
An Examination of the Goodness-of-Fit Between the Expatriate Adjustment Model and Self-Selecting Expatriates

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of globalization has drastically changed the world in which we live. In the past, the idea of “going abroad” was the domain of affluent individuals and corporate powerhouses. Today, common belief holds that globalization affects us all, from the international corporate executive to the local mom-and-pop supplier who builds a presence on the World Wide Web. Businesses seek new opportunities outside of their home countries in order to capture, or maintain, competitive advantage. Reflecting this, the academic literature of the past two decades has produced an explosion of research focusing on both the antecedents and consequences of globalised commerce. In the academic domain of human resource management (HRM), a distinct strand of research has evolved into what is termed international human resource management (IHRM). Within IHRM, a particularly robust area of research has focused on expatriate issues. Topics studied in this area include management, adjustment, compensation, and repatriation, among others. The overwhelming majority of expatriate research focuses solely on one category of expatriate: the employee sent 'abroad' on a temporary assignment to a subsidiary of his or her employing corporation. This paper argues that while the research conducted on this type of expatriate is appropriate for the existing model, it does not universally pertain to expatriates who do not fit this category. This author seeks to point out the weaknesses of the extant literature concerning to other types of expatriates. More specifically, the topic of expatriate adjustment will be examined, with a primary focus on the model of adjustment as developed by Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991). This paper will conclude with areas of further research that should be explored with regard to expatriate adjustment.

EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Adjustment is defined as the psychological comfort expatriates experience with regard to the overseas work assignment and environment in which they are operating (Gregersen & Black 1990). This definition can be expanded by Brett's (1980) assertion that one of the primary processes of adjustment is that of reducing uncertainty. Furthermore, Black (1988) and Black and Stephens (1989) conceptualized adjustment into three distinct facets: work, interaction, and general adjustment. Work adjustment refers to the psychological adjustment to the expatriate's job and work assignments. Interaction adjustment measures the degree of comfort expatriates feel when interacting with the host country nationals. General adjustment refers to the degree of adjustment the expatriate experiences with regard to issues of living in the foreign environment, to include housing, shopping, and food.

Black, *et al.* (1991) proposed a typology of factors thought to be influential on the three facets of adjustment. These factors are categorized into four types: job, organizational, nonwork, and individual. Job factors include role clarity, discretion, novelty, and conflict. Organizational factors include organization culture novelty, social support, and logistical help. Nonwork factors include culture novelty and family-spouse adjustment, while individual factors are self-efficacy, relation skills and perception skills. Shaffer, Harrison and Gilley (1999) have expanded this model to include two additional individual factors: previous assignments and language fluency. Furthermore, they

propose a fifth category described as positional: hierarchical level, functional area, and assignment vector. These models propose that those factors that increase uncertainty will inhibit adjustment, while those that reduce uncertainty will facilitate adjustment (Black, *et al.* 1991). It is important to note that the Black, *et al.* (1991) model is an integration of both domestic and international adjustment. The job, organizational and individual factors are based on the domestic adjustment literature. Only the nonwork factors stem from the international perspective. In addition, the Black *et al.* model proposes two dimensions of adjustment: pre-departure and in-country. Several studies show moderate to robust support for this model of expatriate adjustment (Black, *et al.* 1991; Shaffer & Harrison 1998; Shaffer, *et al.* 1999; Takeuchi, Yun & Russell 2002). Subsequent researchers have proposed differing models of expatriate adjustment (e.g. Birdseye & Hill 1995; Caligiuri, Joshi & Lazarova 1999; Hechanova, Beehr & Christiansen 2003; Kraimer, Wayne & Jaworski 2001). However, these models still exhibit the influence of the Black *et al.* model, in that the three facets of adjustment are delineated into work, interaction, and general. Moreover, the factors influencing these adjustment factors have not been replaced in the subsequent models; rather, additional factors have been identified. Nevertheless, these further models have not been empirically tested beyond the initial research conducted by the authors; only the Black, *et al.* model has been further validated by outside research efforts. Indeed, Bhaskar-Shrinivas, *et al.* (2004, p. A1) describe this model as "easily the most influential and often-cited theoretical treatment" of expatriate adjustment, and a quick search of the most popular electronic databases proves this to be the case: Business Source Premier lists 73 citations of the Black, *et al.* paper, while the Social Science Citation Index details 117 citations. Therefore, the Black, *et al.* model is the natural choice of focus for examination.

