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## The intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses and children

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*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

2003

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Ali, A. J. (2003). *The intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses and children: an empirical study on the determinants contributing to the success of expatriation*. s.n.

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## ***Chapter 3***

### ***The Intercultural Adaptation Process Among Expatriate Spouses and Children***

- 3.1 Culture and acculturation**
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*Chapter 3 concentrates on determinants of well-being among expatriate spouses and children. The chapter is structured as follows. First, the concepts of culture and acculturation in general are discussed as well as their application to intercultural adaptation and adjustment of expatriate spouses and children. Next, the chapter elaborates the phases of expatriate spouses' and children's adaptation during expatriation (pre-assignment, early, late, and post-assignment). This chapter ends with a discussion of studies that examined determinants of intercultural adaptation among expatriate spouses and children.*

### 3.1 Culture and Acculturation

Chapter 2 presented a literature overview that shows the importance of expatriate spouses and children to the success of the expatriates' international business assignments. We know that living in a new environment and culture in a host country is a challenging experience. An overseas assignment is a change, which requires the expatriates, their spouses and children to restructure, develop, and adapt in response to the requirements of the new environment.

#### 3.1.1 Culture

Scholars have provided us with several definitions of culture. Among the most popular definition is the definition by Hofstede (1986, 1991) defined culture as “the collective mental programming distinguishing people in one group from people in other groups”, and describes it as “the software of the mind”. Reviewing 164 definitions of culture, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1963) concluded that culture “consists of patterns that are either explicit or implicit and of behavior that is either acquired or transmitted by symbols. Culture also expresses distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts. The essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.” Terpstra and David (1985) defined culture as a learned, shared, compelling, interrelated set of symbols whose meaning provides a set of orientations for members of society. According to the authors, taken together, these orientations provide solutions to problems that all societies must solve in order to remain viable.

Punnett and Ricks (1992) and Punnett (1998) added that there are several elements to the definition given by Terpstra and David (1985) above, which are important to gain better understanding of the relationship of cultural issues and international management. Those elements are (Punnett, 1998, p. 11):

1. Culture is learned. This means that it is not innate; people are socialized from childhood to learn the rules and norms of their culture. It also means that when one goes to another culture, it is possible to learn the rules of a new culture.
2. Culture is shared. This means that the focus is on those things that are shared by members of particular group rather than on individual differences.

3. Culture is compelling. This means that specific behavior is determined by culture without individuals being aware of the influence of their culture, as such; it means that it is important to understand culture in order to understand behavior.
4. Culture is interrelated. This means that although various facets of culture can be examined in isolation, they should be understood in context of the whole; as such, it means that a culture needs to be studied as a complete entity.
5. Culture provides orientation to people. This means that a particular cultural group tends to react in the same way to a given stimulus; as such, it means that understanding a culture can help in determining how group members might react in various situations.

In the present study, we follow the definition of culture given by Terpstra and David (1985).

### **3.1.2 Acculturation**

The culture in which we are raised strongly affects our norms and behaviour. Going from one culture to another requires a process of acculturation. Rieger and Wong Rieger (1991) defined acculturation as “the process by which group members from one cultural background adapt to the culture of a different group”. According to Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary (1996), acculturation means the modification of cultural traits induced by contacts between people having different ways of life or in short, culture change. The Dictionary of Business and Management (Rosenberg, 1983) defines the acculturation period as “a period following introduction of a new procedure or policy during which workers who are affected by it, have time to adjust”.

Berry and Kailin (1995) identified two dimensions of acculturation: cultural preservation and partner attractiveness. Cultural preservation is the extent to which members of a cultural sub-group need to preserve their own cultural norms whereas partner attractiveness is the extent to which members of a cultural sub-group are attracted to the norms of the larger society in which they operate. Based on these two dimensions, four basic orientations to cultural group relations are possible:

- integration (attraction to partner’s culture and preservation of own cultural norms)

- assimilation (attraction to partner's culture but non-preservation of own cultural norms)
- separation/segregation (preservation of own cultural norms but non-attraction to partner's culture)
- marginalization (non-preservation of own cultural norms and non-attraction to partner's culture)

Based on studies of immigrant and sojourner populations, Berry and Kailin (1995) showed that integration was the most optimal form of interaction between people from two cultures, while marginalization was the most dysfunctional mode. Between these two extremes are assimilation and separation. Furthermore, they argued that integration is the most suitable form since those who are applying this orientation integrate themselves into the other culture and at the same time remain loyal to their own culture.

