realized the importance of national culture in the process of adjustment.

However, the first sparks of the topic has been realized in my exchange studies in Norway, the idea of conducting a research about the expatriate’s adjustment process in Sweden happened to me when I enrolled in Swedish as a foreign language (SFL) course at the Folkuniversitet in Lund where I met many expatriates from different countries working at the international companies located in Lund/Sweden. During the coffee breaks and out-of-class meetings, I witnessed that whenever we start talking with my SFL course class mates, the conversation turned out to be a session of sharing experiences of being a foreigner in Sweden. People were willing to talk, share and try to find out similarities about their adjustment process in Sweden. Looking for a generally accepted pattern of adjustment may be the way of justification of the problems encountered and can be viewed as a coping behavior. Experiencing the similar adjustment process and suffering

from the same adjustment issues can get the people out of the perception that he/she is the only one who has experienced this kind of adjustment process in Sweden, thus providing relief for them. So I thought searching the contemporary expatriation process in Sweden can be a fruitful research both for the expatriates and the companies hosting, as well as sending them. So that the discourse in the SFL course increased my curiosity and finally I decided to conduct my thesis work on the subject of expatriate adjustment in Sweden.

## 1. 6. Methodological Standpoint

As an ethnographically inspired research study, “dataism” has been tried to be avoided. Generally it is assumed that the reality is “out there” and researcher’s job is to go to the field and grasp it. For this reason in many research studies, we are facing with the term “data collection.” Data is, in this perspective, treated as an “apple” or an “orange” that is out there and collectible. Instead of adopting this view, I have concentrated less on the collection and processing of data. The main effort is given to the interpretation and reflection of the empirical material (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). My individual context and my own interactions with the subject being studied created the reflective notion of this study.

According to Patton (1980), the researcher is the instrument. Thus skills and competence of him/her affects the research project as a whole. As a foreigner conducting research on expatriate adjustment in Sweden, I have the merit of cultural relativism. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005: 6); “cultural relativism affirms that one culture has no absolute criteria for judging the activities of another culture as “low” or “noble.” However, every culture can and should apply such judgment to its own activities because its members are actors as well as observers.” I personally possess a neutral vantage point in terms of knowledge about the Swedish culture. Consequently, this situation improves my ability for reflection and interpretation capacity.

## 1. 7. Research Question

Does the expatriation process differ in Sweden according to the peculiar features of Swedish culture and if so how? What are the problematic aspects of the process and what can be done in order to overcome these drawbacks?

## 1. 8. Research Purpose

The aim of this study is to explain the expatriation process in Sweden from the cultural saliency perspective. Since expatriation is a journey among cultures, the process as a whole is highly idiosyncratic. This study tries to illuminate the expatriation process in Lund/Sweden from the knowledge workers perspective. The problematic aspects of the process will be highlighted and suggestions will be given as a conclusion.

## 1. 9. Target Groups

The target groups of this thesis are students, teachers, researchers, human resources specialists, local administrators and expatriates coming to Sweden especially to Lund.

## 2. Methodology and Research Approach

### 2. 1. Personal Frame of Reference

The author's frame of reference has a high influence on this thesis as a whole. One can imagine two extreme options available in terms of using the author's own frame of reference. In one extreme way, the researcher must try to avoid all experiences and pre-understandings of themselves in order to reach 100% objectivity. But in the other way, you, as a researcher, acknowledge yourself and your personal history and let those belongings become the part of your research process. In this thesis work the latter option was chosen. My pre-understandings, experience and knowledge about the subject which is being studied have guided the thesis development process from selection of the subject to the interpretation of the empirical material, thus all the thesis work was conducted in a reflective way. By using reflective notion, I tried to provide opening up opportunities for understanding of the phenomenon being studied and at the same time, tried to reserve space for the reader's critical thinking (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). Consequently, the desire to know the process of expatriate adjustment is sourced from my personal curiosity based on my previous experiences on the issue.

### 2. 2. Research Design

#### 2. 2. 1. Research Approach

Ethnography has been defined as the art and science of describing a group or culture (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000; Patton, 1980). It requires huge amount of data generally collected by onsite observations. It is generally assumed that the researcher in this type of research, submerge in a local culture. The aim is to show how one culture is perceived from another culture's point of view (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). In spite of the fact that this study is not a pure application of ethnography, the general research approach of this study is strongly inspired by the inductive ethnography.

However some scholars agree that the time-period can be shorter in ethnography; it is generally assumed that in order to have the feeling of “have been there” one should spend at least a year within the society being studied. As a matter of fact, pure application of inductive ethnography can be seen as impossible in this case.

On the other side, inductive ethnography welcomes many different kinds of techniques such as observations, studies of artifacts and interviews. Interviews can also be conducted with the key informants. Key informants, in this case, are the expatriates working in Lund/Sweden. These expatriates acted as agents of inductive ethnographical research for the study. Their observations and experiences are merged with my own experiences and observations during the interviews, thus it created a wealthy and in-depth understanding of the expatriate adjustment process in Sweden. Since most of the empirical material is generated by the participants, the approach can be labeled as “indirect inductive ethnography.”

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000), in most ethnographies the hermeneutic element is somewhat prominent. In this study, empirical material is also analyzed by using hermeneutics. Analysis of the empirical material is processed within the two specific hermeneutic circles namely; whole and part circle and understanding and pre-understanding circle (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000).

Hermeneutics has taken its roots from either interpretation of the Protestant analysis of the bible or the humanist study of the ancient classics. The starting point was interpretation of the texts and the main idea was the meaning of a part can only be understood if it is related to the whole. Thus the first hermeneutic circle-the whole and part is created (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000).

In this study, one of the main curiosities was trying to view the Swedish Culture from the foreigners’ perspectives. Foreigners in this study are expatriates working in Sweden. They can be from all over the world and can have infinite types of cultural bearings. When we think about all the national cultures on earth as part of a rather bigger mosaic; just like other national cultures, Swedish Culture can be viewed as a part of it. In order to understand the part, I have focused on understanding the whole and then try to conduct continuous comparison of the part and the

whole throughout the analysis of the empirical material. So the first hermeneutic circle was composed between The Swedish Culture and The National Culture.

One comprehensive study on national cultures based on values was conducted by Geert Hofstede (1980). Hofstede's value theory of culture (1980, 1993) provides a framework that country level comparisons can be based on it. In the first hermeneutic circle; Hofstede's theory was used as a whole whereas The Swedish National Culture composed the part. This circle gave me the opportunity of comparing the Swedish culture with the participants' national culture and hence assisted me to view the Swedish Culture from their perspective.

The hermeneutic cycle between the whole and the part has been criticized that it lacks the link between the researcher and the empirical material. It is assumed that understanding is the basic way of existing. Thus without it, no exploration can be achieved. In this view, the researcher is seen as a member of particular group that is historically and culturally conditioned. For this reason it is natural that the researcher holds a pre-understanding about the issues being studied. The second hermeneutic circle which is called "alethic hermeneutic circle" (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000: 58) has been offered in order to overcome the polarity between the researcher and the text. This circle creates the relationship between pre-understanding and understanding, and thus links the researcher and the text.

In this study, pre-understanding plays a pivotal role. The first curiosity about the adjustment process into a foreign culture was born with my experience of being an Erasmus Link Exchange student in Norway and then being an international master student in Sweden. As it is also mentioned above in the author's frame of reference part, during the exchange study period in Norway I have had a chance to get to know the Turkish immigrants in Norway. During these two study periods, I had the opportunity to view the foreigners and learn their adjustment problems, native people's attitudes toward them (me) and effects of national culture on the adjustment process. So these experiences set my pre-understanding towards the subject and provided the departure point of this study. It is obvious that the ignorance of this pre-understanding results with an unsaturated analysis. Consequently, the alethic hermeneutic circle between my personal



adjustment in Norway and Sweden and expatriates' personal adjustments in Sweden is composed.

## 2. 2. 2. Qualitative Vs. Quantitative

Methodological research design process requires the decision on the use of qualitative or quantitative inquiry. However there is always an opportunity to use both of them, known as triangulation, but this decision is not made solely by the researcher. Researchers are generally responsible for knowing the strengths and the weaknesses of both types and they are in the position of applying the most suitable one.

Quantitative inquiry emphasizes on the facts and causes of behavior. Data is “collected” in terms of numbers and the results are quantified. Data is analyzed with the mathematical processes and the final results are represented in statistical terminologies (Golafshani, 2003).

On the other hand, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the phenomena in a real-world setting. The research process in qualitative inquiry does not require statistical procedures. Rather than generalization of the findings, the aim of this type is to understand the situations (Golafshani, 2003).

In social science, a pure quantitative approach is criticized as the statistics on social phenomena may often contain ambiguities and conceal the social norms since there should be standardizations. But on the other hand, one should not throw the baby out with the bathwater since statistics may well serve as background information for the qualitative research (Alvesson and Skölberg, 2000).

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000), the decision between qualitative and quantitative must be related to the research problem and the research object. If the question is “how much or how many,” quantitative methods are more capable of responding it. On the other hand if the researcher is looking for an answer of “how” question, then the reason to use qualitative methods becomes stronger. In this study, the research objects are the expatriates and the research problem is mainly about their adjustment process in Sweden. Since the aim is reflecting one culture from

other's perspective, naturally, general research approach is strongly inspired by ethnographical inquiry. This inspiration provided the infrastructure of the study and as a result of this situation the dominating research perspective in this study became the qualitative inquiry.

### 2. 2. 3. Research Technique

After finding out the proper research inquiry domain, the next selection to be made is about the research technique. This is also not a free decision that the researcher makes. Generally main research inquiry domain, research objects and research question lead the researcher for finding out the suitable technique. Since the main research base of this study is inspired by inductive ethnography, the selection of the research technique will be mostly effected accordingly. Available techniques within this approach are observations in natural context, studies of artifacts and various kinds of interviews (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2000). Being aware of the time limits of this research, having expatriates as research objects, trying to learn their adjustment process in Sweden and figuring out the individual transformations occurred during that period made interviewing the most appropriate research technique for this study.

Types of interviews vary according to the degree of flexibility given to the interviewee. On the one extreme level, interviews are highly structured that the interviewee acts as just a mere respondent. This type is also called "talking questionnaires." On the other hand, the researcher may structure the interview to some level and let the interviewee to add his/her ideas, feelings, and experiences to the interviewing process. This type is called semi-structured interview. According to Patton (1980) there are three types of interviews. The first type is called informal conversational interview which relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of interaction. Second type in Patton's trilogy which is more or less in line with the semi-structured interview concept is the general interview guide approach. This type involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. The last type is called standardized open-ended interview which is consists of a questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words. Since without theoretical understanding, any design of interview tends to be less beneficial, semi-

structured interviews gain an advantage and are highly used in different kind of qualitative studies. Semi-structured interviews have the ability to provide the needed flexibility for the interviewee, whilst also allowing the researcher to make comparisons among the different participant responses about the same theme (May, 1997). Alvesson (2003: 13) defines qualitative interviews as “relatively loosely structured and open to what the interviewee feels relevant and important to talk about, given the interest of the research project.” This definition is parallel with the general idea behind the semi-structured interviews and in this study the term semi-structured interviews will be used in order to reflect this kind of technique.

In his discussion about the major positions in interviewing, Alvesson (2003) talks about three major views on interviewing namely: neopositivism, romanticism and localism. On the more conservative side, the neopositivist views interview as pipeline for transferring knowledge. According to them, interviews should be guided by the well-established quantitative ideals and that ideal is maximum transparent research process with objectivity and neutrality.

The second view on interviewing is romanticism. The romantic believes establishing a real human interaction by gaining trust, commitment and rapport especially during the interview situation. It is assumed that only then the interviewee lets the researcher experience his/her social reality and explore the inner world of the interviewee. In this view, closeness and interactivity is important and the interviewee should be treated as a “participant” of the whole research process.

As a rebellious social scholar, Alvesson (2003) offers a new view called localism. The localist approaches interviewees with a critical tendency. According to them, people are not honest enough. They are acting in a situated way in order to produce morally adequate accounts. So interview should be used in order to explore the issues and interpret the naturally occurring interactions. Consequently, the interview as a whole becomes the research object of the study.

Research part of this study is technically designed with the romantic view. Having that view, interviewees are called as participants throughout the study. Great importance is given for gaining trust, rapport and creating close relationships with them. The main empirical material generation technique is selected to be semi-structured interviews. Interviews are supported with small talks and chats throughout the various phases of the research process and finally ended

with a follow-up questions sent via e-mail. Semi-structured interview questions are prepared according to the theoretical framework and “probes” are set for navigation. However the interview process is guided by the questions, utmost independence is provided to the participants during the interview sessions for facilitating their idea generation process.

## 2. 2. 4. Interview Process

As an ethnographically inspired research design, the interview process is conducted on a longitudinal base. As many of the participants are my class-mates from the SFL course, during the class-breaks small talks with participants are occurred. These talks were informally happened but provided the very first inputs of the interview guide.

Having completed the theoretical literature review, key points are figured out and questions are phrased accordingly. In order to guide the participants and the whole interview process “probes” have set for some of the questions. Thus the semi-structured interview guide is composed (Appendix-2).

Interview guide is tested with the fake-interview in order to fine-tune the possible misunderstandings. This situation provided me a chance to rehearse the process as a whole and check the sound-recording system.

Participants are communicated via e-mail or phone in order to arrange *rendez vous* for the interview. As 4 out of 5 of the participants are my friends, the interview process was conducted in a relax setting. Participants were welcomed warmly. Culturally, suitable foods and drinks were served in order to create a friendlier environment during the interview session. Only one of the participants was interviewed in a relatively formal setting at a restaurant.

Before each interview, a consent and information form (Appendix-1) was given to the participants and required them to read and if they felt comfortable with the situation, sign in their names. All interviews were conducted in English. Interviews took approximately 45-60 minutes each. After each interview, sound records were transcribed and follow-up questions were sent via e-mail to the participants.

## 2. 2. 5. Interviewees: The Participants

Participants' real names and company names are hidden. Pseudonyms are given to each of the participant. Pseudonyms are specially selected in order to reflect their nationality, since this is one of the key themes of the theoretical framework. Below, a profile of each participant is provided in order of the interview date.

### Participant 1: Guile

He is from the USA and working at one of the global telecommunications company as an engineer. He was expatriated from the USA to Sweden. He has been working in Lund and living in Malmö/Sweden for almost 11 months. The interview was conducted on 21<sup>st</sup> of March 2008.

### Participant 2: Ryu

He is from Japan and working for the one of the biggest global telecommunications company as a software engineer. He was expatriated from Japan to Sweden. His official title is "Software Project Manager." He has been working and living in Lund/Sweden for 9 months. The interview conducted on 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2008.

### Participant 3: Zanda

She is originally from Latvia but moved to the USA. She lived and educated there. She is working at an international pharmaceutical company as a research administrator. She has a bachelor's degree from biology and more than 20 years of experience in that field. She was expatriated from the USA to Sweden. Her official title is "Study Delivery Operations Specialist." She has been living and working in Lund/Sweden for 17 years. The interview was conducted on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2008.

#### Participant 4: Charles

He is from UK and working at the Lund University Hospital as a researcher in the field of vestibular neurophysiology. He was expatriated from UK to Sweden. He has been working and living in Lund/Sweden for 8 months. The interview was conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2008.

#### Participant 5: Babak

He is from Iran and working for an international packaging company as an electrical engineer. He was expatriated from Iran to Sweden. His official title is “Test Coordinator.” He has been working and living in Lund/Sweden for 24 months. The interview was conducted on 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

As it is obviously seen all the participants are conducting some type of R&D work and belong to the group of knowledge workers. They have high level of education and specialist skills. These characteristics of the participants are taken into account during the analysis phase of the study.

### 2. 2. 6. Critical View of the Research Process

Claiming as ethnographically oriented research, this design lacks the longitudinal investigation of each participant. In order to reflect the whole expatriation period, it is normally expected that the participants are interviewed on each stage of their expatriation period.

Interviews and all the other empirical material generation techniques are conducted in English. However English is the native language for 3 out of 5 participants, it is not the native language of the researcher. This situation may cause “lost in translation effect” on the study.

Except one participant, all of the participants are known from the SFL course. One participant declared that she has been to SFL course for 3 years in Stockholm. Language is not a mere vehicle that we use in order to communicate. Learning a foreign language enrich ourselves by familiarizing with the culture of that language. Moreover, willingness to learn the language of the expatriated country can be predicted as a sign of integrationist attitude. Since all the participants have willingness to learn Swedish, it is possible to assume that their adjustment period may be smoother than the others.