THE BLACK, ET AL. MODEL

As mentioned above, the Black, *et al.* (1991) model delineates international adjustment into three facets: work adjustment, interaction adjustment, and general adjustment. Therefore, this model assumes that different antecedent variables will impact the facets of adjustment in different ways. Further, the antecedent variables which affect these facets of adjustment can be categorized into two realms: anticipatory adjustment and in-country adjustment. The variables found in each realm of adjustment will be explained further.

Anticipatory Adjustment

Anticipatory adjustment refers to those antecedents that are in place prior to the expatriate departing for the international assignment. Black, *et al.* (1991, p. 305) hold that the inclusion of anticipatory adjustment in the model is important, for "if appropriate anticipatory adjustments are made, the actual adjustment in the new international setting will be easier and quicker". Black and colleagues separate these adjustment factors into two categories: individual and organizational. Individual factors are those which will influence the expatriate's formation of expectations of the international assignment. Such expectations might be fashioned regarding the job itself, the organization for which the expatriate will work, the host-country nationals, the national culture of the host-country, and daily life in the foreign environment. Black and colleagues propose that the more accurate the expectations of the individual with regards to the international assignment, the easier and quicker the in-country adjustment process will be. In other words, accurate pre-departure preparation on the part of the expatriate should help to reduce uncertainty levels once arriving and settling into the new country. According to the adjustment model, expatriates form their expectations on training and previous experience. Pre-departure cross-cultural training can be either initiated by the expatriates themselves, or provided by the employing organization. Such training supplies information needed to reduce the uncertainty that would be experienced in an unfamiliar environment. Training content could include descriptive country/area information, social rituals, religious practices, negotiation patterns, deep-seated cultural values, and language training.

Mendenhall and Oddou (1985) hold that the greater the cultural toughness of the international assignment (i.e., the greater the cultural distance (Church 1982) between the expatriate's home culture and that of the host country), the more extensive the training that is undertaken should be. For instance, an American expatriate moving to Australia would require less preparation about the culture of the host country than one moving to Saudi Arabia. Adequate training would increase the accuracy of the expatriate's expectations regarding the international assignment. Furthermore, Mendenhall and Oddou (1986) argue that the greater degree of integration in the host culture would also require a greater level of cross-cultural training rigor.

Previous international experience on the part of the expatriate has the potential to affect the accuracy of expectations. If the individual has previously worked in the same (or similar) environment to the forthcoming host-country, intuition would tell us that the levels of uncertainty regarding the unknown would be lower. Moreover, some scholars have posited that international experience in general would facilitate greater ease of adjustment. For example, Shaffer, *et al.* (1999) propose that previous international experience will develop valuable relocation expertise that can reduce uncertainty in adjustment to a new assignment. Expatriates having experienced a previous international assignment might redirect their focus to what adjustment mechanisms worked for them in the past and disregard those that did not. Bhaskar-Shrinivas, *et al.* (2004, p. A4) found empirical support for previous international assignments positively influencing expatriate adjustment; however, the support to date is weak and explains only about one percent of the variance. The second component of anticipatory adjustment involves organizational factors, specifically, the selection mechanisms and criteria used therein. Tung (1981) reported that the single most important selection criterion of U.S. multinational corporations (MNCs) in choosing employees for international assignments is technical competence. Furthermore, a study conducted by Moran, Stahl, and Boyer, Inc. (1987, as cited in Black, *et al.* 1991) found that among the MNCs surveyed, only 35 percent selected employees from a pool of multiple candidates. However, Black, *et al.* propose that expatriates who have been not only selected from a pool of applicants, but are also judged on numerous criteria, will more successfully adjust cross-culturally than those singled out for technical competence alone.