This typology can be applied to the process of acculturation of expatriate spouses and children in the host country (Tung, 1998). If an expatriate member chooses to integrate, the better elements of the host and home country cultures are “preserved, combined and expanded upon to create a new whole...the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Tung, 1998). Integrating expatriate spouses and children are attracted to the local cultures. They will try to learn about the cultures of the locals and they are interested to know more about aspects such as a country's history, geography and economy. At the same time these expatriates maintain their own culture. Expatriate spouses and children who assimilate norms and behavioural patterns of the host country are similar to those who integrate. However, the former group is more open to “absorb” and “accept” the locals' cultures. Expatriate spouses and children who belong to this group unconsciously lose their own cultural norms. However, while promoting local responsiveness, this strategy is not conducive to global integration. Meanwhile, expatriate spouses and children who choose to separate/segregate retain their distinct set of norms and behaviour. They preserve their own cultures and they are not attracted to the locals' cultures. This group will be likely to experience difficulties in adapting and adjusting to the local cultures and situation. They retain their own cultures and they do not want to accept a foreign culture even though they are temporarily part of that culture. Expatriate spouses and children who are marginalized either reject or are rejected by both the host and the home country cultures. This group will probably also experience difficulties in adjusting to the new environment in the host country.

To conclude, it seems that integrating and assimilating groups are most likely to survive and succeed in their expatriation assignments. These two groups are open to the cultures of the foreign countries. In respect to the present study, the degree of “interaction with the local nationals/intercultural interaction” was used as an outcome variable of the intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses and children.

### **3.1.4 Intercultural Adaptation**

In the field of intercultural adaptation/adjustment, a few scholars tried to give definition to intercultural adaptation/adjustment. Generally, intercultural adaptation/adjustment can be defined as “the degree of psychological comfort with various aspects of a host country” (Black, 1988; Oberg, 1960; Nicholson, 1984). In its most general sense, intercultural adaptation/adjustment refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. Zhang and Rentz (1996) discussed that the terms intercultural adaptation and intercultural adjustment are often used interchangeably. In the present thesis, intercultural adaptation and adjustment both refer to expatriate spouses’ and children’s ability to cope with the environment sufficiently and efficiently and to function as comfortably in the new culture as the home culture (by borrowing the definition of intercultural adaptation/adjustment given by Zhang and Rentz, 1996).

A distinction can be made between psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological adaptation refers to internal psychological outcomes such as mental health and personal satisfaction. Socio-cultural adaptation refers to external psychological outcomes that link individuals to their new context such as the ability to deal with daily problems, particularly in the areas of family life, work and school (see Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999).

In the present thesis, indicators of both psychological and socio-cultural adaptation were included. In addition, intercultural interaction was added as another dimension of intercultural adaptation (Kealey & Ruben, 1983). This dimension was defined by having an interest in and being able to deal with people from other cultures and can be regarded as a sub-dimension of socio-cultural adaptation. Black (1988), and Black and Stephens (1989) made an interesting remark by saying that intercultural adjustment is a multifaceted construct where expatriate spouses adjust to interacting with host nationals and to the general foreign environment (Black & Stephen, 1989).

Therefore, these three dimensions of intercultural adaptation—psychological adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation and intercultural interaction are used as the dependent variables in this thesis. By referring to these dimensions, we could conclude that in order for expatriate spouses and children to adjust to a host country, they have to be psychologically healthy, able to function effectively in daily life, and able to interact with the local people.

Therefore, these three dimensions of intercultural adaptation — psychological adaptation, socio-cultural adaptation and intercultural interaction will be used as the dependent variables in the present thesis.

