

THE EFFECTS OF COPING STRATEGIES ON ADJUSTMENT
FOR AMERICAN EXPATRIATES IN GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

Nearly 15% of all expatriates traveling overseas on business fail their assignment according to conservative estimates (Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001). Early attempts to remedy poor performance focused on technical skill development, but recent research suggests that more personal factors may play a larger role in success or failure overseas. There is a growing interest in understanding the psychological factors that contribute to overseas adjustment. Despite past research showing that problem- and emotion-focused coping styles and adjustment can affect performance in many settings, little is known about the specific role of coping styles on adjustment during overseas assignments (Birdseye & Hill, 1995; Naumann, 1992; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998).

The current study examined differences in the effectiveness of general and culture-specific coping strategies for work, interactional, and general adjustment to assignments in Germany. We expected that avoidance would moderate the positive effects of both problem-reappraisal (Avoidance X Problem-Reappraisal interaction) and problem-focused coping (Avoidance X Problem-Focused interaction) on adjustment. Avoidance was expected to attenuate the positive effects of each of these two coping styles; adjustment was expected to be most favorable when avoidance was low and problem-focused or problem-reappraisal coping was high. Culture-specific coping was expected to add unique prediction to adjustment over the effects of these general coping styles.

The hypothesized interaction between problem-reappraisal and avoidance emerged in ratings of work adjustment. When problem-focused coping and avoidance

served as predictors, simple effects of both variables were found on work adjustment, and avoidance had a significant effect on interactional adjustment. None of the general coping style predictors or their interactions predicted general adjustment.

Aspects of culture-specific coping were important predictors of adjustment as well, and added incremental prediction to the general coping measures noted above. Overall ratings of culture-specific coping, societal differences, and language differences were all found to add incremental prediction of general and interactional adjustment. The results from this study may aid in helping decision makers select appropriate employees for expatriate assignments and may guide expatriate training. Additionally, these results have contributed to our theoretical understanding of the constructs that predict success in overseas assignments.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Jerry and Erna Mahony. Their constant love and support throughout my life have helped me to put forth the time and energy necessary to complete this thesis.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For many reasons, each year the number of businesses internationally owned and operated increases. Labor is often less expensive in other countries, the demand for international products is spreading, and international travel and trade is easily accessed (Koch, 2003; MacSweeney, 2003; Schwartz & Tkaczyk, 2003; U.S. Department of Labor, 2002). Given the growth of international business, more than 350,000 American workers are now being sent overseas for assignments and projects (Blonigen, 1998). These workers, referred to as expatriates, are facing difficult challenges in their daily lives. The differences in language, culture, customs, and traditions are just a handful of the factors that can contribute to the success or failure of an expatriate. This study focused on how the ability to adapt to cultural differences and one's use of general coping strategies impacted the adjustment of expatriates in Germany.

Due to the large number of factors affecting adjustment, expatriates often do not finish their assignments successfully. In fact, it is not uncommon for a company to be discussing the latest worker who failed his or her overseas assignment. This is not an event that can be taken lightly. Many times when a failure such as this occurs, companies must select, train, and compensate a new employee to complete the job of the original expatriate. Reports suggest that the combined direct and indirect costs of this process can be anywhere from \$50,000 to \$500,000 per failed expatriate (Naumann, 1992). This cost is quite alarming when considering conservative estimates report that between 5 and 15 percent of all expatriates fail their assignment (Eschbach, Parker, & Stoeberl, 2001).

The high cost of failure has motivated companies to investigate the qualities that differentiate successful and unsuccessful expatriates. In addition to the reasons listed earlier (language, culture, etc.), many individual differences have also been proposed to affect success. Included among these qualities are personality factors, technical knowledge, spousal/significant-other reactions to the assignment, employee reactions to the assignment, coping strategies, the ability and willingness to adjust, appropriate culture and language skills, and stress management techniques (Feldman & Tompson, 1993; Kraimer, Wayne, & Jaworski, 2001; Navara & James, 2002; Selmer, 2001).

Despite the repercussions of overseas failure for both the company and expatriate, research in this area is still fairly new; many of the personal and social challenges that may lead to poor adjustment have not been pinpointed and consequently neither have the solutions. Many factors have been found to affect expatriate success; therefore, the following segment is a review of general information on expatriate success, including a discussion of the relevance of adjustment as a dependent variable (Kraimer et al., 2001). Next, research on the relationship between general coping strategies and adjustment will be reviewed. In a final segment, the culture-specific factors that may impact adjustment are discussed, with an emphasis on measurement of adjustment to the German culture.

The purpose of the current study is to examine the differences in the effectiveness of both general and culture-specific coping strategies in expatriate adjustment. Primarily, the general and culture-specific strategies are examined with regard to the impact they have on the general, work-oriented, and social or interactional adjustment of American expatriates completing an assignment in Germany.

General Factors Affecting Expatriate Success

As briefly mentioned above, there are many factors that contribute to expatriate success and adjustment. The research in this area has been very broad, encompassing individual differences, cultural differences, and work differences. Clearly there is not one primary factor that predicts success or failure.

Research suggests that individual factors (i.e. quality of life, number of children, marital status, educational level), work factors (i.e. job satisfaction, job autonomy, promotion status), and environmental factors (i.e. cost of living, quality of products, standard of living) all play a role in expatriate turnover. Turnover typically involves leaving the assignment rather than the company (Birdseye & Hill, 1995). Unfortunately, little attention has been paid to coping strategies used by individuals and the impact of these strategies on success in expatriate assignments.

While there are many different indices of overseas success, this study focuses on adjustment as an index of success. Adjustment is treated as a multidimensional construct, consisting of interactional (social), work-oriented, and general adjustment. Logically, work and social adjustment may be somewhat distinct. Separate assessments of each aspect may help us understand and clarify the unique determinants of both social and work-oriented adjustment, leading to a greater understanding of overseas success.

In addition, psychological adjustment is likely to be more sensitive to and related to individual differences in coping than the typical measures of turnover or failure on a project. Turnover and failure measures tend to be rather crude and do not capture the psychological state of the individual who chooses to terminate the assignment. The psychological reaction of the expatriate to the assignment seems critical in understanding

their level of adjustment while they are on their assignment, and understanding the predictors of adjustment can help us anticipate and, in some cases, remedy the problems that may be faced by expatriates. In summary, adjustment has not been adequately explored in the literature and may provide a deeper understanding of the psychological basis of the success or failure of expatriates.

At present, most of the available research focuses primarily on turnover or productivity of expatriates. While these dependent measures are probably crude proxies for psychological states, this research does provide a foundation for understanding certain factors that may lead an individual to withdraw from an overseas assignment. These have been noted by Birdseye and Hill (1995), who reported specific types of individual, work, and environmental factors that affect expatriate turnover. For example, an older expatriate who has been overseas for a long time and has a higher quality of life and satisfaction will be less likely to leave an assignment than someone who is younger, been overseas a short time and has a low quality of life and satisfaction. Finally, research shows that whether or not the assignment is a promotion affects expatriate success. For example, if the assignment location involves a relatively unimportant part of the corporation, the assignment may be interpreted as a demotion, which results in more failed assignments.

Based on a review of these individual, environmental, and work factors, Naumann (1992) suggested several key factors in lowering expatriate turnover. One factor was the similarity between the local culture and the foreign culture where the expatriate is traveling. Logically, greater similarity between the home and foreign culture is associated with an easier transition and lower turnover. Similar to Birdseye and Hill

(1995), Naumann (1992) also stated that individuals with previous international experience and longer tenure might be more successful. When taken together, these factors affect the amount and quality of adjustment, which can ultimately lead to completed assignments. These findings also suggest that preparing individuals for work assignments should incorporate training on aspects of the new culture. This step should ease assimilation into the new work environment.

Birdseye and Hill's (1995) findings complement those of Naumann (1992) discussed above and those found by Arthur and Bennett (1995). Arthur and Bennett (1995) studied a multi-national sample of expatriates. Included among the factors studied were job performance components, psychosocial skills, technical skills and knowledge, and the importance of each to the expatriate. It was hypothesized that managers would find psychosocial skills more important, and workers in non-managerial positions would find technical skills and knowledge more useful to successful assignments.

Survey data showed that five main factors were perceived as important by the participant, and aided in determining overseas success. The most important factor was family situation, more specifically; the adaptability of the spouse, spousal opinion of the assignment and willingness to live abroad, and the stability of the marriage all played a role in determining success. Other significant predictors included flexibility/adaptability, job knowledge and motivation, relational skills, and lastly, extra-cultural openness. These ratings were not dependent on the type of job the respondent held, contrary to what was expected. The findings clearly demonstrate the importance of individual and work factors in shaping the overseas experience of the expatriate, and argue that psychological variables such as the ability to adapt are significantly predictive of success. This type of

research was groundbreaking because it focused on factors other than technical skills that can determine the adjustment of expatriates.