In-country Adjustment

Once the expatriate has transitioned into the international assignment, a multitude of further factors come into play which can affect the adjustment process. Black, *et al.* categorize these factors into five areas: individual, job, organization culture, organization socialization, and nonwork. These five factors will variously affect both the mode of adjustment as well as the three facets of degree of adjustment, i.e., work, interaction, and general, as mentioned earlier. Individual factors can be further delineated into three categories: self-oriented, others-oriented, and perceptual-oriented. Black, *et al.* (1991) highlight what they consider to be the most important self-oriented factor: self-efficacy, which is defined as "the ability to believe in oneself and one's ability to deal effectively with the foreign surroundings, even in the face of great uncertainty" (p. 307). Individuals with high levels of self-efficacy continue to display new learned behaviors longer than those with low levels of self-efficacy, even when the results of such displays are not successful. This trait is an important one, given that if an individual persists in acting out new behaviors, this will, in turn, provoke greater levels of feedback. Such feedback is necessary for individuals to grasp what is expected of them, thus reducing uncertainty about what to expect in culturally unfamiliar situations. Others-oriented factors describe, in essence, the relational skills of the individual. The greater the relational skills, the easier it will be for the expatriate to interact with the host nationals (Mendenhall & Oddou 1985). Such interaction would provide additional feedback to the expatriate about more invisible aspects of the host culture, as well as how well he or she is fitting in. Again, such information would help to reduce the uncertainty of the transition, thus increasing the degree of adjustment. The last individual factor, perception skills, also provides a mechanism through which greater understanding of the host culture may be obtained. The more perceptive the expatriate, the more correctly they will

interpret and understand the cultural signals and values they encounter, thus facilitating a greater level of adjustment. The Black, *et al.* model proposes that all three individual factors would relate to the mode of adjustment, as well as the three degrees of adjustment.

The second category of factors that influence in-country adjustment are those relating to the job itself. Black, *et al.* (1991) have labeled these factors as role clarity, role discretion, role novelty, and role conflict. Unlike the individual factors, which are proposed to relate to all three facets of adjustment, the job factors are posited to relate only to the facet of work adjustment.

Role clarity and discretion are proposed to be positively associated with expatriate adjustment (Black, *et al.* 1991). Expatriates whose expectations are met regarding the nature of the job to be performed through accurate and clear information regarding the job responsibilities will therefore be able to reduce uncertainty about what is expected of them. Similarly, the greater the flexibility in the work environment (role discretion), the greater the capability of the expatriate to mould the job to his or her expectations and previous behavior. In contrast, role conflict and novelty are proposed to be negatively related to expatriate adjustment. When the expatriate experiences conflict or ambiguity between the expectations held regarding job behaviors and duties and what is expected, uncertainty levels will not be reduced, thus inhibiting adjustment. For example, a Western academic, accustomed to the freedom of speech and topic choice in the classroom, might strongly disagree with the required behaviors in a Middle Eastern country in which certain topics are considered taboo for discussion in the classroom and could be grounds for immediate dismissal. Indeed, such a situation can lead to high levels of cognitive dissonance. Such incongruity can act as a strong inhibitor of successful adjustment. Furthermore, role novelty, which "really involves the difference between the past role and the new one" (Black 1988, p. 280), would also serve to maintain higher levels of uncertainty for the expatriate. In-country adjustment also contains factor categories that address the organization within the host-country. These two categories address the organization's socialization and culture. Lueke and Svyantek (2000, p. 384-5) define organizational socialization as "the process by which an individual fits in or becomes adjusted to a new role in an organization and learns the content of information necessary for adjustment". Black, *et al.* (1991) point out that socialization can be examined both in terms of tactics and content. Depending on the nature of the tactics used and the content provided, such socialization would either focus on an individual assuming a more custodial role (i.e., accepting the job role as is, with little to no flexibility on the part of the individual in shaping that role), or an innovative one, in that the individual is encouraged to create change. Black, *et al.* show a relationship between organization socialization and mode of adjustment only. Organizational culture contains three factors: novelty, social support, and logistical help. As shown before with role novelty, the degree of newness and unfamiliarity of the organizational culture into which the individual becomes a part will be positively related to the amount of uncertainty of that environment, thus in turn, would be negatively related to adjustment. Black, *et al.* propose that organizational culture novelty would be related only to the facet of work adjustment. In addition, social support in the new organization, by both supervisors and colleagues, would also provide information regarding acceptable behaviors through which uncertainty could be reduced. Again, this factor would relate to the facet of work adjustment.

The third factor in organization culture, logistical help, refers more to nonwork aspects of the international assignment: housing, shopping, and schools, to name a few. Therefore, greater levels of logistical support would reduce uncertainty and facilitate adjustment in those facets of adjustment outside of work; namely, interaction and general. The last category of factors that relate to expatriate adjustment are found in the nonwork arena. These include culture novelty (i.e., of the host country) and family-spouse adjustment. As stated earlier, the greater the cultural distance between the cultural norms and values of the expatriate's home country and those of the host country, the greater the degree of reconciliation between the two will have to be made. Thus, Black, *et al.* (1991) propose that there would be a positive relationship between the amount of cultural distance and the degree of adjustment to be made by the expatriate. They further propose that because "policies and procedures of the U.S. parent company could dilute the impact of the novelty of

the host culture" (Black, *et al.* 1991, p. 312), culture novelty will have the greatest relationship with interaction and general adjustment.