As it is stated above in the participants' profiles, all the expatriates participated in this study are coming from the category of knowledge workers. Knowledge workers are assumed to be different than traditional blue-collar or white-collar workers. They are highly educated and talented in their jobs. All the assets of the firm are loaded in their minds. It is possible to criticize that the adjustment for them is just plugging-in their laptops from one socket to another in company network.

Culture is fragmented, it has a multi-layer structure. From this perspective, this study can be criticized that claiming Swedish national culture as the context, but on the other hand only resembling the adjustment in only one of the regions (Skåne) of Sweden which is said to be very peculiar among all other regions.

# 3. Literature Review

In this part of the literature review, different aspects of expatriation will be discussed. Discussion will start with identifying the reasons for firms to use expatriation. Then individual reasons for being expat will be highlighted. After pointing the logic underlying the expatriation both for firms and individuals, in the second part of the literature review; expatriation will be reviewed from a processual perspective. Process-based view of expatriation which starts from expatriate selection to repatriation will be highlighted. The section will end with discussing three important issues about expatriation namely; family adjustment, expatriate failure and female expatriates. The literature review will be finalized with identifying the context of expatriation which is national culture.

## 3. 1. Reasons of Expatriation: Dual Perspective

### 3. 1. 1. Reasons for Firms to Use Expats

The increasing number of expatriates used by the firms and their impact on world business made the field interesting for many researchers. Historical roots of expatriation can be linked to two fundamental management concepts. The first one is the Likert's (1961) concept of "linking pin", as expats have an ability to increase the knowledge of the organizational network, develop multiple contacts within it and increase the likelihood that these contacts will be used in collecting information to support discretion. The other historical concept that one can link expatriation is the creation of integrators (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967).

Before reviewing the reasons to use expats from a historical perspective, recent research results highlighted that filling skills gap, building management expertise, transferring technology, launching new endeavors, transferring corporate culture and developing business relationships are the main objectives for appointing employees to international assignments (GMAC, 2007).

Management literature witnessed an amazing development about expatriation concept. However expatriation is not a new phenomena, according to study conducted by Franko in 1973,



international personnel management which can be seen as an umbrella field for expatriation management, has been cited as a Pandora's Box.

Only four years later, Edström and Galbraith (1977) came up with their highly cited article called "Transfer of Managers as a Coordination and Control Strategy in Multinational Organizations" for identifying the reasons of using expats. However their conclusion can be summed up as transferring professional know-how and operating as a control and information gathering function (Sappinen, 1993), their trilogy of reasons for international transfers and recent developments build upon that trilogy, which directed our attention for deeper understanding of their study.

According to Edström and Galbraith (1977), firms use expatriates or they call it "transfers" for three reasons. First of all expatriation can be done if there is an empty slot and there are no qualified locals available or training them is not easy to fill that position. Second motive to use expatriation is to develop managers for international responsibilities. Third reason is organizational development that is to use expatriation as a mean of modifying and sustaining firm's structure and decision making processes globally.

More recent studies generally focused on the international knowledge transfer aspect of expatriation (Hocking *et al.* 2004). According to them, whatever the main purpose of the international assignment is, knowledge transfer is the taken for granted component of expatriation. These researchers have reviewed Edström and Galbraith (1977) trilogy from a knowledge transfer perspective and "re-defined" three categories of international principal assignment purposes. In the following paragraphs those re-defined categories and their contributing role objectives, in terms of expatriation process, will be identified.

<i>Original Purpose Categories</i>	<b>Knowledge Transfer Perspective</b>	<i>Re-Defined Purpose Categories</i>	<i>Contributing Role Objectives</i>
Fill Positions		Business Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Managerial know-how application</li> <li>• Professional know-how application</li> <li>• Professional know-how training</li> <li>• Technology innovation transfer</li> <li>• Corporate image promotion/external relations</li> </ul>
Develop Organizations		Organization Applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination/networking</li> <li>• Culture transfer/socialization</li> <li>• Policy transfer/control</li> <li>• Best practice systems transfer</li> </ul>
Develop Managers		Expatriate Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International business/professional experience</li> <li>• Global company perspective</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Original and Re-Defined Expatriation Purposes (Edström and Galbraith, 1977, Hocking *et al*, 2004).

The first category within the Edström and Galbraith (1977) was filling a position. This category was re-defined to convey two key elements of the expatriate knowledge transfer process, namely a business role focus and the role of the expatriate as a knowledge sender rather than receiver. The first role objective in this category is managerial know-how application, which refers to the transfer and application of managerial “know-how,” so they are offering a distinction between professional, technical know-how, and managerial know-how. On the other hand, professional know-how application refers to the expatriate’s specialized technical know-how. In this case expatriate is typically introduced to a new organizational unit to provide specialized expertise. The professional know-how training role objective not only includes formal instruction but also teaching strategically valuable tacit knowledge by using imitative trial-and-error learning under the guidance of an experienced mentor. This training can be provided by parent country nationals to either host or home-based third-party nationals. The technology innovation role objective is a specialized form of professional know-how application associated with the relocation of newly-developed technology. It may require a transfer of specific person, “a

champion” who has done it before and eager to adapt that know-how to a new situation (Evans, 1992:94). The last business application role objective is broadly defined as corporate image promotion/external relations. It is used for creating belongingness and building reputation. A representational function of the manager or the executive is used for promoting these activities.

The second principal assignment category is organization application category, which is a re-defined version of develop organization of Edström and Galbraith’ trilogy (1977). The purpose of re-definition is to underline the expat’s direct role on organizational maintenance and growth. The first role objective within this category is coordination/networking. Having sent on international assignments, expats act as a linking pin between different networks throughout the organization. This situation also facilitates intra-firm knowledge transfer. The second role objective is culture transfer/socialization. Every firm has unique culture and this creates a sustainable competitive advantage. Culture acts as “glue” that binds organization together. In international firm context, these binds are created through socialization of the expatriates with the local unit members. Expatriates in this role are viewed as the ambassadors of the firm’s global culture. The third role objective exists where there is a strong need for management influence and is called policy transfer/control. Staff transfers are still considered as a strategic response to the perplexing question of control (Welch *et al.* 1994:473). The last role objective in this category is best practice system transfer that is a strategic practice that enhances global organizational capability. Over time a firm tries to develop best ways for achieving global economies-of-scale or so called best practices. The transfer of those best practices occurs through the use of expats who facilitate organizational learning of those practices.

The last principal purpose category that is re-defined is “develop managers.” This category is named as expatriate learning which refers to the knowledge acquisition of the expatriate as an individual. The primary role within this category is international business/professional experience and the second one, which is parallel to primary, is global company perspective. Individuals who turn back to their former location or more literally repatriated; reported that they gained knowledge-based competency developments like having a global company perspective, gaining cross-cultural communications skills and the conceptualization of the business trends (Oddou and Mendenhall, 1991). The third and the last role objective is global company

perspective. According to Berthoin Antal (2000) expatriate learning is associated with the understanding of the International organization, the host country environment and communication contacts and relationships. They highlighted the importance of “know-who” learning, representing relational knowledge, associated with the development of communication networks involving professional colleagues. This sort of knowledge is the answer to: “Who knows what? Who can help with that problem? Or who can exploit new information?” (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990:133). So international transfer increases expat’s knowledge of the networks and provides opportunities to develop contacts within it (Galbraith and Edström, 1976).

### 3. 1. 2. Reasons to Become Expat

Global mobility is a reality and a necessity in today’s international business environment (Punnet, 1997). This environment requires employees to have a global mindset. This qualification becomes more relevant as the firm rises up on the scale of internationalization. For the recruitment process, this competency is often gauged by whether the candidate in question has successfully completed an international assignment or not (Tung, 2004). Hence, getting and successfully completing an international assignment can be a milestone in employees’ career. In the literature, successful players of this kind of career path have been labeled as cosmopolitans (Kanter, 1995). Cosmopolitans, who have reached the leadership positions in their organization, are the ones who discovered global commonalities, spread universal ideas and have adjusted to the requirements of diverse locations (Selmer, 1999). It is obvious that the need for cosmopolitans varies directly with the pace of globalization.

Expatriation can also be viewed from a career management perspective. According to Yan *et al.* (2002), career development is the most important concern of the individual in formulating his or her psychological contract with the multi-national company (MNC). Selmer puts it in a more strong sentences stating that managers only accept an assignment if they see the international assignment as a part of their long-term career path with expectation of getting a higher position upon turning back to home country. Findings of the GMAC (2007), also supports this view, as the top three career impact of international assignment has been found to be faster promotions, obtaining new positions easier in the firm and changing employers more often.

From an individual's point of view, being an expat includes many challenges, but those challenges can also be the source of fruitful outcomes. Expatriation is a way of getting rid of inertia by breaking the chain of monotonous daily work life. Social learning theory suggests that individuals can learn vicariously, and future behaviors are guided by vicarious learning (Bandura, 1977). Like all new experiences, expatriation creates amazing learning opportunities. Learning aspect of expatriation has been stated in the previous section and will not be re-stated here. Consequently, learning can be seen as the mutual reason and benefit of expatriation for both firms and employees.

Expatriation, when viewed from a more holistic perspective, can be seen as one's identity revision process (Sanchez *et al.* 2000). Expatriates can be regarded as "boundary-crossing individuals" who make both geographical and organizational moves and inward moves that can be called "reflexive identity construction" or a process of identity development, which unfolds the interaction between the person and his/her social context (Lindgren and Wahlin, 2001). International assignments require more critical incidents, discontinuities and occasions for reflection rather than at home. Thus, the expatriation process can be also viewed as a self-examination and self-renewal process (Kohonen, 2005). Consequently, expatriation prepares individuals for their further global careers by providing opportunities for learning and identity construction by self-reflexivity.

### 3. 2. Expatriation Process

Expatriation can be viewed just as sending an employee to work outside of the country of residence. This simplistic view overlooks the many important aspects of the phenomenon. Expatriation requires very detailed application of different processes. When expatriation processes are not managed properly, results can be disastrous both for the firm and the expat. In this part of the theoretical framework, episodic stages that compose the expatriation process will be described.

### 3. 2. 1. Expatriate Selection

Many authors agree on the high failure rate of international assignments (Mendenhall *et al.*, 1987; Black *et al.*, 1991a). This situation led researchers to carefully review all the stages of expatriation process. As a starting point of an employee's and firm's expatriation journey, selection process has crucial effect on further stages. Selection requires finding the right people. But who is that "right" or what does right mean in expatriation framework is the main question to be answered.

Whilst the importance of selection is obvious, the research observed many firms selection process indicates that in most firms, selection is based on an irrational process. It is naturally expected that the human resources department has a strong control over that process, but it is not the reality (Mendenhall and Macomber, 1997). Shilling (1993: 58) notes that: "Too often expatriates are selected in a knee-jerk reaction for the need to fill a new or unexpected vacancy overseas. Although the selection process should be carried out by a well-informed, inter-cultural trainer or human resources (HR) professional, it is often top management that decides who to send. Management tends to choose the most technically competent candidates, even though the qualities that made candidates a success domestically will not necessarily make them a success internationally." A quote of one HR executive about the issue is summarizing the haphazard nature of the selection process: "My job is to find people in a hurry...it is a highly crisis-oriented and unsophisticated system." (Swaak, 1995: 22). Harris (1993:9) talks about the discrepancy between the theory and the practice: "In determining skills needed to be successful abroad, management writers emphasize on "soft skills" such as interpersonal and cross cultural abilities, while research on actual firm practices indicates a clear reliance on technical competence and knowledge of firm systems".

According to an Australian research project, the most prevalent form of selection is ad hoc recommendation by the line managers or specialist personnel. "Normally this selection is based on technical competence and depends on the belief that the employee who works well here will also keep on working well there" (Still and Smith, 1997:3). Since the failure rate is high on expatriation, technical competence is not enough per se. Anderson also suggests that selection

process should also take interpersonal skills, partner and children status along with the technical competence into account (Anderson, 2005). In terms of interpersonal skills those who were outgoing, relaxed and prepared to work within the local management style were perceived to adapt more successfully (Hailey, 1996:265).

Expatriate selection process should also consider the person's partner and children status. An expatriate should be viewed as a "unit" consisting of employee him/herself, partner and the children if any. According to Mendenhall *et al.* (1987), a spouse and other family members adjustment is not always considered in selection process. One reason that makes firms avoid this integration can be linked to the legal constraints (Anderson, 2005). Nevertheless, interviews with the spouse and older children are found to be beneficial in assessing the adaptability of the family members and the expat as a unit (Shilling, 1993).

According to a research conducted by Black and Gregersen (1999): Although firms differ in their assessment and/or selection processes, they seek for five similar characteristics in their expats.

*a. A Drive to Communicate*

Expats should never give up trying communicating with the locals. People who end up being successful are the ones both enthusiastic and extroverted in conversations.

*b. Broad-Based Sociability*

The general tendency of many expat during the assignment is to stick with a small circle of fellow expats. But successful global expatriation requires social ties to the local residents. This creates opportunity for learning insights about the market and the culture, thus facilitates adjustment process.

*c. Cultural-Flexibility*

Human nature looks for similarities. Many expats search for the things what they used to at the home country. But the expats who are open to local culture and willing to experience different customs are the ones who add the most value to their firms during the assignment.

#### *d. Cosmopolitan Orientation*

These expats have the ability to understand the different cultural norms and values attached to them. The right expat should respect diverse viewpoints.

#### *e. A Collaborative Negotiation Style*

Potential for conflict in international negotiation is much higher than domestic one. Different cultures can hold radically different expectations about the way of conducting negotiations. Thus a collaborative style becomes absolutely critical abroad.

### 3. 2. 2. Expatriate Assignment Acceptance

Similar to the selection process, an expatriate's own decision making process, depends heavily on the technical skills. Typically, the candidate selected has technical competence and experience related to the assignment. Therefore, he or she cannot envision being incapable of performing technically the same job abroad. When an offer is made for expatriation, candidates are prone to assess it from their objective reality, but unfortunately, the subjective reality, which includes the person-environment fit, is generally overlooked. Individuals are unable to anticipate stressors which they have not experienced. We can also add that most decisions are made in a hurry so candidates do not have enough time for assessing the situation rationally. Thus, cross-cultural demands of the international assignments are overlooked by the expatriates (Sanchez *et al*, 2000).

Expatriates are generally seduced by the career advancement opportunities of the international assignments. Furthermore, candidates also use these motives to persuade other family members. Since the assignment duration can be lengthy, the promises given before will not be valid or the people who have given those promises would have changed their career track or firm upon turning back home, so the promises may not be kept all the time. The candidates' dream of "red-carpet" return may become a good old fantasy. This situation also creates many new stressors (Sanchez *et al*, 2000).



Both the firm and the employee should be objective. The expectations should be clarified beforehand. It is better to see assignment as an additional growth opportunity for the long career journey (Sanchez *et al*, 2000).

### 3. 2. 3. Pre- and Post-Arrival Training

Intercultural training can partly remedy cross-cultural insensitivity, but intercultural competence involves more than learning some paper- or web-based country statistics and cultural gimmicks in a relatively short period of time before departure. This can only increase awareness, but awareness does not necessarily bring competence in the host culture (Sanchez *et al*, 2000).

Training in this context can be viewed as preparations aiming at facilitating the individual's adjustment to the new and foreign environment (Ronen, 1986). Training efforts may include different kinds of cross-cultural training, language training, and provision of general information about the country, a pre-visit to the country in question and counseling about the specific firm- or job-related matters (Björkman, 1990).

According to recent survey results, 80% of the firms are providing cross-cultural training. Furthermore, 34% of them provide for all and 46% of them provide for some of the international assignments. At firms where cross-cultural training is offered, 64% made it available for certain destinations, 11% based on employee request, 3% based on the grade of the employee, and 22% using other criteria (GMAC, 2007).

Since the family has a crucial importance on the overall adjustment process of the expat, candidates may spend some time together with the other families who have returned from the same location. At firms where cross-cultural training was offered, 58% provided training for the entire family, 34% for expatriate and spouse, and 5% for employees only. It was also found that only 21% of the firms offer those training as mandatory, which can be linked to legal constraints (GMAC, 2007).