Research discussing the factors affecting expatriate success does not provide a clear and concise roadmap for creating a successful expatriate. While early research overemphasized technical skills, more recent research focuses on individual difference factors. Some of this research will be summarized in the following sections. Those areas relevant to the current examination of the impact of coping styles on adjustment will be emphasized.

As noted earlier, most of the research reviewed has used turnover as a dependent variable. This factor offers little in terms of understanding the psychological dynamics underlying success in overseas assignments. Clearly turnover has economic consequences for the organization, but knowing that an expatriate left a job yields limited information. Understanding adjustment is an area of increasing interest in the field, and predicting the factors that are related to this variable may allow us to select or train individuals to increase the probability of their success in overseas assignments. The nature of adjustment and its relationship to organizational variables of interest is reviewed next.

The Importance of Understanding Expatriate Adjustment

Adjustment can be defined as the “perceived degree of comfort a person has with his or her environment” (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). Research suggests that expatriate adjustment can be broken down into three components: general, work, and interactional adjustment. General adjustment refers to the “psychological comfort involving aspects of the host cultural environment”, work adjustment refers to “psychological comfort regarding work values, expectations and standards”, and finally,

interactional adjustment refers to “adjustment to different communication styles in the host culture and to interpersonal communication with host-country nationals” (Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002). In the current study, we gather data on all three dimensions: general adjustment to the German culture, work adjustment, and interactional (social) adjustment. By gathering data on each of these three dimensions, we were able to determine the role of coping not only in the business setting, but also in the person’s social setting. This is important since it may be the case that the significance of predictors of adjustment varies across the work and social domains.

While adjustment per se does not carry economic consequences for a firm, this variable is linked to factors that do drive economic success of the assignment. Thus, improving adjustment can hold benefits for the company as well as for the expatriate. The research of Shaffer and Harrison (1998) proposes an indirect relationship between adjustment and success. This research posits that an expatriate who thinks about leaving the current assignment or company has not been able to fully adjust, and therefore is more likely to fail the assignment. Through a survey of expatriates in American multinational corporations, Shaffer and Harrison found that higher adjustment does indeed heighten the chance of successful performance in an overseas assignment, and lower adjustment heightens the chance of assignment failure. In summary, research clearly demonstrates the positive relationship between adjustment and success. (Kraimer et al., 2001).

Given the consequences of poor adjustment, identifying significant predictors is a pressing issue. If we can comprehend the underpinnings of adjustment, we may be able to select those with a higher probability of success, or design interventions that might

improve the overseas adjustment of individuals. A number of factors impact adjustment, according to past research. Among the specific factors contributing to adjustment are satisfaction, ability to manage stress, spousal reactions, knowledge of the host country, language knowledge, a willingness to communicate, and, central to this study, coping mechanisms (Selmer, 2001; Shaffer & Harrison, 1998; Stening & Hammer, 1992; Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002; Takeuchi, Yun, & Tesluk, 2002). Similarly, Feldman & Tompson (1993) propose six broad factors that determine expatriate adjustment: demographic factors (i.e., age, marital status); internationalness of the job change (domestic or international assignment location); job characteristics (e.g., current job level); the amount of career development provided; current and upcoming assignment similarity; and again, different types of coping strategies. Of all the variables listed, only coping strategies allow us some insight into the way that individuals are actually psychologically adapting to the changes they encounter overseas. The remaining variables, although important empirical predictors, do not allow us to understand the psychological mechanisms involved in the individual's ability to adapt to the new social, work environments.

Although the importance of coping styles has not been widely explored, the few studies that have been conducted suggest that they play an important role in overseas assignments. Feldman and Tompson (1993) found that problem reappraisal, characterized by looking for the positive side in a situation and finding the benefits of the job, was positively related to job adjustment. In contrast, psychological withdrawal or avoidance, characterized by keeping to one self and avoiding talking to others about

problems, was negatively related to job adjustment. This finding supports the contention made by some researchers that expatriate coping is a significant factor in adjustment.

This research suggests that coping styles may be a significant influence in the adaptation of expatriates. In the next segments, the general coping strategies that may impact an individual's ability to adapt to many new situations and cultures will be explored. These strategies include problem and emotion-focused styles. A second potentially important predictor is also examined. Culture-specific considerations in predicting adjustment are also reviewed. These are more specific than general coping styles and include differences that are endemic to a given culture. Both these general coping abilities and culture-specific issues may add to the prediction and understanding of successful adjustment to overseas assignments.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are used everyday to deal with all types of stress, including occupational/work stress. These coping strategies aid people in both appraising stressful situations as well as regulating distress (Baum, Fleming, & Singer, 1983; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986; Parker & Endler, 1996). Research has shown that functional coping strategies facilitate adjustment in a number of settings. Stressful situations which are dealt with in a positive and optimistic manner not only lead to positive outcomes, but also allow people to develop new skills that may otherwise be hindered by stress (Pritchard & McIntosh, 2003; Shaefer & Coleman, 1992; Zuckerman, Kieffer, & Knee, 1998).

Coping strategies have been defined and redefined over the years in many different ways. One of the most common methods of definition is to divide coping

strategies into problem-focused and emotion-focused strategies. Problem-focused coping can be defined as dealing with a problem that is causing stress by either eliminating it or managing it (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000). For example, this strategy may involve gathering more information, planning a course of action, and actively pursuing the necessary resources for dealing with the problem, such as skills and knowledge. This type of coping has often been regarded as an effective form of coping with stress because it actively addresses and manages the underlying problem. The active nature of problem-focused coping can lead to feelings of empowerment, effectiveness, and adjustment. These positive effects are most evident in situations that can be controlled, where the person can rationally identify and work towards an appropriate goal (Bowman & Stern, 1995; Compas, Malcarne, & Fondacaro, 1988).

In contrast, emotion-focused coping, also referred to as symptom-focused coping, can be defined as dealing with stressful emotions by avoiding direct encounters with the stressor or by redefining the stressor, thus making it less threatening. In the coping literature, emotion-focused coping is often seen as having two separate facets and is defined as such. While these facets are often grouped together, they are actually statistically and conceptually quite independent, and may have very different effects on adjustment. Therefore, measuring the two relatively independent facets of the construct separately and treating them as two distinct predictors may facilitate a greater understanding of the role of emotion-focused coping in adjustment.

The first facet of emotion-focused coping, problem-reappraisal strategies, reflects attempts to manage the evaluation of a situation's stress level. For example, when in a stressful situation a person may try to focus on the value of their efforts and look at them

positively, which can help the person to continue their efforts in the face of stress. This has been seen as an approach method, like problem-focused coping, that can lead to positive outcomes in situations that can be controlled as well as situations that must be accepted for what they are (Bowman & Stern, 1995; Feldman & Tompson, 1993).

The second facet of emotion-focused coping known as avoidance is often related to negative outcomes and is seen as detrimental, both in situations that can and cannot be controlled (Bowman & Stern, 1995). Avoidance strategies attempt to reduce stress by avoiding the problem or stressor and can include both psychological and/or physical means, resulting in the complete avoidance of a situation (Folkman, et al., 1986).

Although past research has revealed different magnitudes of correlations among problem reappraisal, problem-focused strategies, and avoidance coping, the direction and significance of these correlational findings are consistent. One facet of emotion-focused coping, problem-reappraisal, is often significantly and positively correlated to the more general category of problem-focused strategies; Dunkley, Zuroff, and Blankenstein (2003) report a correlation of .54 ($p < .001$). While problem reappraisal and avoidance coping are both considered emotion-based strategies, they are largely independent of one another. Problem-reappraisal coping is only slightly correlated with avoidance coping ($r = .03$); problem-focused coping is not significantly correlated with avoidance coping (Bowman & Stern, 1995; Dunkley et al., 2003; Long, 1990). Therefore, in this study, problem-focused, avoidance, and problem-reappraisal coping are treated as three independent categories of strategies. We planned on examining the correlation between these facets in the first phase of analyses to test this assumption in this setting.

From the information already presented on problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies, it is not surprising that that problem-focused and problem-reappraisal coping are often the most effective methods for dealing with difficult or stressful situations. For example, Pritchard and McIntosh (2003) found that first-year-law students using problem-focused coping strategies, such as active coping, experienced positive affect and heightened adjustment to law school. Inversely, students who utilized avoidance strategies (a facet of emotion-focused coping) experienced not only lowered adjustment, but its use also led more students to contemplate dropping out of law school.