Adjustment is not an isolated experience on the part of the expatriate; indeed, such adjustment will also necessarily have to be made by the expatriate's spouse and family. Black, *et al.* propose that family-spouse adjustment will affect all three facets of the expatriate's adjustment; maladjustment in the family would certainly create a spillover effect onto the expatriate's ability to integrate into the new environment. As mentioned previously, the Black, *et al.* model has received overwhelming support in the expatriate management literature since it was published. Besides acting as a valuable citation resource, many areas of the model have been empirically validated. Indeed, newer theoretical frameworks of expatriate adjustment have not attempted to disprove the Black, *et al.* model; rather, they have sought to strengthen and expand it. It can therefore be stated that the Black, *et al.* model shows validity and some generalisability when applied to expatriates that are sent on an international assignment by their home corporation.

TENTATIVE SUPPOSITIONS

Much of the focus of the empirical studies on expatriate adjustment has been on nonwork factors, particularly those focused on cultural adjustment in the international assignment. This is congruent with Black, *et al.*'s (1991) observation regarding the research conducted prior to the building of their model. Furthermore, most of the perspective of the literature seems to place the onus of adjustment on the expatriate herself, with less emphasis placed on the organization's role. For example, while job factors have received a moderate amount of attention, organizational factors, in both anticipatory and in-country phases, as well as organizational socialization factors, have received scant to no notice in terms of empirical testing. This seems paradoxical, given the familiar lament in expatriate management literature that organizations do not do enough before, during, or after the international assignment to assist the expatriate in successfully adjusting (Bird 2001; Black, Morrison & Gregersen 1999). A caveat must be raised regarding the factors which have moved from ground (i.e., less important) to figure (i.e., more important) with regards to expatriate adjustment. The factors of culture novelty, family-spouse adjustment, self-efficacy, language training, and previous experience appear to be the most salient with regards to the expatriates that were studied in the research reviewed by this author. Other individual and job factors were also tested, but showed weak to no correlation with the adjustment facets. This is not an indication that such factors would always remain unimportant. If the expatriate profile differed from those sent on international assignments by MNCs, the factors that display the most prominence in successful adjustment might also change. Bhaskar-Shrinivas, *et al.* (2004, p. A1) declare that Black and colleagues (1991) assumed that the model they created "is universally applicable to all expatriates". However, a closer look at a different expatriate population through the model's lens might provide a better understanding of when different factors will move to the forefront for different types of expatriates.

SELF-SELECTING EXPATRIATES

Although non-MNC expatriates have been examined in the literature (e.g., religious missionaries, students studying abroad, Peace Corps volunteers, foreign service personnel), there is little to be found regarding those individuals who self-initiate employment outside of their home country. Although precise numbers are not yet known, it is posited that self-selecting expatriates (SSEs) are a widespread phenomenon (Suutari & Brewster, 2000). Because such a dearth of empirical research exists regarding this group of expatriates, it cannot be said for certain that Black, *et al.*'s (1991) model, which was built and tested on MNC expatriates, will show a true goodness of fit for SSEs. In order to determine what factors within the adjustment model would possibly be most applicable to SSE adjustment, a comparison of these two expatriate groups must be conducted.

Inkson, et al. (1997) developed the first comparison between MNC expatriates and SSEs – specifically, those expatriates in Australia and New Zealand that commonly go on an 'Overseas Experience' (OE). Suutari and Brewster (2000, p. 417) later expanded on the Inkson, et al. model, and broadened the definition of non-MNC expatriates beyond Inkson's focus on "thousands of young people heading overseas for a prolonged period of travel, work, and tourism". The taxonomy of Suutari and Brewster, which was also based on an empirical study by these authors, will be discussed here. SSEs and MNC expatriates can be differentiated by the following categories: initiation of the assignment, motives, individual background variables, employer organizations, types of jobs, funding, and career paths (Suutari & Brewster 2000). Perhaps the defining difference between SSEs and MNC expatriates is who initiates the foreign assignment. For MNC expatriates, the initiator is the employing organization. For the SSE, initiation is self-directed. Furthermore, this differentiation leads to a divergence in motivation. Both types of expatriates could be motivated by a desire to learn about another culture, adventure, or by seeing an international assignment as a career building strategy. Richardson and McKenna (2002), in their study of academic expatriates, developed taxonomy of metaphors used to describe motivation to go overseas, as well as for experiences of expatriation. Within this model, two of the metaphors describing motivation fit both SSEs and MNC expatriates well: the Explorer; one who wants to explore the world, and the Architect; an expatriate who views the international assignment as career-building material.