### **3.2 Two cyclic perspectives on the adaptation process of expatriate spouses and children**

In this section, two theoretical perspectives on the adaptation process of expatriate spouses and children are presented. Acculturation requires expatriate spouses and children to integrate with the local culture and local people. But, how does this work over time? There are two developmental perspectives that can be related to adjustment of spouses and children to the host country. The two perspectives are:

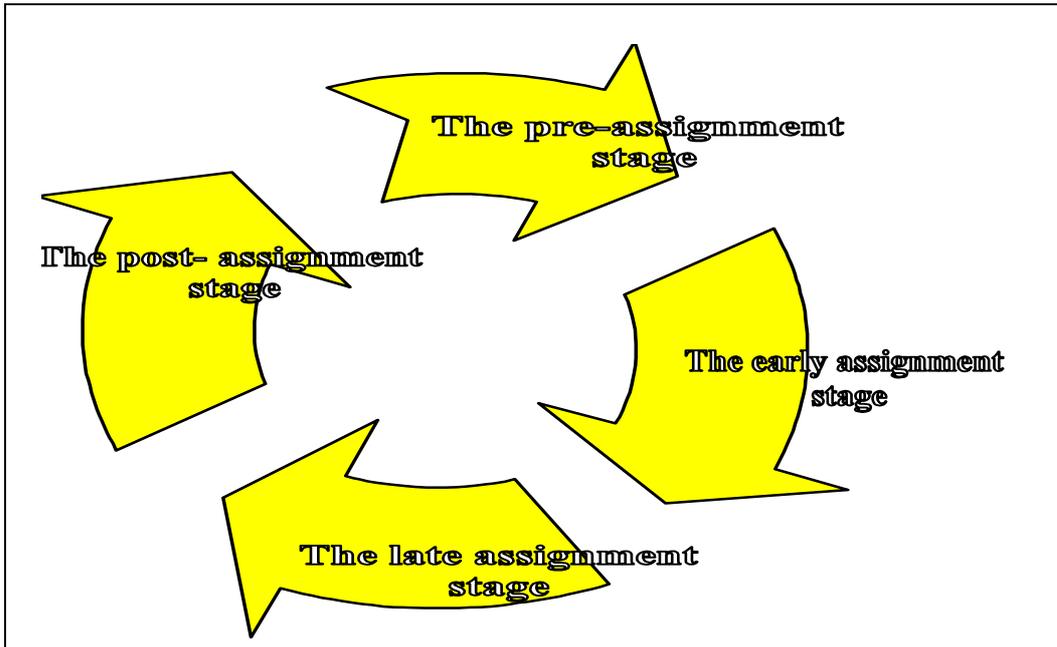
- Expatriate Life Cycle (Punnett, 1997),
- U-Curve Theory of Adjustment

These two perspectives will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### **3.2.1 Expatriate spouses and children's life cycle**

First, we would like to discuss a theoretical perspective that describes the adaptation process of expatriates in terms of a life cycle model. Relating her theory to the continuous relocation that an expatriate and his/her family members may face, Punnett (1997) introduces the Expatriate's Life Cycle (Figure 3.1). In the theory, Punnett describes four stages that expatriates and their family members may pass through before, during, and after expatriation.

**Figure 3.1**  
**The Expatriate's Life Cycle**



Source: Punnett, B. J. (1997)

According to Punnett (1997), the expatriate life cycle can be thought of as encompassing four stages:

- pre-assignment,
- early assignment,
- late assignment and
- post-assignment

### **3.2.1.1 The Pre-assignment Stage**

The international company wants to select the best candidates for their international business assignments. Given the importance of the spouses, this means assessing the spouses as well as the candidates' suitability and motivation for the international business assignments. The spouse must be willing to relocate, and preferably be motivated to relocate. Thereby, expatriates' willingness to relocate seems strongly related to their spouses' attitude toward relocation (Right Associate's Survey, cited by Flynn, 1996).

Adler (1991, p. 268) argued that particularly during the pre-departure phase, expatriate spouses are threatened by the uncertainties that they have to face in the foreign countries. Some of them are reluctant to express their uncertainties openly to their spouses since they do not want to disappoint them. They may feel that they have to be supportive in view of their spouses' career development. Expatriate children may be equally uncertain about the move. Teenagers, especially, may experience difficulties with the changes: finding new friends, schools and social lives in the host country (Adler, 1991, p. 268).

