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A Critical Review of Expatriate Adjustment Research Through a Multiple Stakeholder View: Progress, Emerging Trends, and Prospects

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This article is a critical review of the expatriate adjustment literature that focuses on studies that have considered other stakeholders in addition to expatriates themselves. To highlight current knowledge in this area, the most important, implicit assumptions that scholars seem to have made and that may have restricted the theoretical and empirical advancement of the literature are delineated. By focusing on these assumptions, this article underscores the importance of other stakeholders in influencing or being influenced by expatriates. This article also highlights three theoretical perspectives as exemplars to extend the existing literature. By so doing, this review identifies gaps and stimulates new research directions on expatriate adjustment.

Keywords: expatriate adjustment review; multiple stakeholder; host country nationals; spouses; parent company

You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. . . . You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working.

Ernest Hemingway

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As Hemingway noted, there are both positive and negative consequences to being an expatriate. For expatriate employees working for “business organizations, who are sent overseas on a temporary basis to complete a time-based task or accomplish an organizational goal” (Harrison, Shaffer, & Bhaskar-Shrinivas, 2004: 203), the benefits can include the acquisition of global management skills, which are highly sought after in the labor market (cf. Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 2000). International assignments also play a central role in building global and international skills for organizations (cf. Sambharya, 1996). Expatriate experience at some time in an employee’s career may even be a necessary criterion for his or her advancement to the “executive suites” (Daily et al., 2000). On the other hand, there can be a number of negative consequences, including poor performance due to difficulties in adjusting to the foreign environment or disillusionment with parent company support. Thus, it is considered important to understand why some expatriates adjust well to foreign environments while others do not.

As such, an increasing number of studies have been carried out over the past decades that have focused on expatriate adjustment (e.g., Caligiuri, Hyland, Joshi, & Bross, 1998; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, & Ferzandi, 2006; Van Vianen, De Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004), and the accumulated knowledge in this area has contributed to further understanding of the antecedents and consequences of expatriate adjustment (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer, & Luk, 2005). Expatriate adjustment refers to the degree of fit or psychological comfort and familiarity that individuals feel with different aspects of foreign culture (Black & Stephens, 1989; Harrison et al., 2004). Despite these studies, critical issues remain that need to be addressed for this area to progress further.

For example, despite the existence of several theoretical (e.g., Andreason, 2008; Aycan, 1997a, 1997b; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Church, 1982; Harrison et al., 2004; Thomas, 1998) and empirical (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova, Beehr, & Christiansen, 2003) reviews of expatriate employee cross-cultural adjustment, a criticism that can be raised of expatriate adjustment research is that it has been predominantly “expatriate-centric” and has neglected other “stakeholders” (Freeman, 1984) who can affect and be affected by expatriates, such as spouses (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002) and host country nationals (HCNs; e.g., Toh & DeNisi, 2003; Vance & Paik, 1995). A stakeholder refers to “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm’s objectives” (Freeman, 1984: 25). In the case of expatriates, primary stakeholders—those who can affect expatriates or are affected by them—can include but are not limited to spouses/family members, parent company, and host country nationals.

In addition, many studies of expatriate adjustment have either implicitly or explicitly adopted the stress perspective in examining the antecedents and consequences of expatriate adjustment (Harrison et al., 2004; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). For instance, antecedents such as role ambiguity or role conflict are typically considered as stressors, which cause stress or lack of adjustment. Stress or lack of adjustment is in turn considered to lead to strain or negative consequences such as lower performance or higher premature return intentions. In relation to this, Harrison et al. (2004: 240) called for new investigations, noting that “research on expatriate experiences seems to have evolved into reliance on a comfortable (although difficult, at least in terms of population access) paradigm and well-worn road.” Thus,
additional theoretical perspectives may be helpful in examining various issues associated with expatriate adjustment that have not yet been fully investigated.

This review has two primary objectives: first, to draw attention to the importance of examining other stakeholders by highlighting the implicit assumptions utilized in current literature and providing a critical, focused review of current expatriate adjustment literature and second, to discuss the applicability of a particular theoretical perspective for each of the stakeholders as exemplars of new, additional theoretical perspectives that could help extend the current thinking in this area. More specifically, I will associate work-family conflict, strategic human resource management, and social exchange theoretical perspectives with family, parent company, and host country national domains, respectively. In addition, I adopt the person-interaction perspective as a fourth, overarching theoretical framework to examine the expatriate-stakeholder interface. By so doing, I contribute to the expatriate adjustment literature theoretically by highlighting new research ideas and theories that can be used to further our understanding of expatriate adjustment and its consequences.

Review of Expatriate Adjustment Studies

Research on expatriate issues has been popular for many years (e.g., Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Newman, Bhatt, & Gutteridge, 1978) but has gained momentum particularly over the past couple of decades, due in part to the globalization of the world business environment and in part to a concerted effort by several researchers to highlight the viability of this topic in the late 1980s to the mid-1990s (e.g., Black, 1988; Gregersen, 1992; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). Among the earlier studies, Black et al.’s (1991) adjustment model “instigated and galvanized a large body of evidence. It is the most influential and often-cited theoretical treatment of expatriate experiences, and it can be considered a context-specific reflection of the stressor-stress-strain sequence” (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005: 257). Here, I focus on sociocultural or cross-cultural adjustment (e.g., Black & Stephens, 1989; Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Ward & Searle, 1991). Black (1988) and Black and Stephens (1989) differentiated cross-cultural adjustment into three facets: general, work, and interaction. General adjustment refers to psychological comfort related to the host cultural environment (e.g., weather, food, and living conditions); work adjustment refers to psychological comfort related to different work values, expectations, and standards; and interactional adjustment refers to psychological comfort related to different communication styles in the host culture and to interpersonal communication with host country nationals.

To date, two meta-analyses on expatriate adjustment (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003) have appeared in the literature. I will briefly summarize their findings here. Both studies examine antecedents and consequences of three (general, work, and interaction) facets of expatriate adjustment. There are some differences between these meta-analyses, which are, of course, to be expected. For instance, Hechanova et al. (2003) categorized antecedent variables into four types (individual, work related, environmental, and family related), while Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) categorized them into five (anticipatory, individual, job, organization, and nonwork). The variables included in the studies are also somewhat different. Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al.’s meta-analytic study included a larger number of studies, given that it is relatively more recent than Hechanova et al.’s study.
Thus, I will base this summary on their findings mainly, supplemented by Hechanova et al.’s study findings.