Given the focus of the current study, we were interested in seeing if these coping strategies would impact the adjustment of people in a potentially stressful situation, an overseas assignment. In our next section, we discuss the research on the relationship between coping strategies and adjustment. As will be seen in the review, much of the coping research reports problem-focused and problem-reappraisal coping as beneficial, whereas emotion-focused coping (avoidance) is reported as potentially detrimental to long-term adjustment (Bowman & Stern, 1995; Wong, 2002). The strong relationship between coping and adjustment has been found in many different types of research settings, including expatriates completing overseas assignments.

Coping Strategies and Expatriate Adjustment

As discussed in the previous section, Feldman and Tompson (1993) found that coping strategies affect success in an expatriate assignment. Using Folkman et al.'s (1986) model to define coping, four coping strategies can be applied to job changes: "active attempts to change the work environment, active attempts to seek out information or get additional training, psychological reappraisal, and psychological withdrawal

(avoidance).” The first two strategies are problem-focused, while the last two correspond to the two facets of emotion-focused coping. Like most past research, the intercorrelations among these strategies were found to be modest in the Folkman study. Avoidance coping was only slightly correlated with problem-reappraisal ($r=.23$), problem-focused coping and problem-reappraisal were slightly more correlated ($r=.39$), and finally, problem-focused coping and avoidance coping produced the lowest intercorrelation ($r=.10$). These findings provide more evidence for measuring and treating the coping strategies as relatively independent constructs in the current study.

Both emotion- and problem-focused coping may be associated with adjustment to overseas assignments. In their study, Feldman and Tompson (1993) predicted that the strategies of active attempts to change the work environment or seek out information and psychological reappraisal would result in successful overseas assignments. Findings confirmed that there was a positive correlation between psychological reappraisal and adjustment, which, based on research presented earlier, is related to success. Supporting these findings, McCabe, McKern, and McDonald (2004) found that problem-focused coping strategies resulted in better psychological adjustment to stressful situations, and that emotion-focused coping (avoidance) could lead to lower adjustment. Again, we believe that the relationship between emotion-focused coping and adjustment may depend on the particular facet of emotion-based coping that is assessed; avoidance or withdrawal may be less functional than simply reappraising the problem.

Additional research supports the importance of coping in the experience of expatriates. In 2001, Selmer found that coping strategies play a role in the adjustment of expatriates. In this study, expatriates traveling to Mainland China were given a coping

measure, which was divided into problem- and emotion-focused coping strategies, an adjustment scale measuring both willingness and ability to adjust, and a standard demographic measure. Results showed that the majority of the expatriates used problem-focused coping strategies, which was significantly and positively correlated to the ability to adjust. In addition, unwillingness to adjust significantly and positively correlated with parent-country escapism (similar to withdrawal cognitions), a sign of emotion-focused strategies.

This suggests that there is not only a connection between coping and adjustment, but that problem-focused coping may result in better adjustment than avoidance and may ultimately lead to less expatriates returning home early. Of course, this would also suggest that problem-focused coping and more adaptive emotion-focused styles might lead to a more positive experience for the expatriate as well.

The research presented in this section clearly indicates that coping plays a significant role in an expatriate's adjustment in overseas assignments. Therefore, the current study aims to elaborate on and clarify this relationship for expatriates in Germany, which has not been previously addressed in the psychology literature.

Problem-focused and emotion-focused mechanisms may aid or hinder adjustment in a number of settings. While much of the past research has used a "main effects" model of the role of these factors in adjustment, it may be the case that certain emotion- and problem-focused coping styles interact. In the current study, we explore the possibility that the potentially positive effects of problem-focused coping can be moderated by avoidance. High levels of avoidance may weaken the positive impact of the more functional problem-oriented coping style.

We also believe that the relationship between emotion-focused coping and adjustment may have been oversimplified in research that characterizes problem-focused methods as “good” and emotion-focused methods as “bad.” The relationship between emotion-focused coping and expatriate adjustment may depend on the particular facet under investigation. We do not conceptualize the two facets of emotion-focused coping, problem-reappraisal and avoidance, as having similar effects on adjustment. Problem-reappraisal may function quite differently than avoidance in the prediction of adjustment, and is expected to have more positive effects. Again, we propose that avoidance may moderate the functional impact of the positive coping mechanism of problem-reappraisal. We hypothesize that adjustment will be particularly facilitated when problem-reappraisal is high and avoidance is low. This conjunctive model adds to our understanding of the joint role of these coping mechanisms in adjustment.

Thus, we examine the role of the two separate facets in emotion-focused coping (problem reappraisal and avoidance) in this study, rather than simply contrasting “emotion-focused” and “problem-focused” coping. Given the research reviewed, these two facets of emotion-focused coping may have quite different effects on adjustment. We also extend past research by looking at the joint effects of positive and negative coping mechanisms, rather than considering each in isolation.

While an understanding of general coping mechanisms can help us refine models of expatriate adjustment, it is logical to expect that part of the adjustment process for expatriates is culture-specific. For better prediction of adjustment to a given culture, and for a better appreciation of the cultural differences that impact the well being of expatriates, it is necessary to examine specific differences from the American culture and

to examine acceptance of and adaptation to these differences. Thus, the role of culture-specific coping is explored in this study. This factor is expected to add incremental prediction of adjustment over and above that offered by general coping styles.

Culture-specific coping suggests that additional prediction of adjustment may be offered by measuring the extent to which one is comfortable in a given cultural environment. In the current study, the culture of interest is Germany. General research on adjustment to specific cultures and differences in the American-German culture will be explored in the next segment.

Culture-Specific Factors in Adjustment

In contrast to the findings on general coping mechanisms presented in the previous section, the literature surrounding culture-specific adjustment and culture-specific challenges in coping is somewhat limited in scope. Culture-specific information is seldom incorporated in research examining expatriate adjustment to overseas assignments and has been largely overlooked in research examining general coping styles and overseas assignments. In these studies, adjustment is most often examined in terms of “barriers” that may be prevalent, or the stress of a situation (Pritchard & McIntosh, 2003; Selmer, 2001), and coping is defined in general terms of problem-focused, problem-reappraisal, and avoidance. Each of these methods of examining adjustment and coping leaves us unable to answer a critical question: what specific aspects of a given culture may pose the largest adjustment challenges for expatriates? The answer potentially lies in more culture-specific coping information rather than the all-encompassing general coping measures that may predict overall adjustment to stressful/unfamiliar events.

In spite of the extensive literature that is available regarding culture-specific differences that can affect adjustment, there is a lack of empirical studies integrating this information. Primarily, it has not been examined in conjunction with general coping strategies to determine what combination increases the probability of expatriate success. In addition, many of the coping studies discussed earlier may only focus on work or overall adjustment rather than different facets of adjustment. The current study, therefore, is one of the first studies in the research literature to include not only general measures of coping but culture-specific coping as predictors. In addition, we explored these effects on three different aspects of adjustment (general, social, and work), rather than limiting our investigation to only work or overall adjustment.

In contrasting cultures throughout the world, there are several major distinctions that are often identified (Chao & Sun, 1997; Honeycutt, Ford, & Simintiras, 2003; Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002). This study focuses on five major differences: power distance, sense of time, governmental approach to business, language differences, and societal differences. These topics and their relevance to understanding adaptation to the German culture will be discussed further in the following section.

Cultural Differences in the United States and Germany

The first and potentially most important determinant of how well people adjust to overseas assignments is the similarity of the foreign culture to their home culture. In many cases, when traveling from America to such areas as Europe, Asia, and Africa there are many cultural differences that are far more complex than a simple time change. Some of these differences include language, sense of time, societal differences, power distance,

and government practices. Each of these has been shown to have a significant impact on the success of business interactions.

Although many non-American citizens are moderately fluent in English, they still prefer to conduct business in their native language (Beeth, 1997). Therefore, when American expatriates who are fluent only in English must conduct business in a foreign company in an unfamiliar language, they may feel uncomfortable. Additionally, they may not be able to effectively communicate important information. This may impede adjustment and consequently lower the adjustment of the expatriate.