The relocation process is particularly difficult for a dual-income couple in which case one of the partners has to give up his/her job in order to join the other partner. The spouse of the expatriate candidate has to make a big decision to leave his or her current job in the home country. This means that by giving up one job, the family lacks one source of income. Beyond the altered financial state and employment, the trailing spouse may lose social support provided by extended family and friends and problems may emerge associated with children's unwillingness to relocate (Wiggins-Frame and Shehan, 1994). The expatriate spouse may experience significant problems due to loss of professional identity as well as difficulties in finding employment during the relocation.

Realizing the importance of the intercultural adaptation and adjustment of expatriates and their trailing family members, some companies offer expatriate spouses and children intercultural training before departure (Shaffer, 1994). According to Punnet (1997), learning the language of the host country is usually a critical component of the training, but other aspects of culture are also important, as well as practical issues such as understanding the foreign currency and food habits. It is important for expatriate spouses to undergo the language training program because the spouses have to interact in the foreign culture on a daily basis, for example in buying food, finding transportation, and taking children to school (Punnet, 1997). Unfortunately, Shaffer (1994) stressed that only a few companies involved the trailing expatriate spouses and children in intercultural training.

### **3.2.2.2 The Early Assignment Stage**

When the expatriate family members enter the host country, they are in a phase referred to as the early assignment stage. Initially, most couples will enjoy the foreign experience, but they may need additional language lessons, and they will need a support system made up of people who can

help them with the necessary arrangements for housing, schooling, transportation, and so on.

During this stage, the expatriate's family members may feel excited and they could experience the feeling tourists have in a foreign country. In this phase, many of them seem to enjoy the new experience of the new cultures and environment, a period that Punnet (1997) refers to as the honeymoon period.

However, the feelings of excitement do not last long. When the family members start to experience the "real" culture of the foreign country, which may be sometimes disorientating and totally different from their own, they may feel irritated and disturbed. Suddenly, they may find it hard to accept the foreign culture and environment. Punnet (1997) refers to this period as the period of culture shock. During this period, expatriate spouses and children may feel unaccepted by the local people. For example, a study by De Leon and Mc Partlin (1995) among expatriate children in Hong Kong revealed that these children felt that the local people hated them for being in Hong Kong and that the locals were rude towards them. The expatriate spouses tended to withdraw, and they particularly needed other expatriate spouses with whom they could discuss their concerns. This stage can be especially difficult for expatriate spouses aspiring a job in the host country who have not been able to find work or other productive activities. The phase is characterized by feelings of frustration, language barriers, loneliness, boredom, and meaninglessness (Adler, 1991, p. 268).

Sometimes expatriate family members, in most cases the expatriate spouses, are not capable of getting through this stage. Research shows that family members may suffer emotionally and that they may experience living in a foreign country as an unpleasant experience (De Cieri, Dowling and Taylor, 1991; Harvey, 1985).

Pre-departure preparation (for example, attending a cross-cultural training beforehand) and social support as well as company support may help to ease the difficult experiences. Pre-departure intercultural training has proven to be effective for expatriates in helping them to adjust and adapt effectively to the life and working environment in the host countries (Halcrow, 1999). Unsurprisingly, pre-departure intercultural training also seems to be a helpful tool for their spouses and children to adapt and adjust themselves in the host countries (Flynn, 1995; Halcrow, 1999) but such training seems to be less available to them (Ronen, 1989; Shaffer, 1994).

### 3.2.2.3 The Late Assignment Stage

If the expatriate family continues to face difficulties and adjustment problems persist, then the expatriate family enters the late assignment stage, which lasts until the assignment is completed. Support from the company is still needed. During this period, maintaining contacts with the home country becomes important. Some companies offer home-based mentors for their expatriates in order to support them. Similarly, expatriate spouses need to keep in touch with events at home.

### 3.2.2.4 The Post-Assignment Stage

The final stage of the expatriate assignment is post-assignment. Although researchers have pointed at the importance of managing this stage, companies tend to assume that “coming home” is easy. This is not the case. Expatriate family members have to reestablish themselves in a new environment. They may again find themselves going through a cycle of culture shock. All of this may be especially hard to deal with because this is home and logically speaking it should be easy to reestablish one’s life.