Of the anticipatory factors, language ability was significantly and positively related to interaction but not to general or work adjustment. Previous overseas experience was positively and significantly related to both work and interaction but not to general adjustment. For individual factors, self-efficacy was positively related to both work and interaction adjustments; relational skills were positively related to all three facets of adjustment. Hechanova et al. (2003) also found education level to be positively related to general and work adjustment but negatively related to interaction adjustments. For job factors, role clarity and role discretion were found to be positively related to all three facets of adjustment; role conflict was negatively related to work and interaction but not to general adjustment. Hechanova et al. also found job level to be negatively related to general and work adjustment but positively related to interaction adjustment; organizational tenure was positively related to work and interaction but not to general adjustment; months on assignment and outcome expectancy were positively related to all three facets of adjustment; and cross-cultural training was negatively related to all three facets of adjustment. For the organization factors, coworker support was positively related to all three facets of adjustment while logistical support was positively related to general and interaction but not to work adjustment. Finally, for nonwork factors, culture novelty was negatively related to all three facets of adjustment, while spouse adjustment was positively related to all three facets of adjustment.

Despite the progress that has been made in the area of expatriate adjustment, its development may have been hampered by some assumptions and/or data limitations typically associated with expatriate adjustment studies. I will highlight these assumptions next, followed by the multiple stakeholder and interactionist perspectives utilized in this review.

**Implicit Assumptions**

While Black et al. ’s (1991) model has helped generate a sufficiently large number of empirical studies to allow for meta-analyses (e.g., Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Hechanova et al., 2003), it may also, unintentionally, have restricted the focus of subsequent studies to (a) looking more exclusively at expatriate employees themselves and variables associated with them; (b) treating adjustment as an end to itself, not as a means to an end; (c) examining only those variables included in the model; and (d) investigating simple, direct, or linear relationships among antecedents and adjustment. For example, while there are certainly a few studies that have examined the consequences of adjustment, the majority of them only consider expatriates’ own outcomes. Consequences that have been investigated to date include work and nonwork satisfaction (e.g., Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002), organizational commitment (Shay & Baack, 2006; Takeuchi, Wang, Marinaova, & Yao, 2009), early return intentions/withdrawal cognitions (e.g., Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007), and performance (Caligiuri, 1997; Kraimer et al., 2001; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Shay & Baack, 2006). Nonetheless, the meta-analysis conducted by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) identified less than a dozen studies that had included consequences of adjustment. This lack of attention on the consequences of expatriate adjustment may be in part due to the difficulty of obtaining additional rating sources who can evaluate expatriate outcomes because access to an expatriate sample is already considered to be very difficult (cf. Harrison et al., 2004). Thus, an attempt to obtain additional rating sources adds another layer of complication to such studies.
While I acknowledge this difficulty in terms of population access, it is important to also recognize the implicit assumptions of the expatriate adjustment research as a whole. These seem to be that (a) the focus should be “exclusively on expatriates themselves rather than other elements of their social circumstances: family members, HCNs, or the rest of the members of the foreign operation” (Harrison et al., 2004: 236); (b) the stress perspective is the primary, if not the sole, theoretical perspective that should be used in these studies (Harrison et al., 2004; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004); and (c) variables relate to each other in a direct or linear manner (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Takeuchi, Shay, & Li, 2008).

This review addresses these assumptions in the following manner. Regarding the first point, this review adopts a multiple stakeholder view, as described in more detail in the following, and focuses on how expatriate adjustment is affected by and can affect three key stakeholders: (a) family (e.g., Caligiuri et al., 1998), (b) host country national (e.g., Toh & DeNisi, 2003; Vance & Paik, 1995; Vance, Wholihan, & Paderon, 1993), and (c) parent organization (e.g., Aycan, 1997a, 1997b; Gong, 2003a, 2003b; Guzzo, Noonan, & Elron, 1994). While previous studies have identified and considered these stakeholders, these studies have not been given much attention in the literature. Regarding the second point, I either introduce social exchange and strategic human resource management perspectives as theoretical perspectives or reintroduce work-family conflict perspective as a theoretical perspective as I consider these to be beneficial to moving the field forward and develop a set of research ideas to illustrate potential future research directions.

Finally, regarding the last point, this review will explicitly adopt an interactionist perspective to highlight the possibility of more complex relationships between antecedent variables and expatriate adjustment (and outcomes). Specifically, I adopt a person-situation interaction (e.g., Ekehammar, 1974; Pervin, 1989; Terborg, 1981) perspective as an overarching theoretical perspective here and argue that focusing attention on the interface between stakeholders and expatriates provides opportunities for new research on expatriate adjustment. Interactional psychology is an approach to studying and explaining individual behaviors by emphasizing the continuous and multitudinous interactions between person characteristics and situational characteristics (Terborg, 1981). It has a long tradition in the management field in one form or another; therefore, it is surprising that there is a lack of theoretical and empirical attention in the existing expatriate studies that adopt this perspective (see Van Vianen et al., 2004, for an exception). However, when examining the multiple interfaces between expatriates and their stakeholders, the person–situation interaction perspective seems to provide the best fit as an overarching theoretical perspective for identifying new areas of research.

A Multiple Stakeholder View of Expatriate Adjustment

A multiple stakeholder view of expatriate adjustment is adopted in this review, with the purpose of highlighting the existence of groups or individuals who can influence or can be influenced by expatriates and examining their salience. While a stakeholder can be any group or individual that can affect or be affected by an expatriate’s achievement of the objectives set forth by an international assignment (cf. Freeman, 1984), including managerial development or subsidiary control and coordination (Edstrom & Galbraith, 1977; Shay & Baack, 2004), I argue here that the primary stakeholders for expatriates include (a) spouses and family members, whose inability to adjust to foreign environments has been noted as one of the most critical reasons leading to expatriate “failure” (Hays, 1971, 1974); (b) the parent organization, whose
support can increase expatriates’ adjustment levels and subsequent performance (Wang & Takeuchi, 2007); and (c) host country nationals, whose support can be instrumental in expatriates succeeding in their objectives (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Toh & DeNisi, 2007) or whose resistance can lead to failure (Toh & DeNisi, 2003). In addition, by highlighting these stakeholders and expatriates (see Figure 1), I also underscore the importance of examining their “interfaces” (or the “interaction” between expatriates and their stakeholders), which refers to the overlapping areas between an expatriate and a stakeholder (e.g., a family member).