Although there are many kinds of cross-cultural training offered by the firms, two emerging types should be highlighted. First of all, with the rise of the Internet, intranet and the available

Information Technology, web-based and CD-based education became very popular for the firms. More than half of the participants of GMAC 2007 (56%) indicated that CD and Web-based alternatives are added to support in-person programs, 25% indicated that it was used as a standalone alternative and 19% were offered only CD and Web based preparation. Almost half of the participants (49%) found web-based training convenient, 23% of them found it less expensive, 12% agreed on that web-based cross-cultural training provides efficient use of time (GMAC, 2007). The second type of training format which will be highlighted here is experiential training. This format provides an opportunity to react to cultural stressors and receive feedback about the adequacy of one's coping responses. One of these formats is cultural assimilator, which employs descriptions of critical incidents involving stressful situations together with possible ways of coping with them. Facilitator and the participant discuss the consequences of their individual response. It was found that foreigners trained by Greek assimilator felt significantly better adjusted to Greece than untrained individuals (Sanchez *et al.* 2000).

Many firms are becoming aware of the need to provide continued hands-on training rather than just pre-departure awareness training. Pre-departure expectations of the expatriates may be unrealistic. On the other hand, post-arrival training gives expatriates a chance evaluate the situation in a more realistic way (Sanchez *et al.* 2000). During the post-arrival training phase of the expatriation, it is suggested that employers of the local unit should get cultural-diversity training beforehand. Local unit employees may learn the cultural characteristics of the coming expat. Eventually this will break concrete stereotyping and avoid misunderstandings based on false perceptions (Aycan, 1997).

Expatriate training is mostly reviewed from the employees' side. Since in general cross-cultural training is found to have 77% greater or higher value for the expatriate's success (GMAC, 2007), from the employer's perspective it is an important opportunity to provide the social support that the expatriate may need during the adjustment process (Sanchez *et al.* 2000).

### 3. 2. 4. Expatriate Adjustment

The study of expatriate adjustment has developed as a reaction to the "universalist" view of some writers and some employing organizations (Suutari and Brewster, 1998). The assumption was

that the good employee in one country will be a good employee in all countries. But the research findings about the expatriate failure have showed that this is not the real situation, so the researchers focused on expatriate adjustment process.

Adjustment has been defined (Aycan, 1997:436) as a “feeling of acceptance and satisfaction (Brislin, 1981), acquisition of culturally acceptable skills and behaviors (Bochner *et al.* 1981), the nature and the extent of interaction with the host nationals (Sewell and Davidsen, 1961) or lack of mental health problems such as stress or depression (Berry and Kim, 1988).” According to Berry (1992:73), “adjustment is a state whereby changes occur in the individual in a direction of increased fit and reduced conflict between the environmental demands and the individual attitudinal and behavioral inclinations.” Successful adjustment can be characterized as a balanced psychological state which results in effective functioning (Torbiorn, 1982).

According to the definitions above, adjustment is a multidimensional concept. This multidimensionality of the adjustment has been discussed in both acculturation literature and expatriation literature. In the expatriation literature three dimensions have been identified, being: adjustment to work, adjustment to interacting with host nationals and adjustment to the general environment (Black and Stephens, 1989). In the acculturation literature, three dimensions have again been proposed, this time being: psychological adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment and work adjustment (Aycan, 1997).

Work adjustment includes effectiveness in one’s required tasks and expression of positive attitudes towards the new work role. Socio-cultural adjustment refers one’s process of becoming fully effective in the society to handle problems in non-work situations. Finally, psychological adjustment is assessed as maintaining good mental health or psychological well-being (Aycan, 1997).

Two frameworks are generic building blocks of expatriate adjustment literature. One of them is Berry’s Model of Acculturation Attitudes and the other is U-Curve Approach. In order to build the infrastructure for the further discussion about expatriate adjustment, these two studies will be described here.

Berry's Model may be seen as an example of classical four-fielder approaches. However these kinds of approaches have been criticized as they are unable to reflect the reality of acculturation, reasoning that one cannot define culture or acculturation properly, but can delimit it in four sections.

	Is it considered to be of value to maintain own cultural identity and characteristics?		
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationship with members of the host society?		<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>
	<b>YES</b>	Integration	Assimilation
	<b>NO</b>	Separation	Marginalization

Figure 2: Berry's Model of Acculturation Attitudes (1980)

The model of acculturation attitudes (Figure 2) are composed of two dimensions. The first dimension is whether or not an individual values maintaining his/her cultural characteristics. The second dimension is whether or not maintaining relationships with the host society is considered to be of value. The answers to these dimensions can be "yes" or "no," thus the four-fielder is composed. According to the model if the response to the first dimension is "no" and to the second one is "yes," "assimilation" occurs. In this option, acculturating individual does not wish to maintain his/her cultural characteristics but seeks relations with the groups in the larger society. On the other side, separation occurs when there is a strong connection with one's own culture and identity and there is low level of intention to interact with groups in the larger society. Integration is the option when there is an interest in interacting with others, while conserving the cultural identity. Last section is marginalization. In that case, the individual neither intends to interact with the society nor maintains his/her cultural values. Among the four acculturation attitudes, integration was found to predict good mental health and low stress, whereas marginalization predicts poor mental health and high stress (Aycan, 1997).

According to Berry's model integrationist attitude in both work and social life will yield the best adjustments outcomes for two reasons. First, upon arrival everything will be different for the expatriate. In order to function efficiently, it may be necessary to adopt the norms and values of the new culture. Willingness to interact with the host nationals becomes very important at this point. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) posits that interaction with others is an important source of information for finding the appropriate behavior. This will eventually increase the individual's efficiency in daily contact with the others. Second, interacting with the new society and trying to learn their customs and way of doing things, the expat proves to the locals that he/she gives importance and appreciates the new culture. This increase the host country nationals (HCNs) acceptance and cooperation towards the expat.

Some expats limit their interaction by living in "expatriate ghettos," this situation will create a barrier for understanding host nationals and also increase the salience of being foreigner.

According to Aycan (1997), better adjustment is accomplished if one prefers integration over separation, assimilation and marginalization in his/her interactions within the society.

The second generic framework in cross-cultural adjustment is U-curve. A well-known version of this framework is offered by Oberg (1960), in his discussion of culture shock. According to him, people abroad pass through a four stages beginning with honeymoon stage, and after period of crisis and recovery, end with a time of adjustment when the expatriate starts to function properly.

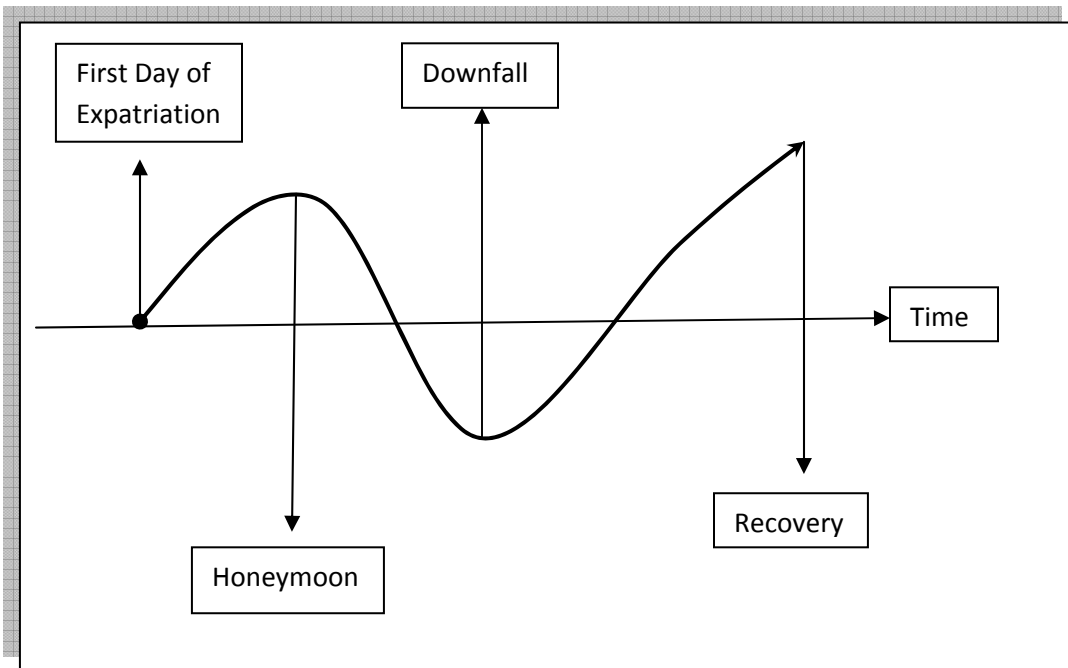


Figure 3: U-curve and it is named as “culture shock cycle” by Adler (1984).

According to Sappinen (1993:4), indicators of culture shock are as follows;

- *Feelings of anxiety, confusion, strain, embarrassment, disappointment, frustration, impatience and anger.*
- *Loss of cultural control and a loss of sense of mastery in situation.*
- *Physiological responses such as sleeplessness, stomach-ache, headaches, and trembling hands.*
- *Fatigue, tension, excessive concern about hygiene, hostility, an obsession about being cheated, withdrawal into work, family, or the expatriate community or in extreme cases, excessive use of drugs and alcohol.*
- *Feeling of loss and deprivation.*
- *Feeling of being rejected by members of the new culture.*
- *Confusion towards own role, values and identity.*
- *Feelings of helplessness and inability to cope with the new environment.*

Sanchez *et al.* (2000) provided a mixture of the given two generic frameworks in a narrative style. They viewed expatriate adjustment as a four-stage phenomenon.

The first stage is named as “arrival stage.” The arrival in an unfamiliar environment may soon bring frustration. Since the expat’s sense of control is affected dramatically, frustration may occur because of the feeling of inadequacy. Membership in a particular culture may induce stress but in that period, the expat feels different from others. Expatriates who reject the host culture are destined to experience continuous frustration and negative feelings. In the arrival stage, the two identifications compete for the same space. Whereas identification with one’s own culture dominates the early stages of adjustment, later on expatriate should balance both host and own cultural identifications for a healthy adjustment. Understanding that identification with both cultures is possible and it is the safest way to prevent acculturative stress.

The second stage is called “novice stage.” As can be guessed from the name, at the beginning of the international assignments, expats are prone to make mistakes by ignoring culturally critical aspects. In that case expats who feel stressed are likely to search for their own repertoire of coping responses for adequate ways to confront situations. Those responses have been shaped throughout the expat’s personal and cultural experiences. The problem is that such responses are no longer valid in a different culture which is characterized by different norms and values. Expatriates need to become aware of the consequences of their old repertoire of coping responses in the host culture. Ambiguity will be overwhelming at first. Expats should pay attention to the functional value of the coping mechanisms employed by the locals who make useful role models. Subtle functions of these responses should also be carefully viewed and interpreted.

The first to the last stage is “transitional stage.” Expat’s continued frustration may lead to identity crisis when they choose to reject their own culture by fully embracing the host culture or vice versa. Expat’s ability to form and maintain attachments with the home country plays a significant role in expat’s health in general. Going too much native can be a source of questions about the expat’s allegiance. Physical distance and cultural differences may make it difficult for the communication between the expat and the parent country nationals. Trips to home country may keep negative feelings getting too far.

The last stage is “mastery.” Successful expatriates should have already developed the knowledge of cultural norms that allow them to understand their environment more fully. Over time expats have also added new coping responses to their own repertoire. The development stages identified

here do not always follow a linear sequence, as some parts of culture may always remain subtle. This ambiguity should not bother expats on this level, since they have already learnt to cope with feelings of divided loyalty. The healthiest expats are those who possess a strong sense of coherence and control. These individuals have learned to live with and enjoy membership in more than one culture which will enhance their global mindset.

In the next part, a theoretical model of expatriate adjustment will be presented. As an ending point for general discussion about the expatriate adjustment, top ten practical suggestions given by expats to the candidates are noteworthy (Suutari and Brewster, 1998:97).

1. *Try to integrate yourself in the local community as soon as possible*
2. *Ensure that your family is motivated and prepared for the time of the assignment*
3. *Obtain knowledge of the country and its culture and history before you go*
4. *Be positive and open-minded, not critical or suspicious*
5. *Learn the local language if possible beforehand*
6. *Clarify details of your job description so that you know what is expected of you*
7. *Clarify the details of your contract (issues like car and telephone benefit, and education costs of children)*
8. *Visit the place beforehand*
9. *Discuss with expatriates who have worked in country*
10. *Make sure you have good professional skills for your new job*

### 3. 2. 5. Facilitators of Expatriate Adjustment

#### 3. 2. 5. 1. *Technical and Managerial Competence*

Technical and managerial competence is found to be the foster adjustment for three reasons. First, expertise reduces stress-loaded uncertainties of the new job role. Second, confidence in one's job increases self-confidence. Finally, expatriates are likely to gain trust and cooperation of the co-workers in local unit because of his/her competence in job, thus the trust towards expat increases (Aycan, 1997).



### *3. 2. 5. 2. Cross-Cultural Experience*

Previous cross-cultural experience has been found to have connections with the successful adjustment (Aycan, 1997). According to social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), expatriates acquire skills to cope with uncertainties through observation, modeling and reinforcement during the cross-cultural experience, for which these same mechanisms can be used in future assignments. Previous experiences also help in the formulation of realistic expectations. The time gap between the previous assignment and the present assignment is found to be important, as past experiences are not too effective (Black *et al*, 1992).

### *3. 2. 5. 3. Relational Skills and Personality Traits*

Cultural flexibility and conflict resolution skills are important relational skills associated with coping with the stress of adjustment (Aycan, 1997). Cultural flexibility refers to the ability to orient oneself to a new cultural setting. One aspect of cultural flexibility includes the ability to substitute for the activities enjoyed in the home country those in the new culture (Black, 1990). Another aspect of cultural flexibility includes a lack of prejudice and willingness to change one's own behavioral patterns whenever needed; this will reduce stress and also facilitates adjustment (Torbiorn, 1982).

Conflict-resolution skills enable one to cope with stress interpersonal conflicts. They include understanding others, initiating a collaborative approach and increasing mutual respect.

Among various personality traits, extraversion, agreeableness and openness to new experiences are found to be the most important predictors of cross-cultural adjustment.

### *3. 2. 5. 4. Organizational Support*

Expatriation is stressful for many reasons. Everything which is in harmony at home has to be changed in a relatively short duration. This change requires arrangements like housing, schooling, medical insurance, legal requirements, and spousal employment. Organizational assistance reduces the time expat spend on these issues and facilitates adjustments to the work setting. The more support and assistance provided, the less stress and uncertainties experienced by the expatriate manager. Organizational support may also be perceived as a signal of caring, and thus increases the job commitment (Aycan, 1997).

### *3. 2. 5. 5. Cultural-Diversity Training in the Local Unit*

The expatriation process should be conducted in collaboration with the local unit. The local unit should also be aware of the cultural characteristics of the incoming expat. Cultural-diversity training received by the local work-force is expected to enhance expatriate adjustment in several ways. First, it may break novice stereotyping. Second, a better understanding of an expat's cultural background and personal characteristics is likely to facilitate interpersonal attraction and increase the likelihood of social support and cooperation for the expat from the local unit (Aycan, 1997).

### *3. 2. 5. 6. Planning for Succession in the Local Unit*

Proper succession ensures continuity and the accumulation of experience in the foreign operations. "During the pre-arrival period, the local unit should make arrangements to facilitate the information exchange between the previous expat and his/her successor (Selmer and Luk, 1995:91)." Proper succession planning prepares the local unit to provide job-related assistance to the expatriate. Having that support, expat's level of ambiguity will decrease and the adjustment process will be facilitated (Aycan, 1997).

### *3. 2. 5. 7. Continuous Communication and Assistance*

"Out of sight, out of mind" phenomenon is highly cited in expatriation literature. Many firms believe that their job is completed when the expat departs from the home country. However support provided during the assignment by the parent firm, not only accelerate the adjustment but also strengthen the commitment to the parent firm. Continuous communication is also very important for repatriation stage of the expatriation process. This may reduce the anxiety about the position upon repatriation. Established "parenting" or "mentoring" mechanisms is a way of showing firm support to expatriates and potential candidates and facilitates the adjustment process (Aycan, 1997).