The remaining two metaphors of motivation could only be used to describe SSEs: the Mercenary, and the Refugee. According to Richard and McKenna (2002, p. 71), the Mercenary identifies money "as a primary driver to expatriation". These authors further recall a traditional view of expatriates, particularly in locations such as the Middle East, as being strictly there for the money. Although many MNCs do offer compensation to expatriates which offsets any financial loss they might encounter by taking an international assignment, it is doubtful that the amount would be high enough to be a primary motivator for the MNC expatriate. Further, the Refugee expatriate is one who is escaping his or her home country, often "in search of a better personal and/or professional life" (p. 71). For example, Suutari and Brewster (2000) found that 23 percent of the SSEs surveyed in their sample of expatriate Finnish engineers sought foreign jobs due to the poor employment situation in their home country. SSEs and MNC expatriates also differ with regard to individual characteristics. The main variables which show divergence are age, marital status, gender, previous international experience, and spouse-related variables. Suutari and Brewster (2000) found that, on average, SSEs are slightly younger than MNC expatriates; however, the disbursement among age groups is relatively similar. A noticeable difference between these two groups is the number of females. In Suutari and Brewster's survey, only four percent of MNC expatriates were female; such a low percentage is echoed throughout the expatriate management literature (see Caligiuri, et al. 1999, for a review). However, Suutari and Brewster found a much higher percentage of females that self-initiated their expatriate experiences: 18 percent. Although little difference was found between SSEs and MNC expatriates with one or fewer previous international experience, multiple experiences were much more common among SSEs than MNC expatriates; so much so, that double the number of SSEs had three or more international experiences. In addition, Suutari and Brewster discovered that there are considerably more single SSEs than MNC expatriates (19 percent versus 10 percent). Finally, although the percentage of spouses accompanying both groups of expatriates was approximately the same, the amount of SSE spouses that were employed in the host country were almost double that of the MNC expatriates. This disparity could indicate a joint decision by the SSE and the spouse to relocate outside of the home country to look for employment, rather than the phenomenon of the 'trailing spouse' as is so often discussed in the literature about MNC expatriates.

The organizations which employ SSEs and MNC expatriates also differ in several ways. First, Suutari and Brewster (2000) found that while expatriates are most often employed by an MNC based in their home country, SSEs are more likely to be directly hired by a foreign organization. Furthermore, by classifying employer organizations into levels of internationalization, Suutari and Brewster (2000, p. 425) found that "[MNC] expatriates are more likely than [SSEs] to operate in

'very international' companies". In other words, SSEs are more likely hired by organizations with much less of a global focus and/or reach; often, they are hired because their talents and skills cannot be supplied by the local workforce. Concerning job types, MNC expatriates were more likely employed at the managerial level (a finding substantiated in Hechanova, et al. 2003), whereas SSEs more often described their role as 'expert', and were more commonly found at a lower hierarchical level. Although Suutari and Brewster (2002, p. 428) did not find any significant differences in salaries between SSEs and MNC expatriates, they did find differences in the "premiums, allowances, and bonuses attached to the compensation package". For example, most MNC expatriates have some form of assignment insurance, while only about 10 percent of SSEs are covered (p.429). Moreover, funding for the international move most often comes from the organization for MNC expatriates; in contrast, SSEs often pay their own transfer expenses. SSEs and MNC expatriates differ on their career paths. While the MNC expatriate takes an international assignment for the purposes of building their organizational career, SSEs could be more accurately described as following a boundary-less career path (Inkson, et al. 1997). For example, MNC expatriates expect company support, both for career planning (in terms of the advantages international experience will bring inside the organization), and for repatriation at the end of the assignment. SSEs, on the other hand, are left largely to their own devices in terms of career planning. Once they finish their overseas contract, they are more likely to be in the uncertain situation of planning their own repatriation. It is clear that SSEs are a distinct category of expatriates who might show divergence from MNC expatriates with regards to the Black, *et al.* (1991) model. Therefore, this author will now examine the adjustment model for areas that might show less goodness-of-fit than it does for MNC expatriates.