This review also highlights the following theoretical perspectives used in examining each of the three interfaces: work-family conflict (e.g., Edwards & Rothbard, 1999; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992) for the expatriate–family member interface, strategic human resource management (e.g., Lepak & Snell, 1999, 2002) for the expatriate–parent organization interface, and social exchange theory (e.g., Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1958, 1961) for the expatriate–host country national interface. Furthermore, a person–situation interactionist perspective, as a fourth perspective, is applied to each of the three interfaces. By integrating these research streams that have previously been underutilized in the expatriate literature, this review will develop a new, broader framework for understanding expatriate adjustment.

**Existing Stock of Knowledge**

Table 1 briefly summarizes the existing published studies that have examined or incorporated these multiple stakeholders. In particular, the variables examined and the causal
### Table 1

**Brief Review of Expatriates and Primary Stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Parent company</th>
<th>Host country nationals (HCNs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caligiuri et al. (1999): Family support → (female) expatriate adjustment</td>
<td>*Kraimer and Wayne (2004): Adjustment/POS → expatriate adjustment; task and contextual performance; LMX (+) → task and contextual performance</td>
<td>Waxin (2004): Supervisory social support → expatriate adjustment; coworker social support → expatriate adjustment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Kraimer et al. (2001): Spouse support → expatriate adjustment</td>
<td>Waxin (2004): Organizational social support (+) → expatriate adjustment</td>
<td>Liu and Shaffer (2005): Depth of relationship → expatriate adjustment and performance (ns); HCN interpersonal skills → expatriate adjustment and performance; HCN cultural empathy → expatriate adjustment and performance</td>
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(continued)
Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Parent company</th>
<th>Host country nationals (HCNs)</th>
</tr>
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Notes: *Asterisk denotes those studies that are conceptually based. The articles are listed according to the year they were published; studies with the same superscript denote the use of the same/similar data sets. MNC = multinational company; POS = perceived organizational support.

relationships implied in these studies are highlighted. As a sidenote, while many of these studies examine either one particular facet or multiple facets (general, work, and interaction) of adjustment, it is not the purpose of this review to go into these facets in detail. Family members, including spouses, are perhaps the most researched group, possibly due to the fact that research by Hays (1971, 1974) identified the inability of spouses to adjust to foreign environments as the second most crucial reason for expatriates’ “failure.” There are fewer studies examining the influence of other stakeholders on expatriates, and even fewer that investigate the impact of expatriates on other stakeholders. The next section of this review will provide a critical evaluation of the existing research on these primary stakeholders.

Stock of knowledge on family stakeholder group. While the call to attend to spouse-related issues is not new (e.g., Harvey, 1985; Hays, 1971, 1974), only relatively recently have scholars started looking at the power that family members have over expatriates. As illustrated in Table 1, the majority of studies have found that spouse/family adjustment is positively related to the level of cross-cultural adjustment by expatriates. Some studies have looked at the relationships between overall levels of spouse/family and expatriate adjustment (e.g., Black, 1988; Caligiuri et al., 1998), while others have looked at the relationship between specific facets of spouse/family and expatriate adjustment (Black & Stephens, 1989; Takeuchi et al., 2002), and still others have looked at a mix (e.g., Palthe, 2004; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998, 2001; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999).

Other studies have looked at the impact of social support on expatriates, either the impact of spouses’ social support in general (Kraimer et al., 2001; Waxin, 2004) or the impact of male spouses’ social support on female expatriates (Caligiuri, Joshi, & Lazarova, 1999).
Here, the findings are equivocal. Caligiuri et al. (1999) found family support to be positively related to female expatriates’ overall adjustment level, and Waxin (2004) found partner social support to be positively related to expatriates’ interaction adjustment. Herleman, Britt, and Hashima (2008) found social support from friends to be positively related to spouses’ personal and interaction adjustment. On the other hand, Kraimer et al. (2001) did not find a significant relationship between spouse support and expatriates’ general and work adjustment.

From this brief and critical review, several observations can be made. First, previous studies have tended to be overly restrictive in their focus (i.e., only a limited number of variables, typically family/spouse support or adjustment, have been investigated). Second, these variables are typically considered to have a linear relationship with expatriate adjustment. However, given that Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al. (2005) found expatriates to go through a non-linear adjustment process (resembling a “sideways S” shaped curve) based on length of stay in a foreign country, it is more likely the case that the relationships between antecedents and adjustment (or, for that matter, adjustment and consequences) are nonlinearly related (Mendenhall & Macomber, 1997; Mendenhall, Macomber, Gregersen, & Cutright, 1998). Third, many studies that have examined the relationship between family and expatriate interfaces seem either atheoretical or invoke work-family literature very generally as their underlying theoretical basis. While the reliance on work-family literature as a theoretical basis is understandable given that international assignments entail critical changes both for expatriates themselves and family members who accompany them, placing heavy demands on their time and resources, these studies typically do not really delve into the specific explanatory mechanisms through which family members affect expatriates (see Caligiuri et al., 1998, for an exception). In addition, the conflict that arises from such changes has not really been examined (see Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley, & Luk, 2001, for an exception). Thus, it may also be helpful to examine negatively oriented concepts such as work-family, time-based, strain-based, and behavior-based conflict (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Fourth, very few studies have examined the influence that expatriates have on their spouses (see Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Takeuchi et al., 2002, for exceptions). Given that it is more likely that expatriates and their family members can have a reciprocal influence on one another (Takeuchi et al., 2002), a more dynamic, process-oriented study that investigates the mediating mechanisms or nonlinear relationships using longitudinal studies may be critical to move the expatriate adjustment area forward.