### *3. 2. 5. 8. Organizational Socialization in the Local Unit*

New comers may be treated as others. Firms should find ways to socialize expats with local workers. Organizational socialization is defined as the fashion in which an individual is taught and learns what behaviors and perspectives are customary and desirable within the work setting as what others are not (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979: 211). According to social learning theory,

socialization accelerates the cultural understanding, thus facilitates adjustment. Expatriates may socialize with other expats, senior mentors or co-workers. Socialization will generate mutual trust, foster commitment and reduce stress, thus facilitating expatriate adjustment (Aycan, 1997).

### 3. 2. 6. Repatriation

Like every journey, the expatriation process also has an end. However there is chance of “going native” and staying at the host country permanently, for the sake of the processual view of expatriation, our discussion has to end with repatriation.

Not all expatriation ends with the red-carpet repatriation ceremony. Björkman (1990:7) exemplified some of the major readjustment problems face by expatriates as “no job on return, loss of career and promotional opportunities, loss of authority and professional freedom in decision making compared to the time at a foreign subsidiary, a feeling that the individual cannot use the new knowledge that he/she acquired abroad, loss of social status, loss of standard of living and culture shock in reverse.”

What can firms do in order to smooth this phase of the expatriation process? Re-entry training is said to be as important as pre-departure training. Participating in pre-repatriation briefings and interviews with the parent firm can inform expat of available opportunities (Sanchez *et al*, 2000). 61% of the firms participated GMAC 2007, declared that they have repatriation/re-entry discussions with the expatriates and among those which provides repatriation/re-entry discussions; 52% of them conduct them before relocation, 43% conduct more than 6 months before return and 57% of them are conducting under 6 months before the return of the expat. For the identification of new jobs, 64% of the participant firms were helping repatriating employees by identifying new jobs within the firm (GMAC, 2007).

Failure during the assignment is not a surprise and highly cited within the literature. An interesting finding is more than half of the expatriates (%54 and average turnover rate is 13%) who left the firm, leaves the firm within first two years of return. This situation spots attention to the poor repatriation management and further to the long-term career planning issues.

## 3. 3. Critical Issues Related to Expatriation

### 3. 3. 1. Family Adjustment

One of the most critical issues of expatriate adjustment is family adjustment. According to the recent results of GMAC (2007), the most common reasons cited by the candidates for turning down the assignments are family concerns (87%), followed by the spouse's career (66%). The same research also indicated that child's education (15%), family adjustment (13%) and partner resistance (13%) were the most critical family related issues.

But why family adjustment is so important and complex in the context of expatriation? The answer can be found in the "spillover theory." Spillover theory suggests that a working spouse's experiences will carry over into the home; likewise, home experiences can influence a person's work life (Aldous, 1969; Caligiuri *et al.* 1998). It states that the relationship between affective responses in one's work and family life is reciprocal. In the context of expatriation, the effects of spillover from home to work can enhance or negatively influence an expatriate's performance because the originating emotions can be positive or negative (Barnett *et al.* 1992). Since the international assignment involves all the family, the lines between home and family will be blurred (Harvey, 1985).

Firms which are aware of the importance of the family adjustment, provide spouse/partner assistance to the expatriates. The type of assistance varies but language training (69%), sponsor work permit (36%), education/training assistance (30%), employee assistance program (22%), networks and volunteering (19%), job-finding fees and search (17%), club membership (16%), reimburse career enhancement (15%), assist career planning (15%), support beyond first 13 months (11%) and pay for the spouse income (6%) are mostly used ones. Although, the findings of the academic research results show the importance of the family adjustment on expatriate's overall adjustment. It is interesting to note that 22% of the participants indicated that they do not provide any assistance (GMAC, 2007).

### 3. 3. 2. Expatriate Failure

Many scholars agreed upon the reality that failure rate of expatriation is very high. But on the other hand the definition of failure in this context is controversial. Expatriate failure is generally

considered as the premature end to an international assignment and premature end caused by reason (Harzing and Christensen, 2004: 619). This definition is criticized as being mono-dimensional which means linking the success and failure just with time. Christensen and Harzing (2004) offered a modified version of expatriate failure definition. They use the dictionary definition of the term failure as a starting point for their argumentation. According to Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2005:451) failure is defined as “the lack of success in doing or achieving something, especially something that you are expected to do.” They further underline the two aspects of this definition; the lack of success in doing or achieving something and that “something” is something that you are expected to do so. By combing these two aspects together, they came up with their own definition of expatriate failure as “the inability of the expatriate or repatriate to perform according to the expectations of the organization” (Harzing and Christensen, 2004: 622).

The reasons behind expatriate failure are important because these reasons create the weakest link in the chain. Top three factors responsible for expatriate failure are cited as spouse/partner dissatisfaction (57%), inability to adapt (47%) and other family concerns (39%) (GMAC, 2007). It is interesting to note that those reasons stem from general adjustment issues and supports the spillover theory.

Similar to the expatriate adjustment, expatriate failure can also affect both the firm and the employee. Effects of failure on the employee during the international assignment could lead to alcoholism, smoking and drug-abuse and over-working, -eating, -cleaning, -exercising, -thinking, -sexing. After unsuccessful international assignments employees are apt to experience loss of self-esteem and confidence, disruption of career path.

From firm’s perspective, effects of failure during international assignment include falling work performance, steady build up complaints, increase in sickness absences and loss of market share to competitors. It is indicated that firms faced problems like relocation expenses and allowances, career reorientation, replacement recruitment and stagnation in foreign operations after unsuccessful ending of an international assignment (Sappinen, 1993).

### 3. 3. 3. Female Expatriates

In today's globalized business world, the importance of expatriation in the long term career planning to reach top level of the management hierarchy is obvious. So the expatriation can be used as an important weapon for breaking the "glass ceiling." According to GMAC (2007), only 20% of the participating firm's expatriate population was female. However, this is better than the number of woman CEO's of Fortune 500-2008 (only 12), success without international experience is a good old days fantasy.

According to Tung (2004), the slow emergence of women in international assignments may be attributed to three beliefs. First, certain host countries may not be receptive to women expatriate. Second, women are unwilling to undertake such assignments and finally women may lack the mental constitution to endure the stresses and strains associated with living and working in some tough foreign environments.

There are several studies that dispelled the beliefs written above as myths. Moreover, Tung (2004) finds using female expatriates as an advantage in three ways. First women are more visible in male dominating cultures. Second, there is an assumption and halo effect that female expatriates must be exceptionally well-qualified before their firm would appoint them to the position. And the third is novelty; in some male-chauvinistic countries, men become more attentive and accommodating to business women.

Firms should be aware of the advantages and disadvantages of appointing a female employee for an international assignment and act accordingly since the failure can be costly for both of them.

## 3. 4. National Culture

The second key concept of the theoretical framework is national culture. In terms of expatriation; national culture provides the context for the whole adjustment process. It can be linked to either the home country's national culture or the host country's national culture. Hofstede's value theory of culture will be the main domain of this part. I will try to integrate Swedish culture into the Hofstede's work. The discussion about the national culture will be ended with summary of Swedish culture which is cited in a study about expatriation in Nordic countries.

According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) all peoples see their country as the centre of the world. Expatriation may be seen as a journey from one centre to another centre. The journey between these two centers requires adjustment to some level. So understanding national culture and its consequences is the fundamental point in expatriation framework.

Every person has his/her own patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting that were learned throughout their lifetime. These patterns are learned generally during early childhood. These patterns of thinking, acting and feeling create our mental programs or our mind's software. Software of the mind lies in the social environment in which one grew up and collected all life experiences.

Generally the term culture is used in order designate the software of the mind. Culture is defined in many ways but in our study "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of the one group or category of people from the others" is used because of its suitability with the expatriation process (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005).

In the heart of Hofstede's theory of culture "values" are located. According to him values are acquired early in our lives. People unconsciously learn, believe and act according to them and their effects tend to be forever from generation to generation. For this reason comparative studies on culture generally depend on values. Cultural values appear in Hofstede's theory as cultural dimensions. "A dimension is an aspect of a culture that can be measured relative to the other cultures (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005:23)." Hofstede's theory compare national culture's in, originally four and then by adding one more, with five dimensions namely; power distance, collectivism versus individualism, femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term versus short-term orientation. These dimensions in connection with the relative position of Sweden will be described below.

Everybody is equal but in some countries some people are more "equal" than others. In some countries inequalities are assumed natural, but in others it is avoided. This situation is measured and indexed as "*power distance*" dimension in Hofstede's framework. Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of the institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Countries may have small or large power distance. In small-power-distance countries employers tend to see their bosses as

consultants. Emotional distance is relatively small where free speech and criticism are welcomed. Contrarily, in large-power-distance countries emotional distance is very large, thus negatively interfere the communication process. There is also strong dependence on authority. As a low-power distance country, in Sweden more consultation and employee-oriented management style are used. According to Jönsson (1995) team spirit, informal communication, lean top management and few organizational levels are characteristics of Swedish management.

Countries differ in terms of its member's values towards each other. In some countries "the group" comes first, these countries are labeled as collectivist. This kind of countries comprises much of the world population. In the minority, there are people who live in the countries where "I" comes first and these countries are labeled as individualist. Hofstede's framework indexes countries on a scale from *individualism to collectivism* as a second cultural dimension. In individualist societies ties between individuals are loose, everyone is look after him or herself and his or her immediate family. Contrarily in collectivist societies people belong to groups. Groups take care of the individuals and in exchange, individuals are expected to be loyal to the group. Individualism is found to be very high in Sweden. The effects of individualism can be trying to spend more personal and family time, looking for more freedom on job, having an emotional independence and self-orientation (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

The third dimension in Hofstede's framework is *femininity or masculinity*. Countries which have feminine societies are characterized as both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. In masculine societies there is clear distinction between emotional gender roles. Men are supposed to be assertive, tough and focused on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life. Sweden is said to have a feminine culture. More importance is given to the supervision and social aspects of job. People orientation is high and consequently; working conditions, working hours and ease of work is relatively comfortable (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

The first to the last dimension is *uncertainty avoidance*. This dimension refers society's attitudes towards ambiguity. Uncertainty avoidance can be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations. This feeling is expressed through nervous stress and in need for written or unwritten rules in order to increase the level of



predictability. Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance like Sweden are characterized as more risk taking. There is a stronger desire for achievement and belief in success. Innovative and development-oriented behavior is expected most (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

The last dimension is labeled as *long-term orientation*. In long-term oriented societies focus on the fostering of virtues oriented towards future. In the opposite side, countries are short-term oriented and their aim is fostering the virtues related to past and present. Values associated with long-term orientation are thrift and perseverance. On the other hand, values associated with short-term orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. As a low long-term oriented country, in Sweden, it is expected that equality is promoted and people treat others as they would like to be treated. Creativity and individualism is high and self-actualization is sought.

In a descriptive study about the expatriates working in Nordic countries, Tixier (1996) describes the Swedish culture as follows;

The cultivation starts within the family and keep on with start of education life in Sweden. A good education emphasizes not making any noise, remaining in the shadow and being modest. It is not usual to see someone talking about his/her money or success publicly. Low-profile and egalitarianism is esteemed. Daily life is structured. Swedes like rules and respect them. They are organized and disciplined to the rigidity. Swedes are solid, realistic and oriented towards results. They look for the most simplistic solutions for the problems.

People are reserved, calm and a bit withdrawn in Sweden. They are more introverted and controlled. Little time is spent being social. People do not speak just in order to say something; they speak if there is something to say.

On the other side of the medal, Swedes are a bit chauvinistic. They do not accept the differences easily. They have a tendency to impose their style on others.

In business Swedes have integrity and are loyal. Swedish managers are very professional. Punctuality, rigor, the work ethic and good citizenship are norms. Problems in business life are solved through politeness and consideration for people for. The essential notion of Swedish management style is its very decentralized and democratic nature. Organization chart is

horizontally structured. Discussions are open and employees may easily express their ideas. Managers are obliged to be very accessible and accountable for their personnel. Group work is facilitated. Managers trust the subordinates and delegate the responsibility.

From Hofstede's perspective Swedish culture is characterized as low-power distance, individualistic, feminine, weak uncertainty avoidance and lastly short-term oriented.

As a low-power distance country, in Sweden more consultation and employee-oriented management style are used. According to Jönsson (1995) team spirit, informal communication, lean top management and few organizational levels are characteristics of Swedish management.

Individualism is found to be very high in Sweden. The effects of individualism can be trying to spend more personal and family time, looking for more freedom on job, having an emotional independence and self-orientation (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

Sweden is said to have a feminine culture. More importance is given to the supervision and social aspects of job. People orientation is high and consequently; working conditions, working hours and ease of work is relatively comfortable (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance like Sweden are characterized as more risk taking. There is a stronger desire for achievement and belief in success. Innovative and development-oriented behavior is expected most (Lindell and Arvonen, 1997).

In terms of long-term orientation, Sweden is not on the edge of the dimension. Respecting traditions, personal stability is related to Swedish culture. On the other hand, respect for circumstances, personal adaptiveness and a sense of shame is also found to be related with the characteristics of Swedish culture. So Sweden is a slightly short-term oriented country, whilst having some features of long-term orientation.

# 4. Analysis

In this chapter of the thesis, empirical material generated during interviews will be analyzed according to the literature review. The structure of the chapter will follow a sequence which is parallel with the general expatriation process. In the first part, current condition of expatriation in Sweden will be provided and then the analysis will continue with describing work and socio-cultural adjustment experienced by the expatriates respectively. As the context of expatriation, analysis will mainly depend on cultural comparisons between Swedish culture and the expatriates' own cultures. Figures will be used in order to illustrate the cultural saliencies visually. Direct quotations will be provided in order to create a space for audience's critical thinking and to foster trustworthiness. In line with general expatriation process, analysis will end up with repatriation and future expectations of the expatriates in Sweden.

## 4. 1. Expatriation in Sweden

### 4. 1. 1. Hosting Expatriates in Sweden

As it is underlined in the literature review, expatriation is a process that includes two parties; namely the company and the expatriate. However the data generation process of this study is not based on finding out the reasons for companies to use expatriation, instead, it is about investigating the expatriation process for the expatriate. Participants indicated that once the decision was made to send them abroad, the company encouraged and supported them a lot. The reasons for companies to host expatriates in Sweden can be summarized by the comments provided by Guile during the interview as;

*“The company really encouraged this cross-site exchange in order to promote building networks and communications among sites and develop employees; it is such a global company so the company encouraged a lot! (Guile)”*

*“The company tries hard to organize the sites in Lund and USA, I don't really know the other sites very well but the kind of work is very similar, even in USA most of our top management is Swedish (Guile).”*

None of the participants have declared that they have been selected in order to fill an empty position in Sweden. Availability of qualified locals and close interaction with the university in Lund makes this option not valid for the companies. It is also important to note that, 4 out of 5 participants are working for the R&D department of large international companies located in Lund/Sweden. Those companies are known to be Swedish world-wide and Lund can be considered as the headquarters in terms of research and development of those companies. So developing managers, sustaining companies' structure and global decision making processes can be the reasons for companies in Sweden to use expatriation.

According to the participants' point of view, their companies use expatriation in order to create networks between different sites, harmonize sites globally and facilitate knowledge sharing throughout the organization. If we consider the knowledge-worker notion of these participants, expats act as a linking pin and facilitates the intra-firm knowledge transfer.

Participants indicated that companies use expatriation as a part of their global human resources strategy, however the name of the applications are changeable according to the company, Guile and Babak indicated that they came to Sweden as a part of job exchange and job rotation program respectively. The availability of these applications is also verified by Zanda.

*“There was an opportunity to do an exchange with one of the engineer here in Lund, so he went to USA and I came here, on paper we have the same kind of background (Guile)”*

*“I came to Sweden as a part of a job rotation program for six months then they asked me to stay for here for 2 more years (Babak)”*

*“We can do job sharing or exchange, the thing that you should find somebody in there has a same kind of job that you do (Zanda)”*

#### 4. 1. 2. Coming to Sweden as an Expatriate

From the employee's side of the expatriation process, individuals indicated that gaining experience, building networks, having a global overview of the company and knowledge sharing were participants' main reasons for accepting the international assignment and coming to Sweden. Being the headquarters of Babak's company, Sweden is viewed as the place where best

practices can be learned. Expatriation to Sweden also gives an advantage to the employees to gain “know-how” knowledge of the company which is highlighted by Guile. Ryu linked his expatriation reason to gaining global company perspective which includes understanding the international organization, host country environment and relationships.