In Germany, it is often said that in order to understand the national sentiment, you must understand the German language (Harris, Moran, & Moran, 2004; Roberts, 2000). Therefore, it is of great importance for all of the reasons listed here that expatriates be fluent in not only the basic German language, but also be willing to learn the intricacies and hidden meanings of the German language (Beeth, 1997; “Doing business with Germany”, 2002; Sethi, 2004). It is important to note that the German language reflects different levels of formality based on how close you are to a person; different forms of the language are used for close friends versus acquaintances. Given that there is generally a longer period of acquaintanceship before a person will call you a “friend” in Germany than in America, understanding these language differences is even more critical. Such differences are also present in social interactions; primarily, there is greater differentiation in the formality of interaction (business and otherwise) for friends vs. family; again there is a longer time period before German will put a person into the informal “category” (Roberts, 2000).

Language differences are not the only challenge that expatriates encounter during an overseas assignment. There are often local cultural customs that can aid in building a successful business relationship. Adjusting to these local traditions, such as local sense of time and societal differences, is often essential for expatriates to perform at an acceptable level and complete the assignment. For example, business practices surrounding promptness and scheduling meetings are a significant source of difference. In Germany, business meetings should not be scheduled for breakfast, and it is imperative that associates arrive on time or early for an appointment or meeting. Americans today often schedule breakfast meetings, and arrive late or barely on time for meetings (Beeth, 1997; Earley & Erez, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Honeycutt et al, 2003; Roberts, 2000).

In addition to this difference in sense of time there are also many societal differences. One source of difference, for example, is that Germans do not establish friendships quickly with someone, but instead stay at an acquaintance level for some time (Harris et al, 2004; Roberts, 2000). Another societal difference is that it is considered improper to invite business clients to dinner, whereas in America this is a common practice, even telling jokes at a business meeting is considered improper (Beeth, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Lewis, 1995). In order for the expatriate to be comfortable with the new culture and country, adjustment to these factors is important.

There are many more differences between Germany and America than these differences in language, societal practices, and sense of time, however. One of the major discrepancies is the cultural difference of power distance defined by Hofstede. Power distance can be defined as “the degree of inequality among people which the population of a country considers as normal: from relatively equal (that is, small power distance) to

extremely unequal (large power distance)” (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1993; Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000). The United States is typically rated as having low power distance, where people take individual initiative and have responsibility in designing jobs. Germany, however, is a high power distance country; the work placed on individuals is within a strict authoritative structure (Earley & Erez, 1997). Given this difference in structure and responsibility, it is easy to see why adjustment to a country with a dissimilar power distance can be difficult.

Finally, government practices and people’s role in society are also important factors with which an expatriate should be comfortable. The role of the government often differs from country to country. This is true of America and Germany as well. One important aspect of German business and government is that it follows a strict chain-of-command (Harris et al, 2004). Where in the United States it may be possible to go directly to the person you need to speak with, regardless of their rank, in Germany, this would not be seen as proper business etiquette. It is also important to understand the overarching systems that govern business, such as the labor-management relation system (“Best-in-the-world practices”, 1994; Davidson, 1993; Harris et al, 2004; Lewis, 1995; Theil, 2004).

Clearly, there are significant German-American differences on many major cultural dimensions, posing a challenge for the uninitiated expatriate. The typical lack of cross-cultural training given to those preparing for overseas assignments makes it unlikely that they will have the information they need to adjust to their new environment. Given the complexity of the cultural differences that exist, it is important to not only study general factors that affect expatriate success, but to also study more specific factors

such as general and culture-specific coping and adjustment. While there may be some general coping strategies that aid or hinder an individual regardless of the cultural change, cultures that are very dissimilar to the American culture may pose a greater challenge to American expatriates. Therefore, this study examines each of the culture-specific topics discussed in this section (power distance, sense of time, language and societal differences, government practices) (Beeth, 1997; “Best-in-the-world practices”, 1994; Davidson, 1993; “Doing business with Germany”, 2002; Earley & Erez, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede, 1993; Honeycutt et al, 2003; Lewis, 1995; Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000; Roberts, 2000; Sethi, 2004; Theil, 2004).

Exploring and understanding the significance of these predictors has practical and theoretical relevance for researchers. From a practical standpoint, understanding how culture-specific factors impact adjustment may lead organizations to pay particular attention to these concerns when designing training programs to prepare expatriates, as well as when they develop support systems overseas. From a theoretical standpoint, extending our understanding of coping mechanisms to the level of culture-specific coping allows a deeper comprehension of the psychological process of adjustment for expatriates in a given country.

Despite the importance of overseas success, many studies in the past have focused only on more general economic indicators of adjustment such as turnover rather than looking at work and general adjustment as dependent variables worthy of research interest. In addition, more general coping strategies are often used to predict these dependent variables, rather than developing more culture-specific predictors. This study,

therefore, adds to the literature more in-depth knowledge about how adjustment is related to general coping strategies as well as one's ability to adjust to the German culture.

Business with German owned companies has expanded in the U.S., and interactions with German companies are extensive in South Carolina. German-owned companies employ approximately 22,000 workers throughout South Carolina, and in 2002 the exports from South Carolina to Germany were valued at nearly \$1.7 billion (Bell, 2003). German culture-specific studies are needed to provide insight into the best way to train, prepare, and support expatriates so that they may experience greater success

Current Study

Although businessmen and women have been traveling overseas to both Eastern and Western European countries for many decades, little research has focused on expatriates in Western Europe. Due to the large contingency of German owned companies in the Southeastern United States and the lack of culture-specific research in this area, this study focuses on American expatriates traveling to Germany.

Past research on cultural differences has frequently combined Western European countries and America into one entity, when in fact they are very different. A great deal of knowledge, skill, and adjustment is often needed for an expatriate to be successful when traveling from the U.S. to a given European country. As discussed earlier, the complexities of adjustment to a foreign culture run deeper than simple surface differences of how to address business associates. They often encompass such broad psychosocial constructs as power distance and how people view their role in society.

Given these cultural differences, as well as the complexity of predicting expatriate success, the proposed research attempted to generalize the basic findings of Selmer's

(2001) study, discussed earlier, to American employees traveling to Germany. More specifically, problem-focused coping, problem-reappraisal coping, avoidance coping and culture-specific coping were used to predict work adjustment, social adjustment, and general adjustment. It was expected that coping strategies, both general and culture-specific, would affect adjustment of the expatriate when traveling abroad.

Hypotheses

Problem-focused coping, as defined in the literature, involves actively managing or eliminating stressors, and is often related to successful adjustment more so than the emotion-focused coping strategy of avoidance (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Selmer, 2001). It was hypothesized that persons exhibiting high problem-focused strategies and low avoidance strategies would be better able to adjust. Furthermore, it was expected that persons primarily utilizing avoidance strategies and rarely using problem-focused would be disproportionately less able to adjust. Therefore, we predict an interaction between problem-focused and avoidance coping in the prediction of work, interactional, and general adjustment.

Hypothesis 1: The relationship between problem-focused coping strategies and adjustment will be stronger for those who are considered low on avoidance coping strategies than those who are high on avoidance coping strategies. (Avoidance X Problem-Focused Coping interaction)

It is also expected based on previous research that there will be a similar relationship between problem-reappraisal and adjustment as there is between problem-focused and adjustment. Again, problem-reappraisal adjustment reflects attempts to manage the evaluation of a situation's stress level. The use of avoidance was expected to weaken the positive impact of problem reappraisal. Therefore:

Hypothesis 2: The relationship between the problem-reappraisal facet of emotion-focused coping and adjustment will be stronger for those who are considered low on avoidance coping strategies than those who are high on avoidance coping strategies. (Avoidance X Problem-Reappraisal interaction)

Finally, in an effort to add prediction beyond that offered by general coping measures, a culture-specific measure was administered. Traveling to a new culture involves a number of significant dimensions related to everyday life at work and home. Many people struggle to adjust to differences associated with the sense of time, the way individuals interact at work, and even language differences. Therefore, the culture-specific measure was designed to access these adjustment factors as manifested in the German culture. Therefore, we expect:

Hypothesis 3: The culture-specific measure will add incremental prediction of adjustment when entered after the general coping interactions discussed in H1 and H2.

Control Variables

A number of control variables were proposed in the initial study, including previous experience traveling abroad, information on the current assignment, amount and type of pre-departure information and language proficiency. Unfortunately, inclusion of all variables resulted in a survey that was 150 items long, and the length of the study strongly discouraged participation, as evidenced in the large number of companies (approximately 75) approached to gain the current sample of 80 participants.

Given this issue, the number of control variables was limited to those that had been shown to have the greatest significance in past research. This included questions on whether the assignment was viewed as mandatory (if the assignment was requested, if the supervisor required the assignment, if there was an option not to take the assignment without fear of repercussions, willingness to take this assignment), perceived importance

of the assignment to the company, and perceived relevance of the assignment to the individual (whether or not the assignment was a promotion ,and whether or not completing the assignment is personally important). It was expected that expatriates who perceived this assignment as a promotion would be more likely to adjust (Birdseye & Hill, 1995).