Stock of knowledge on parent company stakeholder group. As shown in the second column of Table 1, previous research that examined the expatriate–parent company interface tended to investigate the influence of the parent company on expatriate adjustment, focusing on different forms of support provided by the organization, including logistical (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer et al., 1999; see also meta-analysis by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005) and organizational support (Caligiuri et al., 1999; Kraimer et al., 2001; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Takeuchi et al., 2009; Wang & Takeuchi, 2007; Waxin, 2004). In general, these findings indicate that parent company support (logistical or organizational) relates positively to expatriate cross-cultural adjustment (general, work, and interaction). While earlier studies focused on the overall support provided by the company (Black et al., 1991; Caligiuri et al., 1999; Shaffer et al., 1999;
Wang & Takeuchi, 2007), more recent studies have adopted a multifoci view of organizational support (parent company and foreign subsidiary: Kraimer et al., 2001; adjustment, financial, and career: Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; current assignment and nonwork: Takeuchi et al., 2009). Furthermore, based on a social exchange theoretical perspective, Kraimer et al. (2001) and Kraimer and Wayne (2004) examined and found leader-member exchange to be positively related to expatriate task and contextual performance but not to expatriate adjustment.

There are several summary observations that can be made about studies that have investigated the expatriate–parent company interface. First, these studies as a set investigate a limited number of variables, typically those related to some types of support provided by the parent company. Second, and related, many studies that examined the relationship between the expatriate and parent company interface appear to rely heavily on a social exchange theoretical perspective as the underlying theoretical basis (e.g., Kraimer & Wayne, 2004; Takeuchi et al., 2009). However, only perceived organizational support (or a variant of it) and leader-member exchange have been examined in this way. Of course, these by themselves are by no means critical flaws, but the main point that I would like to highlight is the restricted focus of existing studies. Third, these variables are typically considered to have a linear relationship with expatriate adjustment (except Takeuchi et al., 2009). Fourth, virtually no study has examined the influence that expatriates have on the parent company. While expatriate adjustment studies do not typically consider expatriates as agents for knowledge transfer, either as agents that transfer the parent company’s knowledge to the foreign subsidiary or agents for acquiring host country knowledge to be transferred back to the parent company (Gong, 2003a, 2003b), it is plausible that expatriates will be much better equipped to do so when they have adjusted well to the foreign culture; therefore, there are different research questions that can be asked when using a different theoretical perspective.

Stock of knowledge on host country nationals’ stakeholder group. Lastly, Table 1 illustrates that a review of the existing studies that capture the expatriate–host country national interface indicates that the majority of studies on host country nationals consider the influence of HCNs on expatriates but not vice versa. In these studies, coworker social support appears to be the variable that has been considered and studied the most (Black et al., 1991; Shaffer et al., 2001; Toh & DeNisi, 2007; Waxin, 2004; see also the meta-analysis by Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Generally, coworker social support seems to be positively related to expatriate adjustment, but the referent of coworker support is not always specified (i.e., coworkers could be other expatriates, HCNs, or third-country nationals; cf. Shaffer et al., 1999; Waxin, 2004), which may be critical when examining the different kinds (informational vs. socio-emotional) of support that are being provided. Nonetheless, most of the studies tend to use a general measure of social support. Caligiuri et al. (1999) also found that the positive attitude of HCNs toward expatriates, as perceived by the expatriates themselves, was positively related to (female) expatriates’ overall adjustment.

In addition, there are a couple of studies that examined variables associated with a social network perspective (e.g., Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater, & Klein, 2003; Liu & Shaffer, 2005). More specifically, Johnson et al. (2003) found that the number of HCN contacts that expatriates had was positively related to both expatriate work and interaction adjustment. They also found the breadth of relationships expatriates had with HCN contacts.
was positively related to expatriates’ general adjustment. Liu and Shaffer (2005) found expatriates’ evaluation of the interpersonal skills of host country nationals to be positively related to their work and interaction adjustment, while the depth of the relationship (the strength of connection with HCNs) was positively related to interaction adjustment and self-rated expatriate performance.

Two critical observations can be made of these studies. First, again, only a limited set of variables was investigated. Second, only one study (Shay & Baack, 2004) examined the influence on expatriate adjustment of HCNs. Specifically, they found expatriate work adjustment to be positively related to what they termed “HCN perceived contextual performance,” which was represented by HCN supervisor satisfaction, HCN organizational commitment, and HCN-rated expatriate effectiveness. Furthermore, only a limited number of studies have actually obtained ratings from HCNs; therefore, obtaining responses from different sources (particularly HCNs) may be fruitful. Of course, the lack of studies only refers to published studies that have examined expatriate adjustment and HCN characteristics, not empirical studies that have focused on HCNs themselves (e.g., Selmer & De Leon, 1996). In the next section, I discuss three theoretical perspectives that could further our understanding of these interfaces.

Exemplars of Theoretical Perspectives

Figure 2 provides an expanded view of the multiple stakeholder view of expatriate adjustment noted in Figure 1 with selected variables for each stakeholder based on the theoretical perspectives used in this review. Specifically, this framework highlights some of each of the stakeholder’s potential antecedents that are likely to influence expatriate adjustment (and outcomes associated with them) as well as some of the consequences for each stakeholder (e.g., host country nationals). In addition, the person–situational interaction perspective is overlaid as an overarching framework for each of the interfaces. The dotted lines are used to illustrate the potential interaction effects between variables associated with an expatriate and a stakeholder (i.e., expatriate–family, expatriate–parent company, and expatriate–host country national interfaces). The framework is intentionally fairly general to illustrate potential directions for expatriate research and to highlight the significance of interactionist and additional theoretical perspectives in examining these interfaces, rather than hypothesizing specific relationships that may be of limited use for the specific objectives set forth in this critical review.

Nonetheless, a couple of points should be qualified. First, one caveat of the proposed framework (Figure 2) is that the variables included in each interface are not meant to be a comprehensive list of possible factors that can affect or be affected by expatriate adjustment (and some of the consequences associated with expatriates, e.g., their performance or premature return). Second, although practical considerations may prevent scholars from obtaining multiple rating sources at the same time, the framework does not suggest that only one interface be examined at a time. There may be a time in the future when it is not sufficient to discuss the importance of just one stakeholder, but this critical review provides a starting point.