*“You work in the company and they tell you to go to headquarters, it is a good experience! (Babak)”*

*“Lund is our number 1 development site, most of the advanced projects are first implemented here...being here and knowing the people that are working on this new technologies, I had a contact with them and find out the problems that they had and ask for suggestions they can give me...make it much easier when I am back to USA. (Guile)”*

*“I would like to work in Lund and would like to see what is happening in Lund what we can improve or contribute to the company because in Japan it was a little bit difficult to request or change or improve it... and I also felt some cultural gap between Japan and Sweden...so it was a little bit difficult to request or change Swedish mind that is because sometimes it is not so efficient way of working, there was some inefficiency so we felt we can improve if we do this and do this, so I wanted to know what is actually happening in Sweden (Ryu)”*

Besides being the global research and development capital for most of the participants’ companies. For participants traveling overseas, Sweden is a convenient hub for visiting Europe for tourism purposes. It is a lot easier to travel to France or Italy from Sweden than travelling directly from Japan or USA. But on the other hand, for some of the participants, Sweden and Lund are not found to be the most attractive places to come for international assignments.

*“I think Sweden is not a very attractive place to go out...you know the cold weather, people are not eager to come to Sweden, If the company was in Spain or something it may be, it will be little more attractive to go (Guile).”*

*“Job is ok but from the social part I mean I don’t really gain much here, I got some friends but not the fun I was expecting...maybe if it wasn’t like Lund if it was like Paris, New York or some big cities it may be different but it is not the situation (Babak)”*

### 4. 1. 3. Company Supports for Expatriation

Companies provide different types of support for their expatriates. This support tends to differ according to the duration of the international assignment. In short-term assignments the tie between the host company unit in Sweden and the expatriate is looser. For the long-term assignments, expatriates become more or less domestic employee of the local unit. Guile and Ryu are working in Sweden as an expat for the same company. Guile came to Sweden for a short-term assignment and Ryu for the long-term. Their comments are valuable in order to compare the difference in terms of support provided by the companies according to duration.

*“There is two options, one option you stay for less than one year so if you stay for less than one year it is considered as short-term assignment, and if you stay for less than one year they will not ship anything for you, but you can bring free suitcases and that’s about it. Then when I got here they provided my apartment free of cost and a car; Volvo S40 and an apartment in downtown Malmö, and also supplement in my salary... Every two months I got a free economy class ticket back home (Guile).”*

*“Before moving, there are so many supports, for example most of the documented work like applying for the visa, and trying to get international contract and also some training, tips about living in Sweden and also some touristic destinations... Company moved our stuff from Japan to Lund (Ryu).”*

Other participants also indicated that they have received company support for the expatriation period in Sweden. Getting these supports, expatriates save a lot of time and may dedicate that time for visiting their friends or relatives. The more support and assistance provided, the less stress and uncertainties experienced by the expat. The support in that period is also considered as the company’s commitment towards its employees and enhances trust.

*“Yeah they were quite good actually they find a home for me before I come here, then they book the hotel and then everything was more or less arranged it wasn’t much to worry about... our company has an international department so there are people working with us and helping us, so if you want to rent the house they help you, if you want to move your furniture they will help you with this (Babak)”*

*“Oh yes there is an established program, HR take care of your Swedish lessons or finding schools for your kids, everything involved with the move, I think (Zanda).”*

*“My contacts provided me the flat I live in now (Charles)”*

#### 4. 1. 4. Preparing for Sweden

As the opportunity to become an exchange student in Norway was raised in 2005, I remember very clearly that I had very ambivalent feelings. I was aware of the growing potential but on the other hand, I could not get myself out of the fear of unknown since it was my first international experience. Norway seemed too far away at that time. I had no idea about the country and the people. That was a very hectic situation and I could not prepare myself properly for Norway. Two years after I found myself on the way to Sweden. This time I had the preliminary knowledge and experience from Norway which decreased my tension. Expatriates who are leaving their countries for international assignments are pretty much in the same situation as me on the way to Norway.

When I asked participants about their preparation period before coming to Sweden, I saw that not much effort was given.

*“Well, I had a Swedish CD that I listen to my car to learn some Swedish but it wasn’t necessary here everybody speaks English (Guile).”*

*“Not so much, of course we prepared to live and buy so many Japanese groceries and not so much we just bought books regarding the Swedish language I think that’s all. (Ryu)”*

*“My preparation; I did not do a lot of research about Lund. Most of the preparation was paperwork, the permits, but no I didn’t do a lot of preparation (Charles – commenting on his first working venture in Sweden).”*

This situation may have arisen for two reasons. First having preliminary knowledge about Sweden and second having a belief that Sweden and their countries are more or less the same. Previous international experience is very crucial in order to overcome many problems due to the unknown characteristics of the expatriation. In terms of previous international experiences, Charles indicated that he has been to the same department for conducting the same kind of job

before. He said his previous experience in Sweden made it easier for him to come here again as an expat. Zanda also accepted that fact that having international experience before decreased her stress and facilitated her adjustment process. Other participants declared that they did not have international working experience before.

*“In terms of biological work, I spend four months in Sweden during my university degree studies and was doing a similar sort of thing as I am doing now. It was a work placement; They send you somewhere you work for them and you go back home, no exchange with people, I spend it researching, I conducted one study here, and I had to attend lectures also...I did have the experience of living in Sweden for a few months so it was easy for me to come here. I know the location, know how the transport system works...it was great that I already had a pre-knowledge in Sweden (Charles).”*

*“I worked in Nigeria, London, different states in US which can be considered different countries; definitely those experiences were helpful for me to adjust to Sweden (Zanda).”*

*“Not professional. Personally, I travelled a little bit and I travelled for the company to several times on business so I have been to Lund before but mostly to up in north Sweden, I have been in Sweden four times before, I have been to Lund once and Stockholm and Copenhagen so I have been here before (Guile).”*

*“No not at all, only to business trip-base and personal travelling-base (Ryu).”*

*“I have been to Sweden before so I knew about this, so it was not like the first time I am coming to Sweden. I have been to Sweden. I have been in Sweden like 4-5 times before I came to stay here for two or three weeks period and actually I could find my way around I dint need that much of support. I just needed to know which hotel I am booked in and then I could go directly myself (Babak).”*

On the other hand Babak said that the purpose of coming to Sweden is very important. According to him, coming to Sweden for training or business trip is very different than coming here to live and work for longer time.



*“When you come here for training or course or seminar, you only talk with the specific kind of people and those people are very good at handling with the foreigners. I mean if it is a training there is instructor and he is used to foreigners it is a bit more difficult when you come to work with the ordinary people (Babak)”*

So expatriates should bear in mind that they are coming to Sweden not for a business trip or training. They are coming here in order to live and work so they should prepare themselves seriously. Preparation is too important to be left only to expatriates his/herself. Companies, as the natural part of this journey, should provide cross-cultural training for their expats. Ryu’s and Babak’s experiences about cross-cultural training seemed neither enough in terms of duration nor enough for the content.

*“I got it in Tokyo but it was more generic, general one so it was not specific course for Sweden so many people attended that course. It includes the people who are going to visit USA, China and all the other countries (Ryu).”*

*“There was a cultural seminar, one day cultural seminar, but then it was supposed to happen 2-3 months after I came but then I couldn’t attend and then I waited for my girlfriend and we would go there together but the program was a one day seminar, there is a guy coming in and explaining a little bit about Sweden and about the culture, history, people (Babak).”*

Many expatriates like Guile, are also fall into trap of cultural distance paradox and do not give enough attention for preparation.

*“Yeah I think it will be much easier to live in Sweden for a year comparing to Beijing for one year (Guile).”*

It is assumed that if the countries are similar in terms of culture, the adjustment will become rather smoother. Having this assumption in mind expatriates lose their motivation for cross-cultural training or find it unnecessary. But according to Zanda; *“everybody says Sweden is pretty much US but it is not true.”* The lack of proper cross-cultural training may increase the failure rates of expatriation which results with very heavy costs both for the company and for the expats. Regardless of cultural distance, every expatriate, including the sojourner family members, should be provided with proper cross-cultural training.

## 4. 2. Working in Sweden as an Expat

Being an expatriate in Sweden ties you more closely to the company's local unit. When you work in your home country, you would normally be in a relationship with your colleagues and managers. You are either the part of the formal organization or the informal organization. As the organizational context changes with expatriation, you will find yourself in a new type of organizational network. According to country where you start to work, the attitudes of managers and colleagues may seem weird. The aim of this part of analysis is to find out the peculiar aspects of Swedish work culture by the help of observations of the expats.

### 4. 2. 1. Technical Adjustment

Work adjustment starts with adjustment of the technical aspect of the work. Of course expats are introduced to their colleagues but this introduction does not require much more than "hi and bye." On the technical side, adjustment to work is easier for the participants. Since they are knowledge-workers, technical aspects of work do not change much from country to country. This situation is underlined by the comments of Guile, Ryu and Babak.

*"We use the same e-mail system, data-base system and some systems we store our documents and publications everything, so it's all shared among the company globally that made it very easy coming here because I already had access to all and it is easy to bring my computer from States and plug-in to the network (Guile)"*

*"When we are talking we use the same language, we understand each other what we mean. We know the problems (Babak)."*

*"I went to office for the first day there are several treatments. Desk was ready and all the stuff was ready so I could start to work smoothly (Ryu)"*

### 4. 2. 2. Peculiar Aspects of Swedish Work Culture

When I asked participants to define how they find Swedish work culture in general, first of all they all said in choir that they find it more different than they are used to. They indicated that that working in Sweden is more tolerant, relaxed, independent, and individually-oriented and finally it is mostly based on trust.

*“Swedish work culture is different; it is very laid back in here. I am used to being pushed. I don’t really need to always push myself to do things here I give myself the goals because they don’t set any goals. They just expect you to work at your own pace. I am used to being set a difficult goal so that’s what I set myself...Swedish people are very laid back and they don’t have the same work attitudes as they do in England (Charles)”*

*“Working here is much relaxed. I mean in Iran, when you work, you shouldn’t make a mistake since you affect but here it is like a development center so there is no customer watching what you are doing, if you do a mistake ok, I just did a mistake no big deal. The risk is low and there is no customer waiting for the result, there are some internal customers but...I think in general work pressure is much lower in Sweden (Babak)”*

*“There are big differences in several perspective so it is rather difficult to tell the differences in one word, but let me try...so in Sweden we have most of the colleagues are more independent, they are working professionally and they have their own area and they are focusing on their world and most of the job work is based on trust (Ryu)”*

*“You cannot compare it to USA, it is so much better actually. They [The Swedish] really think about you, they are flexible, I really like it, I can really feel the difference (Zanda)”*

It was very interesting to note that however there were some similarities between each participant’s observations for Swedish work culture; cultural saliency in terms of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions plays an important role on the participants’ observations.

For example; Babak’s and Ryu’s comments about Swedish work culture tended to focus on relatively the low-power distance nature of Swedish national culture. When we look at the graph given below adapted from Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), we can see the relative difference between Swedish and Iranian/Japanese cultures in terms of power-distance.

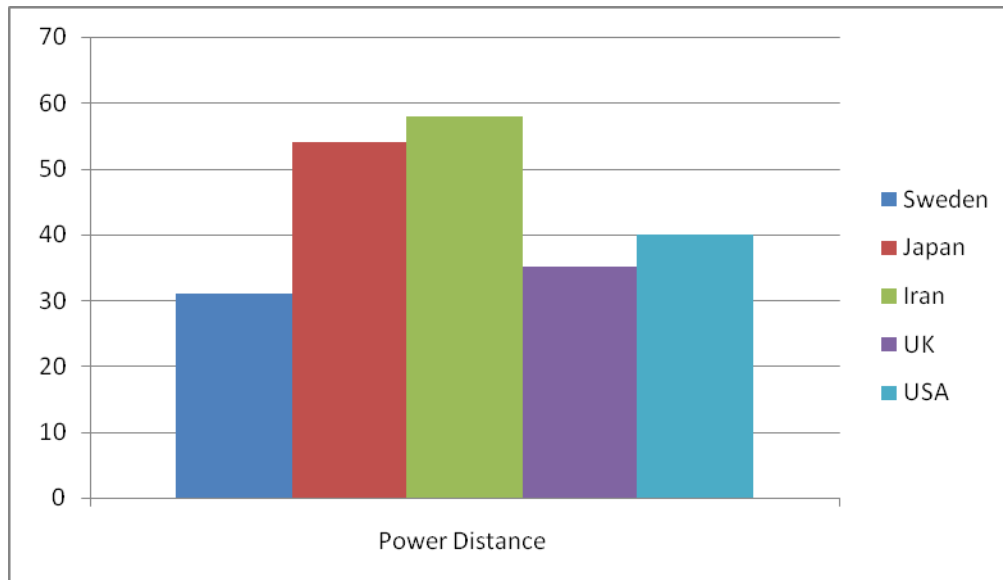


Figure 4: Saliency in terms of Power Distance.

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)

This situation is also declared by the observations of Babak and as he states that *“You know this power distance in Iran quite high, here quite low, for instance in Iran you don’t go to your manager’s room and you sit like this (showing a relaxed position) in front of him usually. But here I mean it is very easy to sit like this and talk with the manager so it is easy talk with them (Babak).”* It is also obvious that Babak had preliminary knowledge on issues like culture and cultural dimensions. This situation also increases the validity of his observations.

On the other hand; whilst comparing Japanese and Swedish work culture, Ryu mostly emphasized on independent nature of working in Sweden.

*“In Japan, we are almost dependent on each other so for example, in my job perspective, my department has stronger power to manage the project. We tend to request something to do strictly! What is the status! You did it correctly? Are you following the process? We tend to control each team more strictly. That’s why we have deeper communication and connection with them, if we tend to ask something then they tend to support us! But more like reactive. So my department tends to request everything from all team and I tend to push them. If we did not do so then their reports tend to be vaguer and so messy situation...here in Sweden each team*

*understand what they should do until that deadline. So we do not have to give more detailed explanation to each other. On the other hand, if we put some more detail information, explanation...if we put such kind of directions then those members tend to be got angry... (Ryu)”*

Very similar comments are also provided by Babak, while talking about the Swedish culture in general.

*“I think in eastern cultures you are not used to be alone that much, maybe if you are a Swede you can just be alone everyday (Babak).”*

*“People in Iran little bit compare themselves with the others in their networks (Babak)”*

The situation which has been described very vividly in the sentences of Ryu and Babak, is obviously the cause of salient difference between Japanese/Iranian work culture and Swedish work culture in terms of collectivism & individualism.

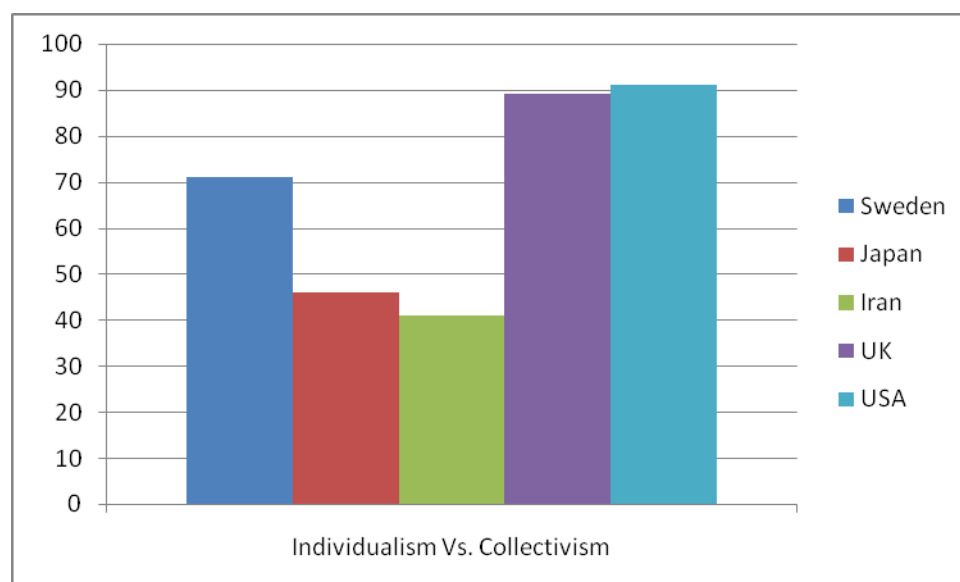


Figure 5: Saliency in terms of Individualism Vs. Collectivism.

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

As can be seen from the graph above also adapted from Hofstede (2005), Japan and Iran is found to be relatively more collectivist than Sweden. From the USA and UK perspective Sweden is

found to be collectivist. I probed this situation by asking Charles follow up question on that issue.