Two additional control variables involved the specific assignment and assessed the length of the assignment and how long the expatriate had already been in Germany. Another important control variable was the type and amount of pre-departure training the expatriate received. Since training has been shown to aid expatriates in the past, it was expected that expatriates would be better able to adjust to their German assignment if they had been given information on such topics as language, local culture and customs, and the company branch they were visiting (Arthur & Bennett, 1995).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 80 American expatriates currently on a business assignment in Germany; three participants were eliminated from the analysis due expatriate assignments that were not temporary (12+ years). The participants were identified through various means, including direct contact through the company for which they work, online expatriate forums, and newsletters distributed through various groups catering to expatriate assignees and international business. A total of 75 companies were contacted in an effort to recruit participants. Unfortunately, many did not have American expatriates in Germany, and therefore, the bulk of the respondents came from 4 large international corporations representing 3 industries. The remaining participants were recruited from various online expatriate forums. Due to the nature of the anonymous recruiting, a participant response rate cannot be calculated for this study.

The participants were 69.7% male and ranged from 20- to 64-years-old, with a mean age of 36.55. The control variables of tenure and time in Germany were examined and on average, participants had been in Germany 504 days, or 1 year and 5 months, and had been working for their respective company an average of 8 years. The length of the expatriate assignment, another control variable, varied greatly from multiple short trips over 2 years to 6 years. Seventy-eight percent of the participants had either a Bachelor's degree or higher and 81.8% were salaried workers. Of the 77 participants included in the analyses, 49.3% indicated the expatriate assignment was not a promotion, and 59.2% of participants requested the overseas assignment. The majority of participants (93.3%)

were willing to take the assignment, 81.4% felt the assignment was important to the company, and 90.6% personally felt the assignment was important to complete.

Information regarding the importance of the assignment to both the individual as well as the company is reported in the results section.

Measures

Demographics – This measure consisted of seven questions. It assessed age, gender, national origin, tenure with the company, highest level of education, current job level, and job title/specialty. Age, national origin, and job title/specialty items allowed the participant to freely respond, as no response options were given. Tenure with the company was determined by asking the participant to report how many months and years they had been employed by their company. Highest level of education was assessed using a checklist of possible educational levels, and current job level was determined using a similar checklist. (See Appendix A)

Control Variables

Current Assignment – The questionnaire assessed the extent of knowledge that the expatriate has about the assignment as well as the surrounding factors. Items assessed the length of the assignment, how long they had been in Germany at the time of participation, whether or not the assignment was a promotion, if the assignment was requested, if the supervisor required the assignment, if there was an option not to take the assignment without fear of repercussions, willingness to take this assignment, perceived importance of the assignment to the company, and whether or not completing the assignment is personally important. Participants were asked to report the length of their current assignment, if they did not know, they were asked to report that as well. Additionally,

participants were asked to report the number of days and months they had been in Germany. The remaining questions required the participant to respond using a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. (See Appendix B)

Pre-departure Training – These questions focused on the types of information the expatriate either received from their company or individually sought out regarding the German language, culture and traditions, and company they were visiting. Specifically, expatriates were asked if they had knowledge of the company they were visiting and the assignment they were completing, if they were familiar with local traditions and customs, and if they received training on the German language. Each of these questions was answered using a 5-point scale from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Data on these control variables can be found in the Results section. (See Appendix C)

Predictors

Coping Strategies – This measure was developed by Long (1990) specifically to be used in a work environment. Long's measure is a combination of the Ways of Coping Checklist, which has been used in a wide variety of settings (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) as well as 3 other coping scales developed specifically for use in the workplace (Dewe, 1985; Latack, 1986; Menaghan & Merves, 1984). Based on past research, the scale reliabilities ranged from .77 to .85. Again, similar to past research, the correlations among the 3 types of coping measured were small, ranging from an r of .01 between avoidance and problem-focused coping to $r=.03$ between avoidance and problem-reappraisal to $r= .27$ between problem-reappraisal and problem-focused coping (see Table 2).

This measure focuses on the three types of coping strategies that were examined within the scope of this study: problem-focused coping and the two facets of emotion-focused coping: problem-reappraisal coping and avoidance coping. The final version of the measure consisted of 11 problem-focused items, 14 problem-reappraisal items, and 21 avoidance items. Items include, “I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in” (avoidance coping), “I thought about how a person I admired would handle this situation and used that as a model” (problem-focused coping) and “I thought how much better things are for me compared to the past or to my peers” (problem-reappraisal coping). The items were answered on a 1 (Not at all) to 4 (Used a great deal) Likert-type scale. There was no right or wrong answer. (See Appendix D)

Culture-Specific Coping – This measure consisted of 63 questions addressing comfort with power distance, sense of time in Germany, knowledge of government involvement/practices in Germany, comfort with societal and language differences, and overall cultural coping. These topics addressed some of the major cultural differences between American and German culture, as identified in previous research. All questions were answered on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Some of the questions within each cultural dimension assessed knowledge of German-American differences (e.g. “In Germany is it common for managers making decisions without consulting their subordinates.”) A separate subset within each cultural dimension assessed affective reactions to the differences (e.g. “I think I’m adjusting well to the managerial practices in German work life.”)

Eight questions on work-related power distance issues (managerial differences) were taken from Earley and Erez (1997). The remaining sections were constructed for this

study; all questions can be found in Appendix E. Information was gathered from: Beeth, 1997; “Best-in-the-world practices”, 1994; Davidson, 1993; “Doing business with Germany”, 2002; Earley & Erez, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Honeycutt et al, 2003; Lewis, 1995; Roberts, 2000; Sethi, 2004; Theil, 2004. The sections assessing knowledge of governmental differences and sense of time had 13 and 14 items respectively. The sections on language and societal differences contained 12 and 11 items respectively. Finally, overall cultural coping contained 5 items.

Dependent Variables

Adjustment – This scale, developed by Black and Stephens (1989), consisted of 14 items. Seven items measured general adjustment, four items measured interactional adjustment, and three items measured work adjustment. Each item was answered using a 7-point scale ranging from “not very well adjusted” (1) to “very well adjusted: (7). Based on past research, we expected all three scales to be significantly correlated. While we did expect that the dependent measures would overlap, we expected the correlations to be low enough to justify measuring each facet of adjustment separately. Correlations among the adjustment measures were calculated in the initial stage of the analyses.

Based on past work, the scale reliabilities were expected to meet or exceed professional guidelines. In past work, these have ranged from .81 (work adjustment) to .87 (interactional adjustment), with general adjustment falling in the middle with an alpha of .84. (Black & Stephens, 1989; Robie & Ryan, 1996; Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002) A sample item measuring general adjustment is “Please rate your own degree of adjustment to the living conditions in general.” A sample for interactional adjustment is “Please indicate how well you have adjusted to socializing with host nationals.” Finally,

a sample work adjustment item is “Please indicate how well you have adjusted to your specific job responsibilities.” (See Appendix F)

Procedure

Participants were directed, either through an online forum or email, to an online link that housed the survey. They first read the informed consent statement (Appendix G) and then completed the online survey. The survey consisted of the general coping and culture-specific coping measures, adjustment, demographics, information about the assignment, and pre-departure training. All survey submissions were anonymous and maintained the anonymity of both the participant and company for which they work. After submitting the survey, participation was complete.

Analyses

The current study examined the three hypotheses stated earlier as well as correlational data provided by the questionnaires. The first step in analysis was to examine the reliability of the scales that were combined for use in this study as well as newly developed scales for this study and refine them as needed. Following this initial examination and scale refinement, we examined simple frequency data for each independent and dependent variable in order to examine the range and variability within each measure.

The next step in the process was to examine the intercorrelations among predictors; this was conducted to ensure that they were relatively independent as proposed. Based on past research, we expected that problem-focused coping and problem-reappraisal coping would have a low to moderate positive correlation, and that both problem-focused and problem-reappraisal coping would be correlated only slightly

with avoidance coping. Furthermore, we expected that work and interactional adjustment would be significantly and positively correlated.

Similarly, we examined the intercorrelation between the dependent measures in order to determine whether it was appropriate to treat each as a conceptually and empirically distinct measure. Based on research, the intercorrelations between general and work adjustment and general and interactional adjustment were expected to produce low, but positive correlations. If the intercorrelations examined were low, we expected to analyze each dependent variable separately.