Work-family conflict perspective. In organizational behavior research, the work and family interface (e.g., work-family conflict) has been an increasingly popular topic (see meta-analysis
by Ford, Heinen, & Langkamer, 2007; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Existing research in this area has established the existence of work-to-family conflict and family-to-work conflict as distinguishable constructs that should both be considered (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). Work-to-family conflict occurs when work activities interfere with family responsibilities, and family-to-work conflict occurs when family activities interfere with work responsibilities (Netemeyer et al., 1996).

There are several theoretical and practical reasons for selecting the work-family conflict perspective here. First, this perspective explicitly recognizes family members, including spouses, as important stakeholders (cf. Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2003) that can impact and be influenced by employees (or, in this case, expatriates). Related to this, work-family conflict has been applied and shown to be relevant to the expatriate context (e.g., Shaffer et al., 2001). Second, while the stressor-stress-strain perspective has been implicitly applied to expatriate adjustment issues (Harrison et al., 2004; Kraimer & Wayne, 2004), the potential for conflict arising from these stressors has not been acknowledged in the expatriate adjustment literature. Third, the research findings from work-family conflict can be useful in opening up new areas of research on expatriate adjustment.

In essence, work-family conflict arises from interrole conflict, in which the demands of the work and family domains collide. As a result, meeting demands in one domain makes it
difficult to meet demands in the other (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) distinguished between three forms of work-family conflict that occur as the result of this interrole conflict: time-based conflict (time constraints limit role involvement), strain-based conflict (strain produced by role membership), and behavior-based conflict (when behaviors associated with one role are incompatible with another role). Each of the three conflict types may influence expatriates’ adjustment and outcomes in different ways. In addition, they can also impact family members.

This theory suggests that work role requirements cause an employee to be unable to meet family responsibilities (i.e., work-to-family conflict). The employee will then experience dissatisfaction and stress that he or she will seek to reduce (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997). The employee can reduce his or her work demands, dissatisfaction, and stress by freeing up time he or she is expected to spend in the work role in order to meet the demands of the family role (Koslowsky, 2000; Vistnes, 1997). This can be done by utilizing resources normally devoted to work to meet family demands, for example, arriving late to work and leaving work early or not coming to work at all. Family-to-work conflict may cause the employee to divert attention, time, and resources away from work, causing his or her performance at work to suffer. Family-to-work conflict has been related to tardiness and absenteeism (Frone et al., 1992), and these withdrawal behaviors can negatively influence job performance. Thus, it can be expected that family/spouse support will likely reduce the family-to-work conflict experienced by expatriates, which in turn will lead to better outcomes for expatriates (e.g., adjustment and performance) because they can expend more resources on work. In addition, work-to-family conflict is likely to put a strain on family members and reduce their well-being (e.g., marital satisfaction, family well-being). Thus, the work-family conflict perspective underscores the need to examine potential conflict that arises between expatriates and family members as well as the mediating mechanisms (e.g., work-family conflict) that link these two interfaces. The investigation of such mediating mechanisms has not been developed in the expatriate adjustment literature thus far and is worth looking into.

Another insight that can be gained from a work-family conflict perspective is the recognition of crossover effects, which refer to the influence that the stress or strain experienced at work by one individual has on the stress or strain experienced by one’s significant other at home, or to the influence that the stress or strain experienced by the individual at home has on the stress or strain experienced by the significant other at work (Westman, 2001). Again, this demonstrates that variables associated with expatriates, such as expatriate adjustment, can have an impact on family members (and vice versa). While Takeuchi et al. (2002) explicitly acknowledged and tested the reciprocal crossover effects between spouse general adjustment and expatriate general and work adjustment and found empirical support for such bidirectional effects, their study was limited by their use of cross-sectional data. Thus, a longitudinal investigation of such reciprocal relationships would be important to tease out the causal relationships between family members and expatriates. Furthermore, additional outcomes that may be unique to family members or spouses include but are not limited to spouses’ marital satisfaction, children’s well-being, family satisfaction, quality of family life, and family members’ psychological and physical symptoms such as fatigue, distress, and depression (e.g., Hammer, Cullen, Neal, Sinclair, & Shafiro, 2005; Rothausen, 1999; Williams & Alliger, 1994).
Finally, it is possible that more complex relationships exist between expatriates and their family members. For instance, Takeuchi, Wang, and Marinova (2005) found an interaction effect between having a spouse accompanying an expatriate (vs. not having a spouse accompanying the expatriate) with children (vs. not with children), such that expatriates perceived the highest level of psychological work strain when they were not accompanied by their spouses but were accompanied by a child (or children). These results are not surprising given that the parental demands placed on expatriate employees in terms of time, attention, and resources is likely to be highest in this situation. Combining their findings with Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al.’s (2005) meta-analytic findings, it is conceivable that family support can act as a moderator in the relationship between role stressors (e.g., role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload) that expatriates experience at work and their adjustment levels. While these moderating effects are speculative, it nonetheless illustrates the possibility of more complex relationships between family members and expatriates. In line with the aforementioned discussion, I pose the following research questions to move the area forward:

**Research Question 1:** What are the specific mechanisms that link variables associated with family members to expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment and their outcomes?

**Research Question 2:** How would expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes) affect family members? What are the mechanisms through which this occurs?

**Research Question 3a:** How would a person–situation interactionist perspective help conceptualize and test more complex (but perhaps more realistic) relationships between antecedents associated with expatriates and their adjustment (and outcomes)? How would family members play a role in moderating such relationships between antecedents and expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes)?

**Research Question 3b:** How would a person–situation interactionist perspective help conceptualize and test more complex (but perhaps more realistic) relationships between expatriate’s adjustment (and outcomes) and outcomes associated with family members? Which variables may play a moderating role in the relationships between expatriate adjustment and family outcomes?