*“I am agreeing that in England work is more individually-based, but there is more interaction between colleagues after work or during breaks (Charles).”*

Managers’ attitudes towards employees are found to be very consultative. Zanda summarizes her relationship with her manager as *“She is very helpful, very motivating. She first tries to find out what I want and then tries to fit into that (Zanda).”*

During the interview, Ryu expressed many differences while he is comparing management styles between Japan and Sweden. According to his comments, while managers in Japan are tough, assertive and focusing on material output, Swedish managers are more consultative, people-oriented.

*“In Japan our boss has more strong power than in Sweden. In Japan I am not sure which is good or which is bad but in Japan manager tend to have to manage that he had the responsibility to strengthen the team so he tend to make some tempered or some tough requests from all the members to follow that way and managers tend to make all the members to be trusted, educated person,...he tend to monitor more deeply and try to train or strengthen or educate ourselves but sometimes it is too much interference to us...In Sweden I could not see many contact from manager, he is busy in his job, I am not sure what it is but we did not have so much communication with them and maybe he is just trusting us and let us do our job. He did not tend to ask us what is the status, what is the problem why don’t you solve it we have never had such kind of suggestion, proposal or request (Ryu)”*

Ryu said he is having difficulties for adjusting himself to the different management styles. *“I am still doing trial and error. There is not much interference in Sweden from boss so I am doing what I feel but I am not sure if it is the best way to do my job... I couldn’t get enough feedback from my managers that is the current way of working preferred from Swedish boss, so I believe I am doing good way but I am not sure about it, from my career perspective in that point I want to have more and more feedback (Ryu).”*

The reason underlying Ryu’s distresses about adjusting to management styles in Sweden can be explained by the saliency between Swedish and Japanese cultures in terms of femininity and masculinity dimension. According to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, there is huge cultural gap between Japan and Sweden. Whilst Japan has one of the most masculine cultures of the world, Sweden is found to be one of the most feminine. That difference can be viewed from the graph given below adapted from Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

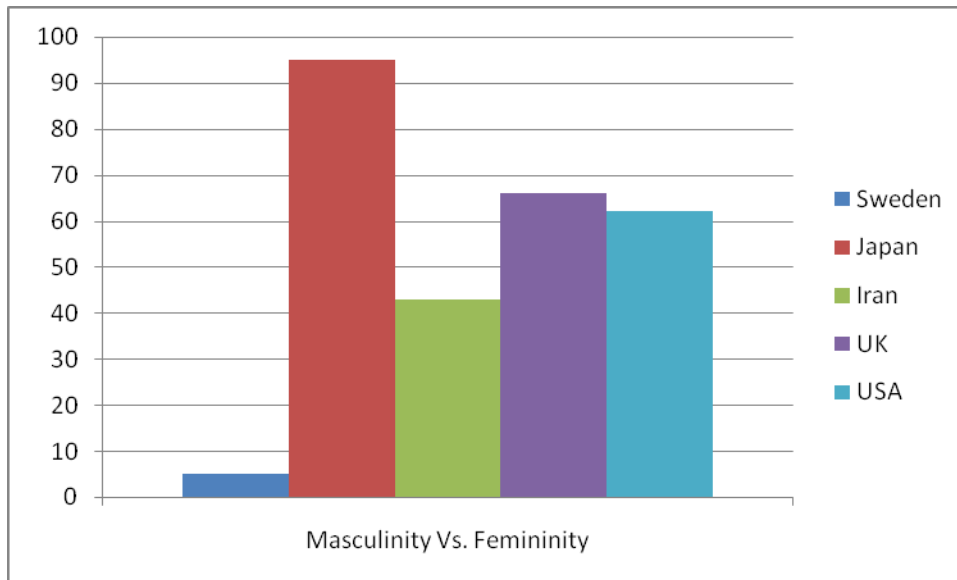


Figure 6: Saliency in terms of Masculinity Vs. Femininity.

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

Lack of direct feedback from managers increases his concerns whether he is doing well or bad. Ryu said he is having difficulties for adjusting himself to the different management styles. This situation can be explained by the saliency in uncertainty avoidance between Sweden and Japan. The saliency can be viewed from the graph provided below adapted from Hofstede (2005). As a Japanese employee Ryu feels threatened by ambiguous and unknown situations. He is stressful and in need of written or unwritten rules.

*“I am still doing trial and error. There is not much interference in Sweden from boss so I am doing what I feel but I am not sure if it is the best way to do my job... I couldn’t get enough feedback from my managers that is the current way of working preferred from Swedish boss, so I*

*believe I am doing good way but I am not sure about it, from my career perspective in that point I want to have more and more feedback (Ryu).”*

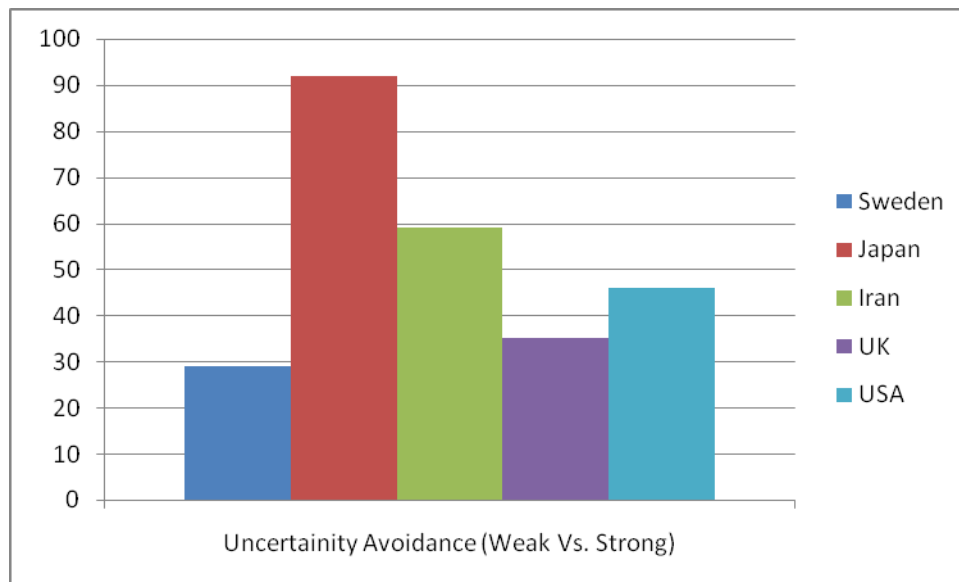


Figure 7: Saliency in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance.

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

#### 4. 2. 3. Everybody Speaks English: Myth or Reality?

One of the important motivations that expats think before coming to Sweden that everybody can speak really good English. Moreover many of the international company use English as their corporate language. It is believed that communication within the company is not a problem for the expats in Sweden.

When I tried to learn expatriates' current relationships with their colleagues in terms of communication, Ryu's account provided me fruitful insights and guided me for finding an important mystery about expatriation Sweden. As an outsider and considering that the corporate language of the company is English, one may think that there should not be any problem concerning the communication within the company. But the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence! Ryu's comments indicated several times that this is not the case. Communication in terms of language is a problem even in Sweden which is traditionally known as the place where everybody can speak English. As, like all Japanese employees which are



known to be very committed to their companies, Ryu also talked about the possible outcomes of this problem.

*“Most of the communication is done by Swedish and sometimes communications are done by verbally not in written work, so it is difficult to understand the whole process because as I said people are working independently so it is invisible that how another team is working (Ryu).”*

*“Here in Sweden they tend to communicate verbally so it is rather difficult to track what is actually ongoing...So most of the communication is shared like a rumor; do you know the status? O yeah, heard the solution is identified and tested ok, but that information is not written in none of the places...Invisible process! Maybe, it might work if the organization is small enough but we are working globally with different geographic sites in that case it will just increase some doubt or fear from other sites (Ryu)”*

*“In the meeting we use English but as a verbal communication they use Swedish...for example I am sitting with my colleague and he is working as a same title with me but sometimes Swedish colleagues came to him and start talking about in Swedish, I could guess the content a little bit, briefly, because of the key words like “camera.” Sometimes I asked them what are you talking about, is that the critical issue? Please share it with me! Then he starts to speak English otherwise they just communicate in Swedish and after that my colleagues give me the result that the issue was solved, no problem, that kind of communication is not good (Ryu)”*

However everybody can speak English, everybody does not speak English unless they are in formal settings or they are requested to. This situation organizationally sabotages the one of the main purposes of expatriation in Sweden which is knowledge sharing. Additionally, this may make adjustment more difficult and longer for expatriate. Hence, it creates stress for the expat and decreases motivation of him/her towards the new life in Sweden.

As a very experienced expatriate in Sweden, Zanda underlined the importance of Swedish as *“I studied Swedish, get free lessons after getting the residence permit, I went to all 3 years then we started to study with my husband...they told me that don’t expect a job that you expect in US until 5 years have passed (Zanda).”* A dilemma occurs in this case. It is said that in order to get

a decent job in Sweden, you have to learn Swedish and at the same time, it is expected that expat may come to Sweden for relatively shorter periods and gain know-how.

It is true that in Sweden everybody speaks English. Whenever you have a problem and want to ask something almost everyone understands you and provides guidance for you in English. This is very good if you are coming to Sweden for short business trip or some sort of vacation. Working in Sweden for the knowledge-transfer purposes requires at least entry level of Swedish. So “everybody speaks English” is not enough for expatriation in Sweden.

#### 4. 2. 4. Working Conditions in Sweden

As a welfare state, Sweden’s working conditions in terms of working hours and vacations are favored by the participants. When I asked participants to compare working conditions in Sweden to their home country, they found working hours flexible and on the minimum level to what they used to. Consequently, many of the expatriates found that working in Sweden is less stressful.

*“You never see people working longer than 40 hours a week but it is the minimum in US where you are working 45-48, 50 hours per week. Maybe this is because we have fewer resources on a project but I think it is just expected most people work till 18.00-18:30. Here people leaving 16:00 and 16:30, it is a different work environment” (Guile).*

*“In Sweden there is not so clear working hours. Of course there is but no strictly. Some are coming to office at 7 a.m. others will come from 10:00 a.m. because they have some personal activities (Ryu).”*

In terms of vacation Guile said in Sweden employees can easily request 2-3 week of vacation. He keeps on saying that *“It will be very hard to tell your manager in the States that you are going to leave 3 weeks of vacation, he will look at you like are you crazy? Do you expect the same job when you come back (Guile)?”*

#### 4. 2. 5. Holy Coffee Breaks

It is expressed by the expatriates that Swedish working culture is flexible and less stressful than they are used to. But participants persistently would like to talk about one incident that they

found very weird while working in Sweden. They found non-work activities, like coffee breaks, lunch breaks, very structured and organized in Sweden.

*“They have “fika” you know, you take a coffee break 30-45 minutes and just you have a group of people that you go, sit down and drink coffee with. You wouldn’t do that in States, you may take your cup of coffee, go in your friends’ cubes and offices and talk with, may be take your coffee and go to your desk which you will never sit out side 45 minutes in the middle of the day. It was kind of different social kind of work environment...it is just because it is just too much organization than what I am used, you know I never take coffee at the same time of the day (Guile)”*

*“Coffee breaks in Sweden are like a “holy time.” 9:30! Everyone goes to coffee break, no matter what you are doing. You just put on the screw driver, put on the computer and go to the coffee break, In Iran it is not like this maybe we don’t have a fix coffee break time. If you want to take a rest you just go and take a rest but here everybody together goes to the coffee room and then come back at the same time, 9:30 and 15:30...this was a little bit strange for me (Babak)”*

The same situation also observed by Guile for the lunch breaks.

*“They want to go to lunch at 12:00 or 11:30. Every day and everybody that you are in the project wants to go to at the same time but for me I would take lunch when I was convenient in my work, if I am in the middle of something I am not going to play it down and just go to lunch. I will finish it and then I will have a break in a good stopping point and then I go to lunch. So that was kind of a different atmosphere (Guile)”*

As it can be seen from the graph, Sweden is an individualist society. People tend to spend more personal and family time. People are more self-oriented and looking for more freedom on job. This characteristic leads to a strong distinction between family-life and work-life in Sweden. This argument is also validated by the comments given by Zanda and Guile.

*“Swedish people want to keep their weekends private so it was hard to contact work colleagues on the weekend. During the week it was ok but on the weekend no! We don’t want to meet you for Sunday to play tennis (Zanda).”*

*“I think here employees are not as dedicated and they do work hard but I think they are much more worried about personal life than the work life. They keep them very separate and the personal life always comes first that’s not the case in US (Guile).”*

The coffee- and lunch-break incidents underline the separation of work-life and personal-life in Sweden. According to my interpretation Swedish workers make separation between personal-life and work-life also during the working hours. Coffee and lunch-breaks are considered as the part of personal-life and it is believed that no work should be involved in that time period. The rigidity of the separation between work-life and family-life and its reflections at workplace makes it hard for expatriate to integrate with host country nationals (HCNs).

As an international student in Sweden, my friends are mostly my class-mates or other students from the university. It is possible to assume that for the expatriates in Sweden most of the social network should probably be composed by the colleagues from the company. But because of the rigid separation between work-life and personal-life, this is also another “the grass is always greener on the other side” phenomenon in Sweden.

## 4. 3. Living in Sweden as an Expat

### 4. 3. 1. “Englishman in New York” Syndrome

“Englishman in New York” is a famous song of Sting which truly describes feelings of the expats during the first days of international assignment. An excerpt from the lyrics goes like this:

*“I don't drink coffee I take tea my dear  
I like my toast done on one side  
And you can hear it in my accent when I talk  
I'm an Englishman in New York*

...

*I'm an alien I'm a legal alien  
I'm an Englishman in New York”*

It is obvious that the technical adjustment of work is smoother in case of knowledge work but in terms of socio-cultural adjustment, knowledge workers do not have any privilege than others. So it is very probable for any expatriate coming to Sweden to sing “I am a/an (...)man in Lund.”

Expatriates interviewed talked about very funny stories that happened during the first few days of their expatriation period. These stories are valuable since they are the first indicators of facing with a different culture. Expatriates start to feel a little bit alienated. I think this is where people realize that they are an “expat” for the first time.

*“One of the funniest things was with the handshake, in Iran when you see people you usually shake hand with them. In Sweden I think when you just first time you see them or if you don't see them for like a 6 or 8 months but when you work in Iran, in the office if you don't see one person 2-3 days you shake hands with him again, then in Sweden it was very strange because when I saw one person I was coming and saying hello and shaking hand. Then ok, I put my hand in the pocket and say just hello, hi. It was funny...then I learn. People are surprised when you shake hand with them (Babak)”*

*“The first week I took the bus to work and then I got my car and could not get out of Malmö! So actually drove to the bus stop and followed the bus out of town so I could find my way to work (Guile)”*

*“Whenever I want to go lunch downtown with my colleagues, the door was always locked so 3-4 times then I called them and asked are you guys coming? You said you are going to meet there at launch (they said yes, yes), ok I am coming down and go to the door and again it is locked! There was a drunken guy sitting in the corner, he guided me up and he pushed the button and the door opened. Nobody told me to open; they assume that I knew... a lot of those kinds of things were going on (Zanda)”*

In addition to being very funny, these stories have provided me important insights about the world of expats in Sweden. Naturally, expats seemed to keep on their life in a way how they consider suitable in their home countries. But whatever suitable at home may not be suitable in

Sweden. When they realize that reality, the situation becomes a humor-laden incident. For the first, second or third time these small incidents may be regarded as funny memories from the first days but gradually they are becoming stressful events in expats life.

It seems that the HR departments take good care of expats in terms of technical aspects work adjustment and also help them with the paper-work but they are not providing adequate support for the socio-cultural adjustment. Swedish people working with expats may be suffering from cultural myopia. They may not realize many of the different aspects of living in Sweden. In order to provide “soft-landing” for the expatriates, HR departments in Sweden should work in collaboration with the sending HR department, consult with experts and moreover carefully observe expatriates experiences in Sweden and try to learn from them.

#### 4. 3. 2. Validity of U-Curve Adjustment in Sweden

The idea of conducting this study happened to me in order to investigate the validity of the generally accepted “universalist” views about expatriation. U-Curve approach is frequently used in the discourse of expatriation. When I asked the expatriates about their adjustment process in general, I have seen that a very similar version of U-Curve is experienced by them. Ryu even used the U-Curve approach terminology while telling his adjustment story.