## 3.2.2 The U-Curve Theory of Adjustment and Culture Shock

The second theory that describes the phases of expatriate adjustment over time is the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment (see Figure 3.2). This theory emphasizes the stages of adaptation of an expatriate while living in a host country. This theory has been most consistently used as a theoretical perspective on cross-cultural research (e.g., Black and Mendenhall, 1991). The U-Curve Theory of Adjustment seems also relevant to the lives of expatriate spouses and children. The four stages of adjustment are:

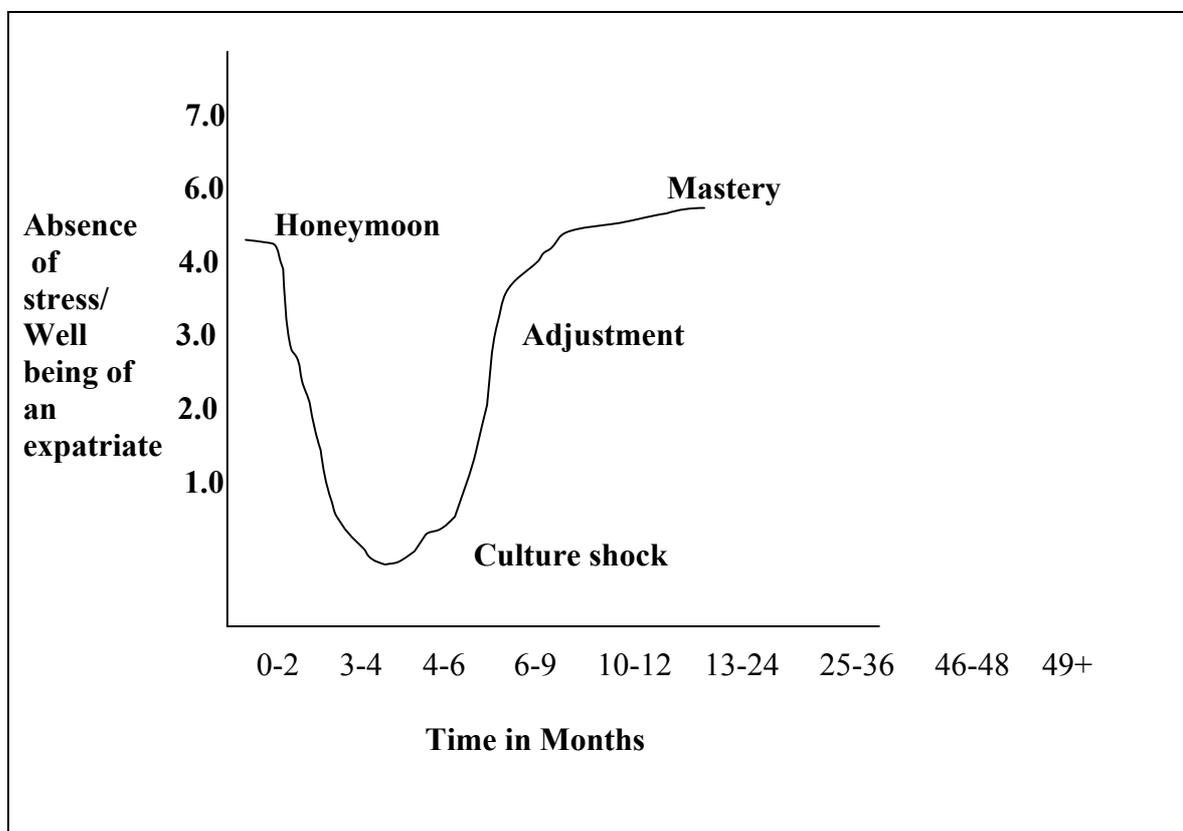
- Honeymoon stage
- Culture shock/disillusionment stage
- Adjustment stage
- Mastery stage

During the honeymoon stage, expatriate spouses and children usually are excited with all the new interesting things offered by a host country: at this stage, the feeling of being tourists in the host country can not be avoided. This period could range from two weeks to the first couple of months until the culture shock/disillusionment stage intervenes. This is the stage where expatriate spouses and children start to feel uneasy or uncomfortable with the daily life in the host county. This phase requires an adequate coping response. Some may take this stage very hard

and they are not able to proceed to the other stages but for those who “survive”, this stage will progress to the adjustment stage. The adjustment stage is the period where expatriate spouses and children feel comfortable and gradually accept the new culture; increasingly they are able to function effectively in spite of some disturbances. The final stage is the mastery stage where expatriate spouses and children possess the ability to function and live effectively in the host country.