Work-family conflict perspective suggests that work-to-family and family-to-work conflict can act as mediators (cf. Eby, Casper, Lockwood, Bordeaux, & Brinley, 2005). For instance, O’Driscoll, Ilgen, and Hildreth (1992) found that family-to-work conflict mediated the relationship between off-job demands and psychological strain such that greater off-job demands related to increased family-to-work conflict, which in turn predicted higher psychological strain. Thus, this perspective and associated findings suggest that parental demands would lead to higher family-to-work conflict, which in turn lead to lower levels of expatriate adjustment. In other words, family-to-work conflict acts as a mediator of the relationship between parental demand and expatriate adjustment. This is one of the mechanisms that address the first research question noted previously. When expatriates are well adjusted, it is likely that they can devote more time on family activities. Thus, expatriate adjustment should reduce work-to-family conflict, which in turn increases the spouse’s satisfaction with the marriage or the family’s satisfaction with living in a foreign country. In other words, work-to-family conflict acts as a mediator of the relationship between parental demand and expatriate adjustment, which addresses the second research question. Obviously, these are merely a few examples that illustrate the relationships between variables associated with family and expatriate. Future research would serve the
literature well if this critical review is used as a steppingstone to further develop strong theoretical linkages between the family and the expatriate.

**Strategic human resource management (HRM) perspective.** Strategic HRM is defined as “the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable an organization to achieve its goals” (Wright & McMahan, 1992: 298). The basic premise of strategic HRM is the adoption of a systems perspective where the focus is on investigating the impact of a bundle of HR practices (not individual HR practices) on organizational outcomes and how the context affects their relationships (e.g., Becker & Huselid, 2006; Wright & McMahan, 1992). When expatriates are viewed from a strategic HRM perspective, it helps underscore the importance of the larger context in which expatriates are embedded. As Werner’s (2002) review of international management research illustrates, expatriate adjustment (and performance) issues are embedded in the larger context of how multinational companies (MNCs) manage expatriate employees; in turn, expatriate management issues are embedded within multinational companies’ control of foreign subsidiaries or their human resource management issues, such as staffing strategies (Gong, 2003a, 2003b) and subsidiary-headquarter relations. Thus, a strategic HRM perspective identifies the implicit assumption that previous scholars might have held about the extent of control expatriates have with regard to their adjustment to the foreign environment as somewhat tenuous. In other words, while expatriates themselves do have some degree of control in adjusting to foreign environments, the environment and conditions expatriates are put in may make it more or less difficult for them to adjust. Admittedly, there are studies that have examined the relationship between expatriate HR management practices and expatriates’ attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Guzzo et al., 1994). However, a strategic HRM perspective also highlights different types of HR systems that could be used to manage these employees (e.g., Huselid, 1995; Lepak & Snell, 2002).

For instance, Taylor, Beechler, and Napier (1996) noted that the type of international strategy (e.g., multidomestic or global) a firm follows is likely to affect the human resource management practices used. In addition, it is likely that firms pursuing a multidomestic strategy consider their subsidiaries to be independent units, and the use of expatriates is likely to be minimal. When expatriates are sent to foreign subsidiaries (perhaps for developmental reasons), their cross-cultural adjustment is likely to be made more difficult because the multinational companies do not have the requisite support structures in place and their human resource management practices may be applied more haphazardly. On the other hand, firms pursuing a global strategy are likely to have more experience transferring human resources from the parent company to the subsidiary and vice versa, and they may have more support structures and HRM practices in place. This may make it easier for expatriates to adjust to foreign environments. For example, an expatriate may have mentors who have already gone through the adjustment process in the parent company and foreign subsidiaries, or an expatriate may have other expatriate colleagues who are assigned to the same country (in the same subsidiary or in a different subsidiary within the same country). Taylor et al. also noted that top management beliefs in multinational companies regarding the applicability of human resource management practices may affect their human resource management orientation, and this may also affect the use and management of expatriate employees. Furthermore, Aycan (1997b) pointed out the importance of the parent company context, including its MNC structure, strategic planning, and organizational support, as a possible
predictor of expatriate adjustment. Thus, the strategic HRM perspective underscores the importance of organizational context on expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes) but has not been examined in depth to date.

Another unique aspect of strategic HRM is its focus on organizational-level outcomes, which is distinct from a functional (i.e., its focus on a particular function, e.g., training and development or performance appraisal) view of HR that typically focuses on individual attitudes and behaviors. If the majority of expatriates are deployed as higher level managers, as indicated by the typical samples used in the literature (cf. Harrison et al., 2004), it is surprising, at least from a theoretical standpoint, that previous studies on expatriate adjustment have not considered higher level (or organizational-level) outcomes relevant to the parent company (and the foreign subsidiary). Werner’s (2002) review of international management research, for example, highlights the lack of attention given to such outcomes. In this regard, outcomes of importance may include but are not limited to knowledge transfer from the foreign subsidiary to the parent company headquarters regarding more tacit, procedural types of knowledge (e.g., product design, distribution know-how, customer service skills, innovation) that can provide competitive advantages to the firm (e.g., Gupta & Govindarajan, 2000; Subramaniam & Venkatraman, 2001). When expatriates are well adjusted to the foreign environment, they should be able to transfer such knowledge more effectively.

Finally, Takeuchi et al. (2008) recently argued for and found empirical evidence of global integration pressure exerted by parent companies on foreign subsidiaries that acts as a moderator of the relationship between expatriates’ decision-making autonomy and their work and interaction adjustment levels such that under high global integration pressure (i.e., more standardization), the extent of decision autonomy did not affect the level of cross-cultural adjustment experienced by expatriates, while the extent of decision autonomy expatriates had was positively related to their adjustment levels when global integration pressure was low. Their findings illustrate the possibility of a global strategy moderating the relationship between expatriate-related factors and expatriate adjustment. This is also in line with a person-situation interactionist perspective that is adopted in this review. Examining these potential moderating effects would be useful in furthering our understanding of the boundary conditions in which expatriate-related variables affect expatriate adjustment (and outcomes) or how expatriate adjustment (and outcomes) relates to parent company variables. Thus, I advance the following:

**Research Question 4:** What are the specific mechanisms that link variables associated with the parent company to expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment and their outcomes?

**Research Question 5:** How would expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes) affect the outcomes of interest to the parent company? What are the mechanisms through which this occurs?

**Research Question 6a:** How would the parent company play a role in moderating the relationships between antecedents and expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes)?