REVALUATION OF THE BLACK, ET AL. MODEL

Based on the previous analysis of the included empirical studies, results would indicate that the antecedent factors most important in affecting MNC expatriate adjustment would be language and cross-cultural training during anticipatory adjustment; for in-country adjustment, those factors highlighted would be the effect of job factors on work adjustment, and nonwork and individual factors on interaction and general adjustment. However, given the differences between SSEs and MNC expatriates, as provided by Suutari and Brewster (2000), a reasonable assumption might be made that these factors will not show the same amount of importance with regards to SSE adjustment. Given the very different motivations for many SSEs (i.e., the Mercenaries and Refugees), it is possible that individual factors in anticipatory adjustment would move from figure to ground, thus moving organizational factors to a more important position. Whereas MNCs oftentimes select prospective expatriates for assignment based on technical competence only, it is reasonable to anticipate that when SSEs interview for overseas positions, the hiring organization not only would select candidates from a broad pool of applicants, but also would make those hiring determinations based on a wide range of criteria. One academic organization of note regularly receives four to five times as many applicants for the faculty positions advertised, will conduct a pre-screening process, then short-list applicants for a lengthy panel interview. Credentials and references are thoroughly examined before the offer of employment is made. Through such a process, one can conclude that the organization, in effect, weeds out many potential SSEs that might have difficulty adjusting.

For in-country adjustment, it would be prudent to assume that job factors and nonwork factors would still have a large impact on SSE adjustment; however, such effect could very well be tempered through an explanation of a further metaphor. Richardson and McKenna (2002) provided additional expatriate metaphors that dealt specifically with the experience of expatriation. One of these, that only applies to SSEs, is the Tightrope Walker. The Tightrope Walker illustrates the stress experienced by the SSE due to the perception that their job security is at risk; in other words, the prospect of losing their jobs would mean not only financial loss, but would most likely mean that they would have to leave the country of employment without the possibility of securing other

employment in advance. This situation is in contrast to the MNC worker, who would simply be repatriated back to the home base of his corporation.

It seems reasonable to expect that organizational factors and socialization would play a much greater role in SSE adjustment. For example, if organizational socialization provided assurance to SSEs regarding termination procedures and rationales, the stress and uncertainty of feeling that one's job and location could be lost without warning would thus be lowered. An organizational culture that reflected trust and transparency would help promote SSE adjustment probably to a greater degree than nonwork or job factors. If the SSE faces bleak employment opportunities in his home country, or has other reasons for not wanting to reside there, then it can be supposed that he would be able to reconcile maladjustment to job or nonwork factors out of financial necessity and lifestyle security issues. Such suppositions can only be borne out by a more concentrated effort on studying SSEs, and their adjustment experiences. Then researchers in the expatriate management field can begin to contrast those results with those of MNC expatriates. Such an endeavor would significantly provide greater substantiation to this area of research by recognizing and including valuable sectors of expatriates that heretofore have been unexamined, as well as provide a divergent view of expatriate management that would further the understanding and analysis of what has been discovered so far.

CONCLUSION

As globalization of the world of work increases, it is logical to assume that the employment of expatriates will as well. The importance of the expatriate is demonstrated in the growing body of scholarly literature dedicated to the subject. However, most of what has been written so far centers on one segment of the expatriate population: those sent on an international assignment by their employing MNC in their host country. Little attention has been paid to most other definitions of expatriates, including those that self-select to initiate their foreign employment. Given the high cost of the expatriation process to both the employing organization and the expatriate personally, much attention has naturally focused on the subject of expatriate adjustment and those factors which show a relationship with its success. Most of the current adjustment studies use the theoretical framework of Black, *et al.* (1991) as their model, and are providing increasingly robust support for the same. However, an over-reliance on MNC expatriates has created a blind spot. Does the Black, *et al.* model hold up when used to describe the adjustment process of SSE expatriates? This paper offers possible areas where the factors in the foreground for MNC expatriates might shift position when applied to SSEs. It is hoped that through future attention on and research of SSEs, scholars of expatriate issues will provide possible answers to this question.

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