Interestingly, De Cieri et al. (1991) found that the amount of culture shock was negatively associated with psychological adjustment of the expatriate spouses in the early phases of expatriation. Meanwhile, a study by Forster (1997) showed that over 80% of the respondents (expatriates and their spouses) reported either positive or neutral outcomes after eight months of relocation. This finding is consistent with the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment’s hypothesis that assumes that after eight months of relocation, expatriate spouses and children are able to move into the adjustment stage.

**Figure 3.2**  
**The U-Curve of Cross-cultural Adjustment**



Derived from Black and Mendenhall (1991)

A perspective that is closely related to the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment is forwarded by Deresky (1997) and Oberg (1960). They distinguish four stages that are largely similar to the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment. The four stages are: the honeymoon stage, the irritation/hostility stage, the gradual adjustment stage, and finally, the bi-culturalism stage. The bi-culturalism stage is the stage in which expatriate spouses and children grow to accept and appreciate local people and practices as well as being able to function effectively in two cultures. Bi-culturalism is hard to achieve. Many never get to this stage but those who do, report that their assignment is positive and growth-oriented (Deresky, 1997, p. 283).

Both perspectives on expatriate spouses and children's intercultural adjustment (Expatriate Life Cycle Theory and the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment) clearly show that expatriate spouses and children do not have an "easy life" while adapting to the host country.

### **3.3 Studies on the determinants of intercultural adaptation among expatriate spouses and children**

As we have argued in the previous chapter, most studies that pointed out the importance of the adaptation and adjustment of the trailing expatriate spouses and children in the foreign country (e.g., Tung, 1987; Black & Stephen, 1991) did not involve expatriate spouses and children directly in their studies, and in most cases those studies that did pay attention to expatriate spouses and children used expatriates as the informants. There are a few studies that directly involved expatriate spouses and children (e.g., Shaffer & Harrison, 2001, 1998; Shaffer, 1996; De Leon & Mc Partlin, 1995; Black & Gregersen, 1991; Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1987). For example, Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1987) surveyed expatriates and their spouses on their satisfaction with expatriation. They found that 71% of the spouses felt that their foreign experience was worthwhile and only 33% wanted to accompany their spouses on another international assignment. This is understandable because, as we have argued repeatedly, the adjustment process for expatriate spouses in the host country may be frustrating and stressful since they are isolated from family and friends and living in an environment with different legal, political and social (cultural and language) systems (Albright, Chu & Austin, 1993). However, Gomez-Mejia and Balkin's (1987) finding is consistent with Foster's (1997) findings that showed five out of six

expatriate spouses reported positive outcomes of their international assignments.

What determines whether expatriate spouses and children will succeed in adapting to the new environment? Recently, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) argued that current theories of expatriate adjustment are not adequate in explaining spouses' and children's adjustment and suggested that expatriate spouses and children require "their" own theories. Shaffer and Harrison (2001) reasoned that expatriates generally arrive at a new assignment with a defined role, a set of responsibilities, and an established organisational support system. In contrast, expatriate spouses usually do not have a job and they are more heavily involved in daily life in the host country. Shaffer and Harrison (2001) further argued that expatriate spouses are generally more directly involved with the local environment on a daily basis than expatriates themselves and the former tend to have different responsibilities than in the home country. Therefore, existing theories on intercultural adaptation in the expatriation field that in majority heavily emphasise work-related factors are not relevant to expatriate spouses and children.

There are some studies that present models of expatriate family adjustment. For example, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) performed an extensive research on the factors that contribute to the expatriate spouses' adaptation. In their study, they divided the factors into three groups:

- Individual factors: Language fluency, change in employment status, general self-efficacy, and social efficacy
- Environmental factors: Cultural novelty (the gap of differences between the home and host country culture), favorable living conditions, assignment duration certainty
- Interpersonal relationships factors:
  - i. Family relationships: Extended family support, expatriate adjustment, and parental demands
  - ii. Social network relationships: network size, breadth of support, and depth of support from MNCs and non-MNCs.