Given the large number of potential predictors in the regression, we wanted to limit the variables to those of central interest in the study; the general and culture-specific predictors were the focus. Thus, an additional step in the initial analyses was to examine the relationship between the control variables and the dependent measures. Although this approach did not allow us to identify potential interactions between the control variables and the major predictors of interest, there was not sufficient theoretical or empirical research to justify adding these numerous potential interactions. Thus, we examined only simple effects of control variables. Those with significant relationships to the dependent variables were entered as a block into the regression, followed by the predictors indicated by H1, H2 and H3.

The first two hypotheses were tested using a hierarchical regression analysis. For H1, the control variables were entered first. If any of the control variables were found to be significant, they were retained in further analyses and entered first into each test of the hypotheses; the non-significant variables were eliminated from further analyses. After entering the control variables into the regressions, the main effects of problem-focused

and avoidance coping were entered. Then the interaction of problem-focused and avoidance coping were entered to see if it added incremental prediction of adjustment. In the final step, the main effect of culture-specific coping was added to the equation. This final step provided a test of H3, the additional prediction offered by culture-specific coping.

For H2, the control variables were entered first into a hierarchical regression, followed by the main effects of problem reappraisal and avoidance coping. This was followed by the interaction of problem-reappraisal and avoidance coping to determine if the interaction provided additional prediction of adjustment. Finally, culture-specific coping was added as a second test of H3, which provided information on whether or not the culture-specific measure added prediction of adjustment over that offered by the general coping measures.

We also used the control variables in some purely exploratory analyses involving culture specific coping; these should be interpreted with caution, since the large number of unplanned analyses increases the chance of Type 2 error. Given the relevance of some of the control variables (voluntary nature of assignment, length of assignment, etc) to cross cultural coping, we explored the relationship between these two sets of variables. These control variables were entered as a block into a regression with the cross-cultural coping dimensions serving as dependent variables. Direction of significant relationships was determined and reported.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Simple descriptive statistics were first computed to ensure that each of the variables was normally distributed. As shown in Table 1, all variables exhibited a wide range of responses and therefore range restriction was not a concern. The mean for problem-focused coping was 28.49 (possible range of 7-49) and the mean for problem-reappraisal was 36.82 (possible range of 14-56). Additionally, the use of avoidance strategies was also moderate with a mean of 35.29 (possible range of 21-84).

The next scales to be examined were the culture-specific coping scales. Managerial differences had a mean of 10.75, sense of time had a mean score of 15.55, and societal differences had a mean of 14.36. All three of these scales had a possible range of 4 to 20. Governmental differences had a mean score of 8.92 with a range of 3 to 15 possible. Finally, language coping had a mean of 42.56 and overall culture-specific coping (one subscale) had a mean of 12.65 with total possible ranges of 12 to 60 and 3 to 15 respectively.

The means for the dependent variables of adjustment were fairly high, but still reflected a wide range of use. General adjustment had a mean of 37.27 where the possible range score was 7 to 49. Similarly, the means for interactional and work adjustment were also relatively high at 21.00 (possible range was 4-28) and 16.93 (possible range was 3-21) respectively.

Background Information

In order to better understand the background information and training that each participant brought to their assignment, the amount and type of pre-departure knowledge was first assessed through a self-report measure. The average level of training was 3.2 on a 5 point scale. Only 50% of the participants felt they received adequate information about the German branch of the company where they would be traveling, and 76 % sought out information on the company on their own. Knowledge of the actual assignment to be completed was also assessed and it was found that 24% of the participants felt they did not receive enough information about the assignment from the company, and 76% sought out information on their own about the assignment. On a positive note, over half (61.4%) of the participants received German language training from their company and 65.7% sought out training individually. Finally, 46% of respondents noted that their company did not provide adequate information on the local culture and customs, making the fact that 75.7% sought out such information on their own not surprising.

Analyses of Scales

After this initial assessment of participants' profiles, the reliability of the general coping, culture-specific coping, and adjustment scales used in the study was examined. In addition, the correlations among the subscales were examined.

Adjustment

The first scale to be examined was the dependent variable of adjustment, with its three subscales. A reliability analysis was used to assess this scale. Evidence of the independence of the subscales can be seen in Table 2; intercorrelations ranged from .05

(work and general adjustment) to .41 (interactional and general adjustment). Given the independence of the three subscales, they were treated as separate dependent variables in subsequent analyses.

The reliability of the adjustment subscales ranged from .80 to .88 as shown in Table 3. Again these findings support past research as expected. Item-total correlations for the 7 general adjustment items ranged from .42 (Item 116) to .65 (Item 114), and the alpha was .80. The item-total correlations were slightly higher for the 4 interactional adjustment items, ranging from .64 (Item 120) to .84 (Item 119) and an alpha of .88. Finally, for the 3 item work adjustment subscale, item-total correlations ranged from .69 (Item 123) to .81 (Item 122) and the alpha level was .86. Given the high alpha level and item-total correlations, all items were retained in the adjustment subscales.

General Coping

The next scale to be examined was the general coping scale. Past research suggests that there are low, significant correlations among the three subscales, but they still remain distinct. In this study, intercorrelations among the subscales were low, ranging from .156 (problem-focused and avoidance coping) to .303 (problem-focused and problem-reappraisal coping, problem-reappraisal and avoidance coping) (shown in Table 2). This provided additional support for the relative independence of these three general coping styles, and the subscales were treated as such in subsequent analyses.

Like the analysis of the adjustment scales, the general coping subscales were assessed with reliability analysis. The reliability of these three sub-scales will be examined separately. The final range of reliabilities was acceptable, ranging from .77 to .85 as shown in Table 4.

The first to be examined was problem-focused coping. The problem-focused scale consisted of 11 items and had an alpha level of .77. The item-total correlations ranged from .18 (Item 10) to .60 (Item 6). Of the 11 items in this scale, five items had item-total correlations less than .4. Problem-reappraisal coping was examined next. The alpha level for the 14 items was .82, slightly higher than past research. The item-total correlations ranged from .12 (Item 7) to .67 (Item 30); three items had item-total correlations less than .4. Finally, avoidance coping was examined. The alpha for the 21 items was .85 with item-total correlations ranging from .16 (Item 40) to .67 (Item 43). Nine items had item-total correlations less than .4. Despite the low item-total correlations of some items within each subscale, the alpha levels were not significantly increased when they were deleted; therefore, all items were retained in further analyses. (See Table 4)

Culture-Specific Coping

Finally, the culture-specific coping scale was examined. The scale was initially developed with 6 distinct subscales in mind. The managerial differences subscale was significantly and positively related to sense of time ($r=.37$), governmental differences ($r=.23$), societal differences ($r=.48$), and overall cultural coping ($r=.27$). Additionally, sense of time was significantly and positively related to governmental differences ($r=.23$), societal differences ($r=.41$) and overall culture-specific coping ($r=.31$). Governmental differences is significantly and negatively related to language ($r=-.34$). Finally, societal differences was significantly and positively related to overall cultural coping ($r=.48$). Although the correlations were significant, they were low enough to suggest that each of the subscales measured a somewhat unique aspect of culture-specific

coping. Given the low intercorrelations, these subscales were treated as separate measures in subsequent analyses.

The reliability of the culture-specific coping subscales was examined next. Given that this measure was created specifically for this study, refinement was needed prior to further analyses. As shown in Table 5, several items were deleted based on the alpha-if-item deleted statistic. The final reliabilities for this measure ranged from .65 (Managerial Differences) to .92 (Language Differences). A general pattern emerged in the analyses of these subscales. For all subscales except the language difference subscale, the items measuring affective reactions to a cultural difference (e.g., managerial differences) were more cohesive than the items measuring specific knowledge of the cultural differences. This is consistent with the fact that little training was provided to expatriates other than language training.

The initial reliability of the 8 item managerial differences subscale (See Appendix E), was .2139 with item total correlations ranging from -.05 (Item 54) to .25 (Item 49). All eight items produced item-total correlations less than .4. Based on the alpha if item deleted statistic, Item 47 was deleted, resulting in a reliability of .34 (7 items) and item total correlations ranging from -.16 (Item 48) to .28 (Item 52), all items were still below .4 for the item-total correlation statistic. Next, Item 48 was deleted and the reliability increased further to .48 for the remaining six items, and produced item total correlations ranging from .06 (Item 50) to .39 (Item 52). Item 50 then had the lowest item-total correlation and was deleted resulting in a five item scale with a reliability of .55 and item total correlations from .03 (Item 49) to .55 (Item 52). Finally, Item 49 was deleted, producing the final reliability of .65 and item total correlations ranging from .36 (Item

51) to .62 (Item 52). Although three of the four items still produced item-total correlations slightly less than .4, all were retained given that the reliability was not harmed by their inclusion, nor would be helped by their deletion. The final managerial differences scale consisted of four items from the initial eight. These items measured adjustment to the managerial differences rather than factual knowledge of the differences.