*“Coming start to live in a different culture, there are several phases first months is like “honeymoon” period where all the things you see or feel that everything is very enjoyable but next you go into “winter season” deep period, for several months. It depends on the person, some people cannot escape from that deep and might be going back to mother country but the good thing is the person in better situation can be escaped from that period in one or two months. Spring will come please be patient...actually I had a larger winter period but I have never thought that actually go back to Japan (Ryu)”*

*“When I came here at the beginning really full of energy and everything was good then after a while you think ok, I am doing work but what is happening the work is getting better and better because you are improving that but then the social side of life became lower and lower because you lose your friends. For the first month for the second month it is not a problem, after four months you get tired of working you want to do something...if you force to adapt yourself you*

*would adapt yourself, you learn the culture, you make some friends and people than its ok but I always had something to stop me going out to society. At the beginning, I went back quite often and I never try to adapt myself to the society maybe it is a bad part (Babak)”*

Experiences confirm the validity of U-Curve approach in Sweden. Cultural distance and duration of stay play an important role shaping the curve. Expats coming from culturally more distant countries are apt to experience a longer deep period. Duration of the international assignment also has an important effect on the shape of the curve. For some of the expats if the duration of the expatriation is relatively short, they do not care much about adaptation, and looking forward to accomplishing the task and turning back home.

*“I suppose I am finishing soon, I am fine with it but if I was working here such a long period I think I would have really problems because I like to work, when people around me don’t work as hard as me I got frustrated so I don’t think I could stay here as well the society they are very cold people, difficult to make good friends especially when you don’t have a reason (Charles)”*

Ryu said that in order for him to reach his original expectations from the international assignment, at least three years is needed.

*“I tend to focus on the job in three years. First year is educational period; I work very hard and try to learn what is going on, what is the process? Second year; is more practical year, so based on the experiences from the first year, I tend to work efficiently. Third year is the improvement period; so I tend to improve and change practically based on the first two years (Ryu).*

Different expectations in terms of duration of the international assignment can be linked to the long-term orientation of the national culture, thus affects the shape of the U-Curve at the end. Saliency between Japan and other countries in terms of long-term orientation can be viewed from the graph given below adapted from Hofstede (2005). Since Japan has a very long-term oriented culture, they tend to set goals on a more long-term basis compared to Sweden.

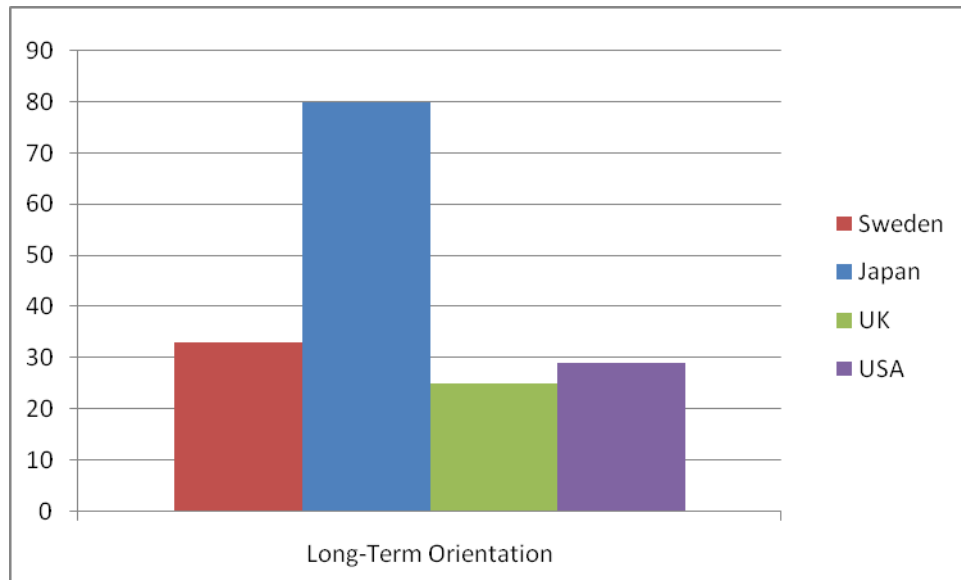


Figure 8: Saliency in terms of Long-Term Orientation.

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005).

### 4. 3. 3. Swedes from Expats' Perspective

In order to understand the socio-cultural adjustment in Sweden, I asked participants to describe Swedish people according to their observation. They expressed that Swedish people are silent, cold, and not easy to communicate with, not very friendly and not taking the initiative in a relationship. On the other hand participants agreed on that they are rational, logical, polite and helpful when it is needed.

*“I found Swedish people are not the most welcoming people to talk to and open (Guile).”*

*“They are good, Swedes are polite, actually they are very polite but they are not friendly. You know what I mean if you ask something they would help you but they are not like they don't become your friend...if you go out and talk with them they will talk as well but I think they don't take the first step so you have to be little bit how do you say “proactive” so you have to go and talk with them (Babak).”*



*“They are practical, logical and maybe there are barriers to get over first, once you are ok, they open up...Swedes are very contempt with quiet, it is hard to get used to, they are just saying anything and drinking coffee...you have long periods of quiet...in USA there is always somebody talking (Zanda).”*

*“They are very laid back, they do drink a lot, and they are little cold. It is very difficult to get to know a Swedish person. Frankly, they will not talk to you unless they have to talk to you (Charles).”*

I probed these comments in order to learn how these characteristics affected expatriate’s adjustment process. I found that expats suffer the rigidity of circle of friends in Sweden.

*“When they are in groups they like to keep in those groups, they will not let anybody else in. They are very cold; they don’t really accept people easily (Charles)”*

HCNs tendency to socialize in closed loops, decreases the potential of expats to integrate with Swedish culture. This barrier was so rigid that expatriates at the end integrate with other foreigners. Babak solved this problem by creating relationship with other foreigners. He found other foreigners are more welcoming to each other. He also concludes that *“maybe if you met Swedish people outside of Sweden, it would be more different than this.”* Guile finds the multicultural atmosphere of Malmö as an advantage for expats in order to create social-relationships.

*“I think Malmö is a kind of exception because I think there are so many foreigners in Malmö, people are very used to let in outsiders (Guile)”*

However every participant agreed on the toughness of socializing with HCNs in Sweden, participants using English as a native language found it as an advantage for integration with Swedish society.

*“When they found I was American, most of the times they were interested in when I say where I come from why actually here (Guile).”*

*“They like English or American things; speaking English is an advantage everybody likes speaking English so it is an advantage (Charles).”*

Since I know 4 out of 5 participants from SFL course, their willingness to learn Swedish can be viewed as they give value to maintain relationship with members of the host society. In spite of the integrationist attitudes of expatriates, the rigid circle of friends does not allow them to integrate totally with Swedish society.

#### 4. 3. 4. Adjusting to Daily Life in Sweden

In order to learn the situation of adjustment in terms of day-to-day living in Sweden, first of all I asked about their grocery shopping. If they found what they are looking for in Sweden, this may facilitate their adjustment. During the very beginning of expatriation period the expected behavior is that expats will look for the same things they were using in their home country.

Guile said he was looking for the US brands during first days of expatriation and then they were twice more expensive than he was paying in US. He felt frustrated at first then dealt with it and discovered the places to buy and products to buy. The same adaptation period was also valid for Charles.

*“Originally I thought there will be everything in terms of English things...I did look for the same things for the grocery shopping but then I learnt that Swedish things were not different from most of the things in England so I ended up simply buying Swedish in the end, it was an adaptation period (Charles).”*

Zanda highlighted the importance of Swedish in order to adjust day-to-day living in Sweden.

*“I was totally confused, I had to experiment going out and buy meat and end up with horse meat, take me at least a year and until my Swedish is better (Zanda).”*

It is probably the most different environment for Ryu in terms of food and grocery items as he is from Japan. He said, he did not have problem about it and they can find very similar version of the things what they consume in Japan. But he also said his wife is requesting Japanese stuff from his parents-in law, so he said they are consuming either Swedish or Japanese items at home. His wife's attitudes can be interpreted as protecting the values of her national culture. It may be an effort to teach their kids their national culture and try not to disconnect them from Japanese culture since they are still relatively young.

The second indicator I chose to look for in term of adjusting to daily life is finding the availability of suitable free-time activities in Sweden. Since the working hours are relatively shorter what they used to, expats in Sweden normally have more free-time than at home. If they find time and availability to carry on the sports, hobbies and art activities they do at home in Sweden, their adjustment process will be facilitated.

Guile had problems because of the European understanding of football (Soccer). Zanda has problems for playing tennis because of the rigid distinction between work-life and family-life in Sweden.

*“The hardest thing for me was there is no American football on TV in Sweden. That was hard. In the States on Saturday afternoon all you do is watching American football, here they don’t even show it on Saturdays, on Sundays they had one game at night which I go to watch and if there is a soccer match I was got kicked out of the sports bar, because I was the only person that wanted to watch it. That would never be the case in States (Guile).”*

*“I don’t play tennis here, I was playing in California because the weather is not great and no friends to play with, it was hard to Swedish people want to keep their weekends private so it was hard to contact work colleagues on the weekend, during the week it was ok but on the weekend no we don’t want to meet you for Sunday to play tennis (Zanda).”*

For the gym attendees and TV fans, Sweden is very welcoming. Since TV is never dubbed, it is very convenient for foreigners to watch and waste some spare-time. Golf, a traditional businessman sport, is found to be relatively cheaper, more convenient and less time consuming in Sweden.

*“I like playing golf so in Japan. I tend to play golf but in Japan golf is really expensive sport. We have a lack of land so it is difficult to find a place so I couldn’t play so much. Here in Sweden I am still playing golf and I am enjoying it. Golf is quite cheap not so cheap but compared with Japan it is quite cheap sport. In Japan we are living in the center of the city, and it takes about two hours of driving to the golf course so it is really tough, I tend to wake up at 5:00 am., and drive car for 2 hours for going to the golf course and play golf and after turning back for 2:30*

*hours with the traffic jam. It is a one day, full day activity, and that makes my family too angry. But here in Sweden it is too easy so we can go quickly and go back quickly (Ryu)."*

#### 4. 3. 5. Family Adjustment in Sweden

Since there is a spillover effect family adjustment and expatriate's work adjustment, family adjustment is so important for the general adjustment of the expatriate. The empirical material of this study does not primarily focus on family adjustment, but single participants indicated that to make decision to come here was rather easier for both them and for the company because of the family reasons.

*"I think it is much easier since I am single because the company was not worried about shipping my wife and kids or finding a job, it cost a lot for the company a lot more they are required to pay for your wife to come over and they have to give you a nicer or bigger apartment (Guile)"*

Ryu and Babak were participants who have sojourners travelling accompanied by their family and girlfriend respectively. They each expressed different situations for their family adjustment in Sweden. According to my interpretations family adjustment is smoother for the expats coming from masculine cultures. A feminine culture in which gender aspect of the life is vaguer bears more problems in terms of expatriation.

Ryu as an expat with family has indicated not so many problems for his family adjustment. His wife was not working in Japan and he has relatively small children. When we also add the masculine characteristics of Japanese culture, from my point of view his conditions were rather easier and may not resemble the general situation.

*"My wife did not work in Japan, she was a housewife, now she is a housewife too, she did not have any work to do, it was easy for her to follow me and also she likes to travel around the world, travelling was her hobby...she really like to living in Europe it was easy for her, only problem was she cannot speak English and for children one was attending to kindergarten so missed her older friends and for the younger one was three years old. So no problem maybe he did not remember that he was actually living in Japan before. (Ryu)"*

Babak's comments about his girlfriend's adjustment period and her way of approaching this issue are very interesting. He said at first his girlfriend was very upset when he decided to come to Sweden. He described her feelings while she was trying to adapt herself to Sweden as *"She is pissed off. Actually now she doesn't like it here. I mean she is coming from a very busy part of the city and she is a very social girl so it is not the best place for her but she is also trying really hard to adapt herself here and she is good in that, she has made some friends...it is much more difficult to motivate her, she does not have the motivation to stay here (Babak)."*

## 4. 4. Life after Sweden

### 4. 4. 1. Career Expectations after Sweden

It is very hard to believe that people decides to live in country without career reasons other than their mother country. Future career expectations depend mainly on the reasons set while accepting international assignment.

*"It is easier when I am back to USA. Basically because of the network you have build and the people that you can contact. All of those factors should help me with advancement and career back in States...I will have a better chance to take new responsibilities since I have this experience because it's kind of sets me apart not many other employees have international experience (Guile)."*

*"If you think about it logically, it will help you because you had some experience of the different working environment so it just helps you, it is not expectation. I don't expect something to happen because of this but it will facilitate. I mean if I take another role I could use this experience and help it (Babak)."*

### 4. 4. 2. Farewell to Sweden

It is expected that every expatriation process requires a farewell to the host country. However there is always a chance to become "native," repatriation is the natural part of expatriation process. Before asking about their feelings and expectations about the repatriation in the home

country, I tried to learn if they ever think about turning back earlier than originally planned. My aim was to understand how deep that “deep period” and how they survived and recovered?

*“I was able to make it work, it was difficult, it was hard to find food that I wanted to eat and to get a comfort zone but I had never consider leaving early (Guile).”*

*“I learnt to adapt myself because in Iran I was little bit “nose up” when you come to Sweden you don’t have any of those support, now you are much smaller part of the big group so you are much less important so then you have to really try to adapt yourself and then you have to find a way to move yourself in the company and get your job done (Babak)”*

*“I tried and will keep trying to learn the language to high school level then if I can communicate, if I can express my thoughts it is a whole different world (Zanda).”*

*“No never ever, ever. I was somebody who is determined and if I had my set on something I will stick it through because I know, I would learned so much, I knew I would learn and I knew come back with a lot of experience and a change of personality (Charles).”*

*“No I never considered turning back to Japan (Ryu).”*

It can be interpreted from the comments that modest, determined, optimistic, out-going and culturally flexible people tend to be more successful in expatriation in Sweden.

None of the participants I have interviewed were repatriated so that I could not really talk about repatriation. Participants’ expectations for repatriation were based on the perceived cultural similarity. I found that expats, who experienced a more different environment in Sweden, tend to believe that repatriation will be problematic. It is also important to note repatriation is easier for the expats coming to Sweden as a part of planned job exchange since they do not need to care about their jobs back home and did not suffer from “out of sight, out of mind” phenomenon.

*“I think I was just got back to my normal life pretty quickly... I don’t think moving back to American culture will be difficult to be honest. I really haven’t changed my work and getting back to American culture will not be difficult and it is probably easier to go and talk to people and to meet new people...I had the opportunity to get an exchange, it will be much harder me going and no one replacing me, when I come back home, I still have my old job (Guile).”*

*“I think repatriation can be problem for me, I personally would like to extend my contact in Sweden, if I go back to Japan in two years then maybe I may not make so much output... Biggest problem when I turn back is the working times. It is their habit but we tend to work on until late. After working in Sweden for several years it must be hard for me to work until too late and also working Japan is so much stressful (Ryu).*

## 4. 5. Summary of Analysis

Expatriation in Sweden is mainly conducted for knowledge transfer purposes. Creating networks and having a global overview of the company were the most frequently stated reasons to become an expat in Sweden. Companies have organized expatriation plans and they are providing different types of support for the incoming expats. Support tends to vary according to the duration of the international assignment.

It was found that not enough attention is given for preparation before coming to Sweden. Only one day of training is said to be offered by the companies. However these were not enough, it is interesting to see that expatriates benefited a lot even from the one day cross-cultural training. But on the long-run, inadequate training will be costly both for the expat and for the company. Participants stated that they have been in Lund before and they are agreed on the value of previous international assignment for adjusting to another country. All stages of the expatriation process are prone to be affected by the cultural saliencies between the host and the home countries.

Working in Lund is not problematic in terms of technical aspects of job. Moreover, flexible and relatively less working hours, respectful managers are favored by the participants. But on the other hand, social side of work is very problematic for expats due to the strong distinction between family-life and work-life in Sweden. Out of work life also suffers in terms of socialization because of the strong, already composed circle of friends. So both work-adjustment and socio-cultural adjustment is found to be problematic because of the peculiar features of the host society. Thus the integrationist behaviors are blocked. U-curve type of cultural adjustment is found to be valid in Sweden but the shape of the “U” is affected by the cultural saliencies.

For the final comments; despite the drawbacks, expatriation in Sweden is found to be an important investment for one’s career. Career expectations for the life after Sweden are optimistic.