With respect to individual factors, host-country language fluency, social efficacy and self-efficacy were found to be important antecedents of spouses' adjustment. Change in employment status did not appear as a unique predictor of spouse adjustment. With respect to environmental factors, favorable living conditions, and assignment duration certainty turned out to be significant antecedents of spouses' adjustment whereby cultural novelty was found to be negatively related to the spouses' adjustment. With respect to family relationships, extended family support,

expatriate adjustment and parental demands were all found to be significant factors in influencing spouses' adjustment. Positive parental demands indicate that the expatriate spouses with younger or school-aged children experienced better personal adjustment than those with no children accompanying them on the assignment. Regarding social network relationships, all variables except depth of support from non-MNCs were found to be positively related to spouses' adjustment. These findings strengthen Shaffer's (1996) earlier findings that also showed that culture novelty, comparable living conditions, support satisfaction, and family support were significant predictors of expatriate spouses' adjustment.

Black and Gregersen (1991) claimed that their study was the first to systematically examine the antecedents that influence expatriate spouses' adaptation. In their cross-sectional study, questionnaires were sent to American expatriates and their spouses living in England, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, and Taiwan. The results of their study indicated that involving expatriate spouse's opinion about the international business assignment, expatriate spouse's self-initiated pre-departure training, and social support from family and host country nationals during the overseas assignment showed a positive relationship with expatriate spouses' intercultural interaction adjustment. The results of their study also showed that firms seeking the spouses' opinion about the intercultural assignments and standard of living in the host country were positively related to spouses' general adjustment. In addition, their study indicated that pre-move visit, the firm seeking the spouses' opinion about the overseas assignment, total time in the overseas assignment, favorable living conditions, and culture novelty were significantly related to both spouses' general and interaction adjustment.

In a more recent study, Copeland and Norell (2002) studied expatriate spouses' intercultural adjustment among 194 expatriate spouses who lived in one of 17 countries in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, or Latin America. They found that expatriate spouses with higher intercultural adjustment were in more cohesive families, had had more involvement in the decision to move, felt they had fewer losses in friendship networks, had more functions of social support adequately met, and received more of their support from local rather than long-distance providers, compared with those with lower adjustments.

Another interesting determinant of intercultural adaptation among expatriate spouses and children is support from the company. Black and Gregersen (1991) highlighted three factors of relevance to expatriate spouses' intercultural interaction adjustment in the foreign country. First,

whether or not firms seek the expatriate spouses' opinions about the international assignment seemed to affect expatriate spouses' adjustment. The second and third factors were the expatriate spouses' self-initiated pre-departure training and social support from host country nationals and family during the international assignment. Furthermore, De Cieri et al. (1991) showed that company assistance was found to be the most important positive predictor of psychological adjustment of the spouses, particularly in the early stages of expatriation. In their cross-sectional study, Guzzo, Noonan and Elron (1994) asked expatriates to rate company practices in terms of how much support was provided to them and their family. The authors used scores on a 5-point scale to reflect how much assistance the company provided. The results (median) were: financial support (2.76), general support (2.3), and family support (1.69). The results showed that companies gave less assistance to expatriate spouses and children. Black and Stephens (1989) showed that cross-cultural training is important to the intercultural adaptation among expatriate spouses and children. However, Ronen (1989) and Shaffer (1994) found that spouses and children were rarely involved in training prior to departure or any intercultural training.

Family factors and support from the companies have been proved to be among the factors that influence expatriate spouses' and children's intercultural adaptation. In the present study, family factors and support from the companies will also be studied as determinants of expatriate spouses' and children's intercultural adaptation.