Sense of time was examined next (See Appendix E). The initial reliability of the 14 item subscale was .23 and the item total correlations ranged from -.37 (Item 59) to .55 (Item 68). The first item deleted was Item 59. This raised the reliability to .40 and the item total correlations ranged from -.32 (Item 58) to .55 (Item 68) for the remaining 13 items. Next Item 58 was deleted, which raised the reliability further to .52. The item total correlations ranged from -.11 (Item 64) to .54 (Item 68), with 10 of the remaining 12 items with item-total correlations less than .4. Item 64 was deleted next and the resulting in an eleven item scale with a reliability of .57 and item total correlations ranging from -.02 (Item 60) to .55 (Item 68). Eight items still maintained item-total correlations less than .4. Item 60 was then deleted resulting in a reliability of .60 and item total correlations ranging from .08 (Items 61 and 62) to .57 (Item 68). Given the low item-total correlation of Item 62, it was deleted leaving 9 items in the scale. The new alpha was .63 and the item-total correlations ranged from .08 (Item 63) to .56 (Item 68). Since six items still had item-total correlations less than .4, Item 61 was deleted next. This deletion resulted in an eight item scale with a reliability of .66 and item-total correlations ranging from .08 (Item 63) to .58 (Item 68). Item 63 was deleted next. The resulting alpha was .66 and the item-total correlations ranged from .22 (Item 56) to .60 (Item 68). Given the low item-total correlation, Item 56 was deleted leaving 6 items. The item-total

correlations ranged from .33 (Item 57) to .61 (Item 68) and an alpha of .70. The next item to be deleted was Item 57. The alpha rose slightly to .70 with item-total correlations ranging from .31 (Item 55) to .62 (item 68). Finally, Item 55 was deleted. This resulted in a reliability of .74 and item-total correlations all greater than .4, ranging from .48 (item 66) to .67 (Item 68). The final scale consisted of 4 of the original 14 items and again reflected affective reactions to German-American sense of time.

The language differences scale (See Appendix E), unlike the other culture-specific coping scales, did not require any refinement as the initial reliability was .92 and the item-total correlations ranged from .40 (Item 89) to .91 (Item 84). This was not surprising since this construct appears to be more straightforward, homogeneous, and easily measured than the other cultural facets included in this study. In addition, this was the only area in which most expatriates received some formal training.

The societal differences subscale, however, did need revision (See Appendix E). The initial reliability on this 11 item scale was .41 and the item-total correlations ranged from -.11 (Item 97) to .47 (Item 103). All items except for 103 had item-total correlations less than .4. The first item deleted was 94. This deletion raised the reliability to .45 with item-total correlations ranging from -.14 (Item 97) to .50 (103). Only seven of the eleven remaining items had item-total correlations less than .4. The next item to be deleted was 97, resulting in a reliability of .51 and item-total correlations from -.06 (Item 99) to .51 (Item 103). Six of the remaining nine items still had item-total correlations below .4, and so the third item deleted was 99. The new reliability was .58 with item-total correlations ranging from -.10 (Item 98) to .58 (Item 103), with four of the eight items producing item-total correlations less than .4. Fourth to be deleted based on

item-total correlation was Item 98. This deletion produced a reliability of .64 and item total correlations ranging from $-.07$ (Item 96) to $.57$ (Item 103). Three of the remaining seven items maintained item-total correlations less than $.4$. Item 96 was then deleted, and the reliability became $.72$ with item-total correlations ranging from $.14$ (Item 100) to $.60$ (Item 104). Item 100 was then deleted resulting in a reliability of $.76$ and item-total correlations ranging from $.36$ (Item 95) to $.64$ (Item 104). Finally, Item 95 was deleted, leaving 4 items out of the original 11 items. The final reliability was $.78$ and the item-total correlations ranged from $.53$ (Item 102) to $.63$ (Item 101). Again, knowledge-based items were dropped and reliability improved when the assessment focused only on affective reactions to the cultural difference.

The overall cultural coping scale was refined next. The initial reliability of this 5 item scale was $.71$ with item total correlations from $.25$ (Item 107) to $.72$ (Item 109). Item 107 was deleted due to its low item-total correlation. This deletion resulted in a reliability of $.73$ and item-total correlations ranging from $.32$ (Item 105) to $.74$ (Item 109). Finally, as the only item with an item-total correlation less than $.4$, Item 105 was deleted. This resulted in a final reliability to $.82$ and item-total correlations ranging from $.62$ (Item 106) to $.76$ (Item 109). Three of the initial five items were retained in this scale. These items measured affective reactions to overall cultural differences.

Governmental differences also needed refinement before further analyses could be completed (See Appendix E). The initial reliability for the 13 item scale was $.08$ with item-total correlations ranging from $-.32$ (Item 77) to $.29$ (Item 76). Based on the trends in the other culture-specific coping scales, the affective items were retained for further analysis and the other items were discarded. The final scale consisted of 3 items with an

alpha of .72. The item-total correlations ranged from .47 (Item 79) to .58 (Item 80). Again, to restate, the items retained focused on affective reactions to governmental differences.

With the exception of the Language Differences scale, the items retained for further analyses primarily addressed affective reactions to the cultural differences expatriates were experiencing. Knowledge based items assessed specific areas of cultural differences. These items did not cluster together within sub-dimensions such as managerial differences. Additional analyses suggested that they also did not cluster together as a whole, across dimensions. It may have been the case that participants simply knew some pieces of information and not other pieces; little or no formal cultural training outside language training was provided to expatriates. Any knowledge of the remaining cultural differences would have to be based on the unique experiences or self-education of the trainees. Thus, the knowledge-based items within each cultural difference subscale were not sufficiently reliable for further use in the study. It is interesting to note that the knowledge items were unrelated to general or work adjustment ($r=-.084, p=.506$ and $r=.019, p=.880$ respectively), but significantly related to interactional adjustment ($r=.241, p=.043$).

Tests of Hypotheses

Control Variables

Prior to testing the hypotheses, a separate regression analysis was run using each of the adjustment subscales (general, interactional, and work) to determine which control variables were significant predictors of adjustment. This initial analysis was conducted in an attempt to reduce the total number of predictors that would be used in subsequent

analyses. While the control variables were important, they were not the focus of the study and so their simple impact on the dependent measures was assessed in the first step. If they had no simple effects, they were dropped from subsequent analyses.

It was found that Item 130 addressing willingness to take the expatriate assignment was significantly related to general adjustment ($R^2 = .06, p = .020$). This item was retained in subsequent analyses when general adjustment was the dependent variable. More specifically, when willingness to take the assignment increased, general adjustment increased significantly. (See Table 6)

When interactional adjustment was entered as the dependent variable, two control variables were significant. Items 129 (perception that the assignment had to be taken to avoid negative job consequences) and 132 (completing the assignment was personally important) were both significantly related to interactional adjustment at the $p < .05$ level ($R^2 = .15$ and $.01$ respectively). More specifically, as the feeling that the assignment had to be taken increased, interactional adjustment decreased. Additionally, if the assignment was personally important, interactional adjustment decreased slightly. (See Table 6)

Finally, work adjustment was entered as the dependent variable and it was found that none of the control variables were significantly related, and therefore none were retained in further analyses of this dependent variable.

As noted earlier, all hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regression, with control variables entered first into the analysis. The R^2 change was tested for significance at each step. Beta weights and associated t -tests for the predictors in each regression conducted to test Hypotheses 1-3 are reported in Tables 7-9.

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1, which predicted a problem-focused by avoidance interaction, was tested using a hierarchical regression analysis. This hypothesis was tested three times, once for each adjustment subscale (general adjustment, interactional adjustment, and work adjustment). After entering the significant control variable (Item 130) identified above into the regressions, the main effects of problem-focused and avoidance coping were entered. Again, Item 130 addressed willingness to take the expatriate assignment. With general adjustment as the DV, neither the problem-focused ($R^2=.03, p=.364$) nor avoidance coping ($R^2=.02, p=.286$) main effects were significant (see Table 7). The interaction of problem-focused and avoidance coping was then entered to determine if it added incremental prediction of adjustment. The interaction with general adjustment as the DV was also non-significant ($R^2= .000, p=.962$).