# 5. Conclusion

## 5. 1. Theoretical Contribution

None of the participants came to Sweden for filling an empty slot. They came to Sweden either to learn or to teach. Since we are living in a highly connected world in terms of technology, the question arises why these people leave their home country? When I viewed the empirical material as a whole, cultural “*fingerspitzgefühl*” (sensitivity to the context) is the main gain for both the expats and their companies. According to literature, whatever the primary goal of expatriation is, knowledge transfer is the taken for granted outcome of the process. Findings of this study indicated that, in addition to knowledge transfer, cultural “*fingerspitzgefühl*” is also gained by the expats I have interviewed.

A literature review provided a general picture of the expatriation process which is shown in figure 9. This study followed this processual view and tried to find out the availability of it in the Swedish context. However, findings supported that expatriation in Sweden follows the universal expatriation process. According to the key findings of the study, that process needs to be customized.

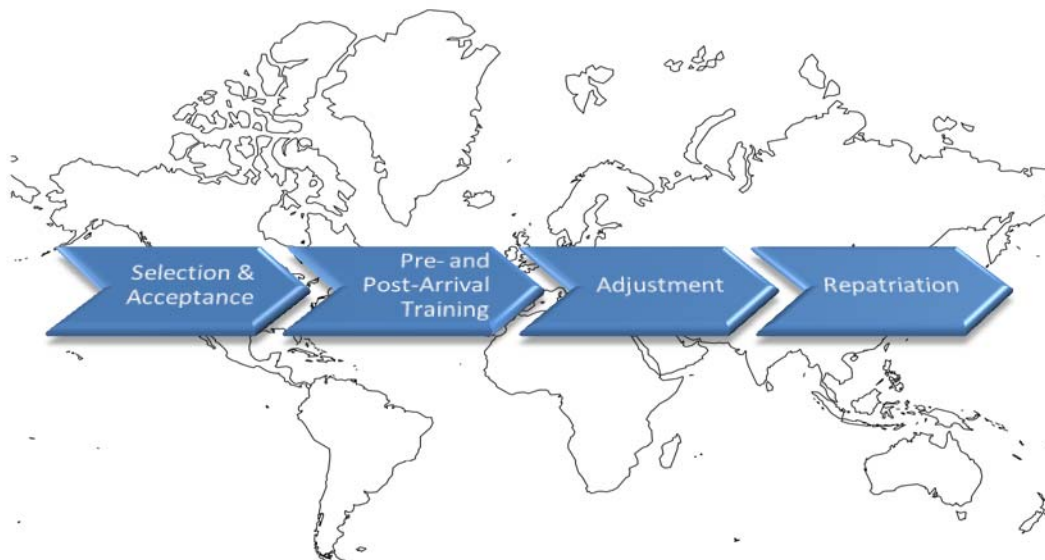


Figure 9: General Picture of the Expatriation Process.



One of the key concepts of the study was national culture. The expatriation process has been viewed from the cultural perspective. It is found that expatriation is highly sensitive to cultural differences.

Cultural saliency is found to be the important determinant of expatriation process as a whole. In order to view the cultural saliency, I have used Hofstede's cultural values and taken Sweden as a reference point. Findings indicated that if there is a larger cultural saliency between the home country and the host country, the expatriation process tends to be problematic. Cultural saliency should be taken into account while hosting expatriates in Sweden.

Adjustment is found to be the most important stage of the expatriation process. A literature review indicated two important theories embracing adjustment process. These are U-Curve Theory and Berry's Model of Acculturation Attitudes.

Empirical findings indicated the validity of U-Curve theory in Swedish context. The shape of the "U" is not universal. Cultural saliency, again, plays an important role for shaping the "U" in Sweden. If the expatriate comes from a country which culturally differs in many dimensions from Sweden, then the deep period tends to be longer. On the other hand, duration of the international assignment also plays an important role while shaping the "U" curve. Expatriates coming to Sweden for shorter period do not care much about adjustment. They are looking forward to accomplishing their tasks and turning back. In that situation, U-Curve theory is not applicable since there is no or less intention for adjustment.

However it is regularly said for the last couple of decades that we are living in a global village, culture shock is not an old-fashioned phenomenon nowadays. Every expat, I interviewed has experienced a more or less similar version of culture shock in Sweden. So everybody has to prepare for that process.

It is perceived that in Sweden everybody speaks English. According to my own experiences and the interviews I have conducted, it is true. This situation decreases the motivation for preparing for a different culture. But interview findings indicated that working in Sweden, even for knowledge workers, requires an intermediate understanding of Swedish. In terms of knowledge work, expats come to Sweden either to learn or to teach but without language none of this can be

realized. A more realistic picture of “everybody speaks English” should be provided in order not to decrease potential expats’ motivation for preparation before coming to Sweden.

Berry’s model offers four alternative attitudes while adjusting to host country culture. According to the research findings, participants give great value for creating a relationship with the HCNs; indeed they have to give because they are working together with them. But this intention is counteracted by some of the peculiar aspects of Swedish culture.

First of all, in Sweden there is a strong distinction between family-life and work-life. As an expat coming to Sweden, maybe the only place where there is an opportunity for socialization is the workplace. The rigid distinction between work-life and family-life blocks the integrationist attitudes of the expats. On the other hand, research illustrated that there is also a strong distinction between friends and non-friends in Sweden. This distinction leads to closed loop socialization. It is very hard for an outsider to become a part of this circle. As a result of these circumstances, although the expats act proactively in order to integrate with HCNs, their efforts may not result in integration. If this situation leads to a diminished willingness for integration then separation from the society unfortunately becomes the alternative.

As a result of the theoretical discussion given above; the redefined process of expatriation (Figure-11) is developed. The redefined model takes its roots from the cultural saliency approach and provides a general framework for expatriation in Sweden. The model assumes that each expatriation process is going to be customized because of the peculiar features of each nation and the interaction within the Swedish context. Peculiarity and cultural saliency can be viewed from the figure-10. Even for 5 countries, it is impossible to track any paternalistic behaviour. For example, research findings indicated that the expatriation process of an English employee is different from the expatriation process of an employee from Japan. The redefined model is dependent on comparing expatriates national culture with Swedish national culture. The salient aspects are important because it is found that the more saliency between each countries culture in any of the Hofstede’s dimension, the more problematic the expatriation process is likely to be experienced. So, the customized expatriation process will focus on those dimensions and provide a tailor-made expatriation model for each case.

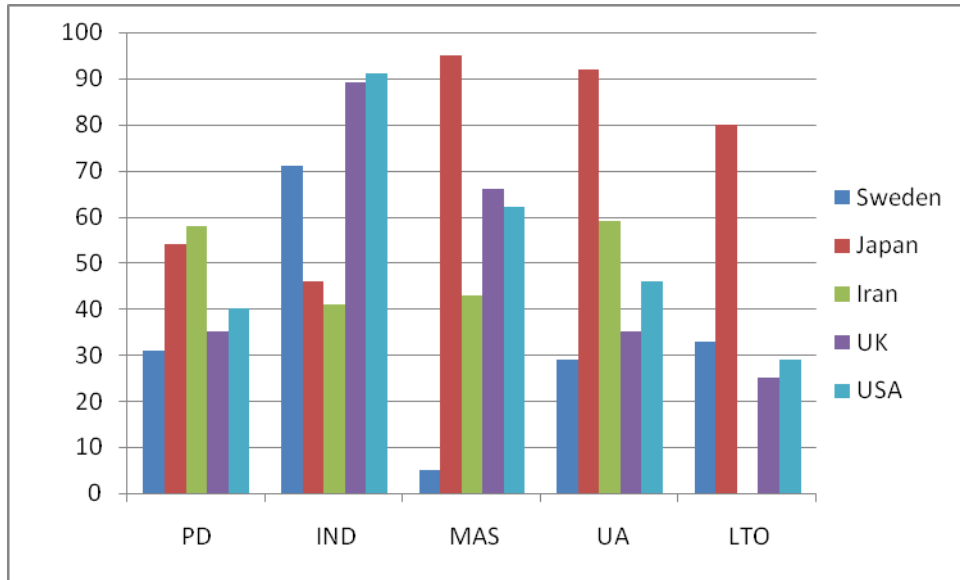


Figure 10: Saliencies among 5 Countries.

(PD: Power Distance, IND: Individualism Vs. Collectivism, MAS: Masculinity Vs. Femininity, UA: Uncertainty Avoidance, LTO: Long-Term Vs. Short-Term Orientation)

Source: Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)



Figure 11: Refined Expatriation Process Model

## 5. 2. Methodological Contribution

Conducting an ethnographically inspired research was a great dare, since the conventional way of data generation in ethnography takes a longer time than the time allocated for this study. This drawback has been surmounted by the method I called “indirect inductive ethnography,” in which the researcher conducts interview with the participants about their observations. Their observations constructed the empirical material of this study.

However, I have used the semi-structured interview as the main data generation technique for this study, each participant’s interview process varied in terms of domain and the richness to the degree to which contributed to the empirical material. This study underlined the importance of cultural saliency while designing research about expatriation. The more cultural saliency experienced by the participants, the more fruitful interview process we had and the more vivid examples were provided.

According to Patton (1980), in qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument. I have maintained this notion and used myself by the support of hermeneutics. Throughout the study, my personal frame of reference was highly used for the sake of reflexivity. This situation has been structured at the very beginning of the study by setting two hermeneutics circles between the Hofstede’s Theory of Culture and Swedish culture and my experiences as an international student and expatriates’ experiences in Sweden. These circles were not only used for the interpretation of the empirical material but also used in all stages of thesis construction. Thus the peculiar methodology as a whole in this study illustrates an example of marriage between ethnography and hermeneutics.

## 5. 3. Empirical Contribution

The research conducted in this study provides five different expatriation stories in Sweden. When you “zoom-out” from the detailed empirical findings and try to view the full picture, stories illustrates the expatriation process from knowledge work perspective in Sweden.

When you “zoom-in” to the empirical material, you may see the expatriation in Sweden from different perspectives. Empirical material provides flexibility to the reader to view the expatriation according to his/her focused area of interest. One may find either the possible

reasons to become expat in Sweden or free-time activities available for expats in Sweden. The study as a whole includes five excerpts from personal life stories of the expats from different parts of the world. Readers may find various real-life examples given by the expats from different countries. So the empirical material of the study provides a gateway to Sweden in terms of expatriation.

## 5. 4. Practical Contribution

From organizational point of view, expatriation process includes at least three actors: expat, HR department and HCNs.

The participants in this study indicated that there are established programs for expatriation in their companies. Expatriates seemed to be satisfied for the support provided by their companies. HR departments should work in collaboration with the sending unit while crafting customized expatriation process on an individual-base. For the Swedish context, since it is problematic to create social ties with HCNs, a mentor should be provided in order to facilitate the adjustment process. This mentor should be appointed at the very beginning of the expatriation process and guide the expat while adjusting to Sweden.

On the other hand, local administration or the branch of local administration responsible for industrial relations should provide guidance for the expatriates coming to Sweden. Social clubs like American Women's Club Malmö or Lund University Foreign Friends (LUFF) should be launched and supported. Since expatriation process includes not only the expat but the family as a whole, these institutions are very important especially for the family adjustment process.

Expatriates should not be tricked by the popular slogans like "world is global village." Everything is so close but on the other hand so far away. You may reach every part of the world in a very short period of time but expatriation is not a business trip or a summer vacation. Working in a foreign culture requires preparation. Expats should prepare themselves for this challenge. Preparation should include all the aspects of adjustment. Training should be started with the first decision to become an expat arises. It is a very natural right for expat to demand this kind of training not only for him/her but also for the family. If getting training is not

convenient because of time, duration and geographical reasons, CD-based or web-based trainings can be used for their asynchronous character.

## 5. 5. Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness in qualitative research finds its meaning while trying to persuade audience that the research findings are worth paying attention (Golafshani, 2003). Guba and Lincoln (1981) propose four criteria in order to enhance the trustworthiness of a qualitative study.

The first criterion offered is *credibility* which means assessment of believability of research findings from the participants' perspective. In this study when I felt doubt or found a major bias between the theory and the findings, I have sent follow-up questions by e-mail to the participants and then double-checked the findings. Moreover, I have requested one participant to read the analysis chapter of the thesis as a whole and provide me with feedback. According to this feedback and the answers to follow-up questions, I tried to increase the credibility of the study. Rapport between the participants and I were based on trust. Moreover, participants were also personally very curious about the research question. This situation increased their willingness to talk and express their feelings, thus generated more fruitful interview sessions.

The second criterion is *transferability* which refers to the degree that findings can be transferred to other contexts. As ethnographically inspired research, the transferability of the research findings is relatively low. I have used direct quotations in order to provide a detailed view of the findings, thus creating vivid examples for the researched phenomenon.

The first to the last criterion is *dependability* which refers to the degree that the research process as a whole takes the contextual changes into account. Context played an important role in every stage of this study. Contextual factors were observed carefully, thus the salencies found and proper actions were taken.

The last criterion is *confirmability*. Confirmability requires research findings confirmed by others. Confirmability is reached by heavy dependence on reflexivity. At the very beginning of the research process, the author's frame of reference is provided in order to present the goggle that I am using while conducting this study. Since the author also experienced a more or less

similar version of expatriation process as student in Sweden, empirical material is interpreted bearing that situation in mind.

## 5. 6. Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should focus on the “Swedified” way of expatriation process. Findings of the study did not lead me for developing this kind of model. Instead, it was found that the expatriation process requires cultural customization and the design of the process mainly depends on cultural saliencies among nations. A study with more participants and in a larger domain should be conducted in order to find out the “Swedified” way of expatriation. The study you have read can serve as a preliminary step to this kind of research project.

Expatriation can be viewed as a journey between two cultures. However, expatriation naturally includes the physical journey; one more journey also takes place during expatriation within the individual which is called inward journey.

The adjustment discussion in this study departs from the view that adjustment is composed of three sub-categories namely; work adjustment, socio-cultural adjustment and psychological adjustment. My study mainly generated empirical material for the work and socio-cultural adjustment domain of the general adjustment phenomenon.

Psychological adjustment is more related to the inward journey that takes place during the expatriation period. Inward journey requires self-awareness and self-examination, thus it can be viewed from an identity constructionist perspective. Expatriation is viewed as part of life that is used for future career investments, so it is part of one’s life story. Advanced, further research should be conducted in order to understand relationship between the expatriation and the life-story of the expat from the narrative nature of the identity perspective.

# Appendix-1 (Inform Consent Form)

Date

Lund/Sweden

Dear Participant;

As you have been informed by e-mail few days ago, I am willing to conduct a research study as a part of my master thesis about expatriation in Sweden.

The Interview is planned to be last in 45-60 minutes. I also would like to record this interview.

The data generated during the interview will only be used for scientific purposes. Your name and company information will be held strictly anonymous.

By signing and writing your name to the space given below, you are voluntarily accepting to participate and agree in the stated terms.

Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation.

Kind regards.

Ozan Ağlargöz

Lund University, School of Economics and Management

Master Program in MPKC

Participant Name and Surname:

Signature:



# Appendix-2 (Interview Guide)

- 1) Can you tell us about your background? Education, family, work experience?
- 2) Can you tell us about your job in Sweden? When you compare it to your former job?
- 3) What is the story that makes you come to Sweden? Why actually Sweden?
- 4) Did you have any other international experience before coming to Sweden? If yes, was it useful?
- 5) Before going to Sweden, did you do anything to prepare yourself? Did your company do any kind of service? What kind of issues were you curious about most?
- 6) How was your adjustment period? How do you describe it? Family? Did you get bored and think about turning back?
- 7) Did you generally look for the stuff you use, eat in your home country? Or it does not matter?
- 8) What do you think about the Swedish culture in general? Did you have chance to experience it?
- 9) After starting your job in Sweden, did you get any support from your company you are working for? What kind?
- 10) How do you describe your relationship with Swedish colleagues and managers? Can you compare with your own country?
- 11) Did you easily communicate with the Swedish people outside the company? How easy? Did you do anything to make it more comfortable?
- 12) What kinds of activities (sports, arts, hobbies etc.) were you enjoy doing before you came to Sweden? Did you keep on doing? If not, why? What has changed in your life?
- 13) Do you think that being expat within the same company is an advantage for you? How would it be different if you come to Sweden and work for another company?
- 14) What are your expectations for the future, repatriation, any intention extend your contact in Sweden?
- 15) What do you think about the Swedish working culture in general? When you compare?

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