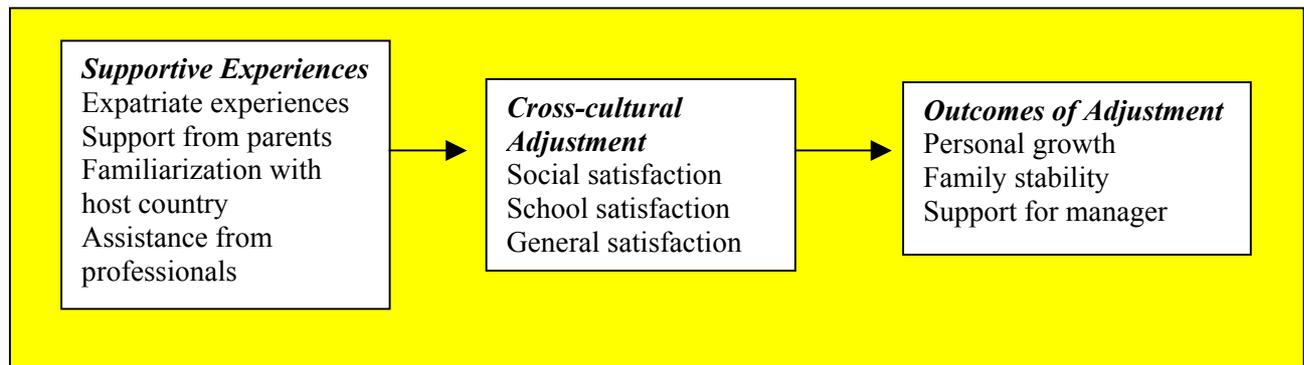
### **3.3.1 Issues on expatriate children's intercultural adaptation**

The issue of the expatriate children's adaptation is highly neglected. Scientific research on the adaptation of the expatriate children is scarce. Gaylord (1979) found that children experience relocation to be most stressful at the ages of 3 to 5 years, and 14 to 16 years. Those who are 3 to 5 years old often experience emotional difficulties and those between the ages of 14 to 16 largely suffer from social frustration because of the relocation. Spouses reported that their children had experienced problems either in adapting to the new schools or making friends four months after the move (Forster, 1997).

De Leon and McPartlin (1995) have proposed a model of adjustment of expatriate children (see Figure 3.3). Their model assumes that supportive experiences such as the expatriation experience, general support they get from their parents, familiarizing themselves with the host

country, and getting assistance from professionals contribute to children's cross-cultural adjustment. The model suggests that if a high level of cross-cultural adjustment is reached, this in turn contributes to own personal growth, family stability, and support for the working parent in the host country.

**Figure 3.3**  
**The Model of Adjustment of Expatriate Children**



Source: De Leon and McPartlin (1995)

De Leon and McPartlin (1995) carried out an empirical study in order to test their model. Their study revealed that the more supportive the experiences gathered by the expatriate children, the better their cross-cultural adjustment was. Their study also showed that expatriate children who had enough time to prepare for the move were significantly more satisfied in the host country. De Leon and McPartlin (1995) found that the majority of the children believed that their parents did not support them emotionally. Those who discussed the move with their parents were significantly more satisfied with their schools than those who had not. Unsurprisingly, the results of the study showed that the extent of social satisfaction in the host country was positively related to the levels of general satisfaction and school satisfaction. In addition, the above study by De Leon and McPartlin proved that the more supportive activities a child had experienced, the higher the social satisfaction. The study also revealed that total and social satisfaction was significantly increased for those who had met other expatriate children. In contrast, activities such as visiting the host country and reading about the country before the relocation did not contribute to children's total satisfaction.

Tung (1998) in her empirical study among expatriates presented some interesting facts regarding family demographics and adjustment to the

host country. Expatriates with children were more prone to socialize with other expatriates. In addition, Tung found that expatriates with spouses who worked full-time were more likely to be engaged in exploring the host country culture and language than those whose spouses did not work outside of home or who worked part-time. Expatriates with children were also more inclined to pursue such activities. This may stem from the greater desire of expatriates to engage in activities the entire family can participate in; examples are sightseeing and visits to museums. Not surprisingly, Tung (1998) showed that expatriates with children in the host country desired more time to spend at home than expatriates without children.

### **3.4 Concluding remarks**

This chapter presented an overview of theories, studies and factors that are related to the intercultural adaptation process experienced by expatriate spouses and children. We totally agree with Shaffer and Harrison (2001) that current theories of expatriate adaptation are not adequate in explaining expatriate spouses' and children's intercultural adaptation. Expatriate spouses and children need their "own" theories and models of intercultural adaptation and that is one of the present study's goals, to produce a theoretical model that stems from direct contact of this group. Our theoretical model of the intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses and children will be presented in the next chapter (Chapter 4). This theoretical model incorporates three determinants of intercultural adaptation of expatriate spouses, namely, personal characteristics, family characteristics and expatriates' work characteristics.