**Research Question 6b:** How would a person-situation interactionist perspective help conceptualize and test more complex (but perhaps more realistic) relationships between expatriate adjustment (and outcomes) and outcomes associated with the parent company? Which variables may play a moderating role in the relationships between expatriate adjustment and parent company outcomes?
A strategic HRM perspective suggests that the impact of an HR system on performance is contingent upon the type of strategy used. For instance, Youndt, Snell, Dean, and Lepak (1996: 843) found that an HR system focused on human capital enhancement was related to multiple dimensions of performance for manufacturing plants, but this relationship was contingent on plants using a quality manufacturing strategy with a focus on “continually improving manufacturing processes to increase product reliability and customer satisfaction.” Similarly, MNCs may use a commitment-based HR system where its primary goal is to “shape desired employee behaviors and attitudes by forging psychological links between organizational and employee goals” and to “focus on developing committed employees who can be trusted to use their discretion to carry out job tasks that are consistent with organizational goals” (Arthur, 1994: 672; see also Guzzo et al., 1994) for expatriates. Typically, such an HR system would be expected to lead to better adjustment (cf. Guzzo et al., 1994). However, this may also create room for more opportunistic behaviors on the part of expatriates to behave selfishly (cf. Roth & O’Donnell, 1996). Thus, when MNCs pursue a global integration strategy, the impact of a commitment-based HR system on expatriate adjustment may not be as strong as when MNCs pursue a multidomestic strategy. In other words, multinational strategy acts as a moderator of the relationship between HR system and expatriate adjustment, which is one idea that addresses the third research question. This illustrates the possibility of moderating effects on the relationships between parent company and expatriate variables, but I encourage further theoretical developments regarding the parent company–expatriate interface.

Social exchange perspective. Another perspective that appears beneficial to furthering expatriate research is the social exchange theoretical perspective (e.g., Guzzo et al., 1994; Takeuchi et al., 2009). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960; Homans, 1961) proposes that two parties, be it two individuals, two groups, two organizations, or any combination (e.g., employer–employee, supervisor–subordinate, or team–individual member), enter into an exchange relationship where one party perceives that the other party possesses something of value that is not merely monetary. Over time, if the relationship proves mutually satisfying, each party is expected to contribute more toward the maintenance and development of the relationship. The nature of the contribution is expected to increase slowly, both in breadth (the range of possible contributions made by the parties) and value (the importance of the contributions to each party), as parties see that their investments in the relationship are offset by their returns and they develop trust in the other party’s intent to reciprocate their own contributions. Both parties in the exchange are expected to strive for a balance in the contributions they make, with balance being judged in terms of the equity norm as well as from the parties’ past experience in other social exchanges (Homans, 1961). If one party in a relationship goes beyond the requirements of his or her formal organizational role to provide “extra” tangible or intangible contributions to the other party, the receiving party subsequently feels obligated to reciprocate by giving back something of greater value. This component of the exchange is known as the norm of reciprocity. While the social exchange theoretical perspective has not been applied in examining the relationships between expatriates and host country nationals, it provides a valuable framework for examining this interface.

When expatriates are well adjusted to the foreign environment, it is likely that they can adopt the appropriate leadership styles for the host environment, which likely result in host
country nationals perceiving higher supervisory support or higher leader-member exchange (e.g., Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Liden & Graen, 1980; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). As such, host country nationals are more likely to develop better relationships with expatriates, which is likely not only to influence the attitudes and behaviors associated with the host country nationals, such as supervisory satisfaction (Shay & Baack, 2004), but also to affect expatriates’ adjustment and job performance through reciprocation mechanisms.

For example, when host country nationals perceive that they have a higher social exchange relationship with expatriates, they are likely to reciprocate by providing more support or helping expatriates with their work and nonwork problems. In addition, host country nationals may act as mentors to teach expatriates the “ropes” (e.g., Feldman & Bolino, 1999). Feldman and Bolino (1999) found the on-site mentoring provided by host country nationals to be positively related to the degree of socialization of expatriates, which in turn was positively related to expatriates’ intention to complete assignments. Furthermore, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) found the quality of leader-member exchange (perceived by the expatriates) to be positively related to the overall adjustment of expatriates. While longitudinal design is necessary to tease out the cause and effect (i.e., antecedents and consequences), a social exchange theoretical perspective highlights the importance of host country nationals and how they can affect or can be affected by expatriates.

Furthermore, I expect some of the variables related to host country nationals to moderate (or interact) with expatriate-related factors to affect expatriates’ level of adjustment (and outcomes). Van Vianen et al. (2004) examined the value similarities between expatriates’ home culture and those of the host culture (as perceived by the expatriates) and found self-transcendent dimensions of cultural values to interact with each other (expatriates’ values and perceived host country nationals’ values) to affect expatriates’ work and interactional adjustment. This empirical evidence illustrates the possibility of interaction between expatriate-related factors and factors associated with host country nationals, which is also consistent with a person–situation interactionist perspective; thus, I pose the following research questions:

**Research Question 7:** What are the specific mechanisms that link variables associated with host country nationals to expatriates’ cross-cultural adjustment and their outcomes?

**Research Question 8:** How would expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes) affect host country nationals? What are the mechanisms through which this occurs?

**Research Question 9a:** How would host country nationals play a role in moderating the relationships between antecedents and expatriate adjustment (and other outcomes)?

**Research Question 9b:** How would a person–situation interactionist perspective help conceptualize and test more complex (but perhaps realistic) relationships between expatriates adjustment (and outcomes) and outcomes associated with host country nationals? Which variables may play a moderating role in the relationships between expatriate adjustment and host country national outcomes?

When expatriates are well adjusted to a foreign country, they are more likely to be perceived by the host country nationals as more similar to them, which has been shown to relate positively to interpersonal attraction and liking (similarity-attraction paradigm; Byrne, 1961). For example, Thomas and Ravlin (1995) found that the cultural adjustment of Japanese managers was positively related to perceptions of similarity and managerial effectiveness by the American subordinates. Given that similarity has been linked with leader-member exchange
quality (Bauer & Green, 1996), I expect a positive relationship between expatriate adjustment and leader-member exchange quality between expatriates and host country nationals. Furthermore, Thomas and Ravlin (1995) found that internal attributions made by the host country nationals moderated the relationship between similarity and intentions to associate. Extending their logic, it may be the case that attributions by host country nationals of the expatriates are likely to moderate the relationship between expatriate adjustment and leader-member exchange quality (as perceived by host country nationals). This is one idea that illustrates the utility of the fourth research question. Given the limited space, I cannot develop theoretical rationale for all possible moderating effects, but I would encourage further theoretical developments regarding the host country national–expatriate interface.

Discussion

The main objective of this critical review of the expatriate adjustment literature is to summarize the existing studies that consider the impact of other stakeholders on expatriate adjustment and performance. In completing this summary, it is possible for this review to also identify inherent, typically unspoken, assumptions associated with this type of research. As a result, new research directions that extend and complement the existing research streams can be highlighted. The intention of this review however is not merely to criticize existing studies, as there are practical limitations associated with expatriate studies that must be recognized. For example, many of the assumptions highlighted in this review likely stem from difficulties in collecting expatriate and associated data. Given the relatively low response rates for expatriate studies using international surveys (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al.’s [2005] meta-analysis found an average response rate of 41%), obtaining a large enough sample size becomes an even greater issue when attempting to collect additional source data from other stakeholders such as spouses or host country nationals. Thus, it has been natural for scholars to focus on expatriate employees themselves and examine the antecedents associated with them. Similarly, sample size requirement may be one of the reasons that expatriate managers from parent companies have been the most commonly accessed population in expatriate research (Harrison et al., 2004). Furthermore, to secure enough variance at the firm level, researchers may need to secure cooperation from several dozen multinational firms to examine the effect of parent company characteristics on expatriates, which may be difficult to achieve.

While these difficulties are acknowledged, I maintain that these difficulties should not prevent advancement in theoretical as well as empirical research that develops and tests different research ideas in this area. In addition, expatriate adjustment and performance is a very complicated phenomenon, and using multiple theoretical perspectives in an integrative manner may be necessary to advance its understanding. This is the primary contribution of the multiple stakeholder view of expatriate adjustment and performance (see Figure 1); by underscoring the importance of multiple stakeholders (not just spouses) who are likely to have an impact on expatriates, this theoretical critique redirects the existing research on expatriate adjustment and performance. Furthermore, by incorporating multiple theoretical perspectives that are integral to examining the impact of different stakeholders on expatriates’ level of adjustment and performance, the multiple stakeholder view (see Figure 2) offers critical insights into new research directions.
More specifically, multiple interfaces (spouse/family–expatriate, host country national–expatriate, and parent company–expatriate) are used to suggest main as well as interaction effects between several selected variables that are likely to affect expatriates’ level of adjustment and performance. Of course, the variables shown are only a small portion of the variables that relate to spouse/family, parent company, and host country nationals that may be of interest to expatriate scholars. Nonetheless, for the purposes of this review, these variables should be sufficient to suggest new avenues for research.

For example, person–situational interaction perspective suggests that expatriate-related factors (person) may interact with family-related variables (situational) to affect an expatriate’s adjustment and/or performance during an international assignment. Conversely, spouse-related factors (person) may also interact with assignment-related variables (situational) to affect an expatriate’s adjustment and/or performance during an international assignment. While this relates only to the spouse–expatriate interface, there are two additional interfaces, parent company–expatriate interface and host country nationals–expatriate interface, that have not been thoroughly examined to date. Thus, there are several important avenues for future research on expatriation issues.

Managing Expatriate Adjustment Through Multiple Interfaces

One of the critical managerial implications that arise from the multiple stakeholder view of expatriate adjustment (and outcomes) is that multinationals cannot manage expatriate adjustment (and outcomes) just by focusing on the expatriates themselves (even when expatriates are single). Many scholars have called for the inclusion of spouses in managing expatriate adjustment and performance. In addition, Vance et al. (1993), Vance and Paik (1995), and Toh and DeNisi (2003) advocated for the inclusion of host country nationals in managing expatriate performance. For example, Vance and Paik (1995: 157) noted that “there is a surprising lack of attention to the development needs and potential contributions of the host country national workforce (HCW) associated with the expatriate management assignment.” This opinion was echoed by Toh and DeNisi (2003: 617), who noted that “existing IHRM [international HRM] studies have neglected the HCN’s role in the success of expatriate assignees, placing the burden largely on the expatriate.” These perspectives however are still limited in that only one stakeholder is highlighted. It may be time to start examining more than one stakeholder at a time to see if each stakeholder has an independent as well as an interactive impact on expatriate employees. Only then will multinationals begin to understand how to devise intervention programs to help expatriates (and their families) adjust to foreign environments, which in turn will facilitate better outcomes for them.

Additional Future Research Directions

As the multiple stakeholder view of expatriate adjustment and performance in Figure 1 clearly illustrates, there are additional interfaces and potential stakeholders that have not been explored in this research. For example, the possibility of foreign subsidiary characteristics
affecting expatriate adjustment and/or performance, which is essentially a cross-level inference (e.g., James & Williams, 2000), highlights the possibility that higher level variables may influence expatriates’ attitudes and behaviors, such as cross-cultural adjustment and job performance. Other extensions not explored in this study are the additional interfaces between spouse–host country nationals, spouse–parent company, and host country nationals–parent company. Toh and DeNisi (2003) argued that the discrepancy between the human resources system implemented for expatriates by the parent company and the one implemented by the foreign subsidiary will likely impact expatriate adjustment and performance. Shaffer and Harrison (2001) also examined the relationship between spouse adjustment and host country national social network characteristics. Studying these additional interfaces will provide invaluable insight into the workings of international assignments.

Conclusions

To conclude, this theoretical critique reviews the literature to highlight various assumptions that are inherent in many, if not the majority, of studies on expatriates and to underscore the importance of adopting an innovative, multiple stakeholder view approach to studies on expatriate adjustment and performance. In addition, this review provides an integrative framework that highlights future research directions that could complement existing studies. Although a fully comprehensive review of the expatriate literature was not provided here, the review that was done captures the essential elements of the literature, and the proposed model provides a new angle on expatriate adjustment and performance that synthesizes three different research areas. Overall, this review provides a novel outlook on expatriate studies that could be used to expand the existing research streams.

Note

1. This refers to “people’s concern with the welfare of others (social justice, equality, helpfulness, and loyalty are exemplary aspects)” (Van Vianen, De Pater, Kristof-Brown, & Johnson, 2004: 705).

References

*An asterisk indicates that the study was included in the review.