The same process was followed for the remaining types of adjustment (interactional and work). First to be discussed is interactional adjustment. Items 129 (feeling that participation was necessary) and 132 (completing the assignment is personally important) were retained as significant control variables in these analyses. Although the problem-focused X avoidance interaction was not significant ($R^2= .04, p=.894$), the avoidance main effect was significant ($R^2= .09, p=.045$). More specifically, as avoidance coping increased, interactional adjustment decreased. Finally, the problem-focused main effect was non-significant ($R^2=.002, p=.861$). (See Table 7)

The final test of H1 utilized work adjustment as the DV. Again, the avoidance coping main effect was significant such that as a participant utilized more avoidance coping strategies their adjustment significantly decreased ($R^2=.04, p=.051$). The

problem-focused main effect approached significance ($R^2=.04, p=.056$). The interaction between problem focused coping and avoidance was not significant ($R^2=.003, p=.150$) (See Table 7).

Given these results, the interaction proposed in Hypothesis 1 was not supported and follow-up analyses were not needed. Effects were simpler than proposed and involved significant negative effects of avoidance coping on both interactional and work adjustment when avoidance was entered in a regression with problem focused-coping.

Hypothesis 2

To test Hypothesis 2, hierarchical regression was again used, with any significant control variables entered first. Problem-reappraisal coping, avoidance, and the interaction term of problem-reappraisal by avoidance coping were entered. Again, Hypothesis 2 predicted a problem-reappraisal by avoidance coping interaction.

General adjustment was the first DV to be examined in the tests of Hypothesis 2, with Item 130 (willingness to take the assignment) entered as a control variable. Much like the tests of H1 on general adjustment, the main effects (problem-reappraisal and avoidance coping) were found to be non-significant ($R^2= .03, p=.213$ and $R^2= .03, p=.171$ respectively). The interaction term was then added to the equation and also was found to be non-significant ($R^2= .002, p=.515$). (See Table 8)

Interactional adjustment was tested next as the DV. Items 129 (feeling that participation was necessary) and 132 (completing the assignment is personally important) were once again retained. Again, neither the problem-reappraisal main effect ($R^2= .0005, p=.767$) nor the avoidance coping main effect ($R^2= .07, p=.073$) was significant. The interaction term was also found to be non-significant ($R^2=.04, p=.714$).

As a final test of H2, work adjustment was entered as the DV. Like each of the other tests of H2, the main effects were again non-significant for problem-reappraisal and avoidance coping ($R^2=.0008$, $p=.453$ and $R^2=.04$, $p=.100$ respectively). The interaction term, however, was significant in this case ($R^2=.02$, $p=.031$). More specifically, simple slopes were calculated and at low levels of avoidance coping, the slope for problem-reappraisal coping is slightly steeper than when avoidance coping is average or high (See Figure 1).

This suggests that problem-reappraisal is more strongly related to work adjustment when avoidance is low rather than high. The presence of avoidance attenuated the relationship between problem-reappraisal and work adjustment. These findings provide support H2 when looking at work adjustment, but again, H2 is not supported for general or interactional adjustment.

Hypothesis 3

As a first test of the effects of the culture-specific coping scale, regression analyses were run to determine whether the culture-specific coping scales predicted each facet of adjustment. This allowed us to examine the simple effects of each culture specific subscale to each adjustment facet. The second stage of the analyses involved testing the hypotheses involving culture-specific coping effects. We expected they would add prediction over that offered by the significant general coping measures.

As with H1 and H2, a regression was run for each type of adjustment. It was found that general adjustment was significantly predicted by overall culture-specific coping ($R^2= .44$, $p=.000$). Sense of time ($R^2= .16$, $p=.098$), language differences ($R^2= .01$, $p=.441$), societal differences ($R^2= .17$, $p=.733$), governmental differences ($R^2= .02$,

$p=.206$), and managerial differences ($R^2 = .12, p=.260$) were not significant predictors of general adjustment. (See Table 9)

Three culture-specific scales were significant predictors of interactional adjustment: sense of time ($R^2 = .21, p=.001$), language differences ($R^2 = .13, p=.030$), and societal differences ($R^2 = .22, p=.010$). Overall cultural coping ($R^2 = .16, p=.240$), governmental differences ($R^2 = .003, p=.476$), and managerial differences ($R^2 = .01, p=.153$) were not significant. (See Table 9)

Finally, work adjustment was not significantly predicted by any of the culture-specific coping scales. The effect sizes for all six culture-specific variables were quite low: managerial differences ($R^2 = .06, p=.300$), sense of time ($R^2 = .05, p=.629$), governmental differences ($R^2 = .003, p=.723$), language differences ($R^2 = .04, p=.143$), societal coping ($R^2 = .08, p=.536$), and overall culture-specific coping ($R^2 = .05, p=.511$). (See Table 9)

As a test of H3, the main effects of culture-specific coping (all 6 subscales) were tested to determine if they added prediction over and above the significant predictors identified in H1 and H2. Therefore, the significant general coping predictors for each facet of adjustment were entered as a block followed by the culture-specific scales in the second block.

In the analyses for H1 and H2, general adjustment was predicted by Item 130 which assessed willingness to take the expatriate assignment. Therefore, Item 130 was entered into the first block of the hierarchical regression, with general adjustment as the DV. The culture-specific coping scales were then added into the second block to test incremental prediction. Overall culture-specific coping (one subscale) ($R^2 = .41, p=.000$)

as well as sense of time ($R^2 = .19, p = .026$) added significant prediction of general adjustment over and above that offered by willingness to take the assignment. More specifically, as overall culture-specific coping and sense of time increased, general adjustment also increased. Managerial differences ($R^2 = .11, p = .336$), governmental differences ($R^2 = .03, p = .143$), language differences ($R^2 = .008, p = .450$), and societal differences ($R^2 = .15, p = .594$) were all non-significant and therefore did not aid the prediction of general coping over willingness to take the assignment. (See Table 10)

For interactional adjustment, the significant predictors in H1 were avoidance coping, Items 129 and 132. Item 129 assessed whether or not the expatriate felt they had to take the assignment to avoid negative job consequences, and Item 132 assessed whether expatriates felt it was personally important to complete the assignment. These three items were entered into the first block with interactional adjustment as the dependent variable. The culture-specific coping subscales were then added to the equation for interactional adjustment as another test of H3. It was found that sense of time added significant prediction ($R^2 = .22, p = .010$). More specifically, as sense of time increased, interactional adjustment also increased.

As noted earlier, avoidance predicted interactional adjustment when entered after problem-focused coping (H1) but not when entered after problem-reappraisal coping (H2). Based on the findings of H2, this relationship between the culture specific scales and interactional adjustment was then rerun without avoidance coping. From this second analysis, sense of time ($R^2 = .22, p = .010$), language differences ($R^2 = .13, p = .041$), and societal differences ($R^2 = .21, p = .009$) were all significant. More specifically, as each increased (sense of time, language, and societal coping), interactional adjustment

increased. Managerial differences ($R^2 = .01, p = .157$), governmental differences ($R^2 = .003, p = .456$), and overall culture-specific coping ($R^2 = .15, p = .290$) were non-significant. (See Table 10)

The initial analyses of simple effects of the culture specific measures showed there were no significant relationships between each culture-specific predictor and work adjustment. Therefore, it was not necessary to run the hierarchical regression planned in H3.

Follow-up Analyses

Having tested each of the proposed hypotheses, additional regression analyses were then run to determine whether any of the control variables were significantly related to the culture-specific coping scales. We were interested in determining whether or not control variables could predict culture-specific coping. More specifically, the control variables such as specific information on the current assignment, demographics, and pre-departure training may have an effect on culture-specific coping. This is important given the clear prediction of adjustment by culture-specific coping factors shown in H3. Each subscale of the culture-specific scale was treated as a dependent variable. Again, we reiterate that these were purely exploratory; this increases the chance of Type 2 error, so the results should be viewed with caution.

The first scale entered as the DV was managerial differences. It was found that of the control variables, only Items 133b and 134a about seeking company information and receiving information on the assignment were significantly related to coping with managerial differences ($R^2 = .07, p = .051$ and $R^2 = .14, p = .032$ respectively). More specifically, as participants sought out more information on the company they were

traveling to, managerial differences coping went down. Additionally, as more information was provided about the assignment to the participant, managerial coping increased. (See Table 11) This suggested very different effects for self versus company provided information.

Sense of time was the second DV tested; none of the control variables were found to be significant. Language differences coping was significantly predicted by whether or not the participant sought out language training ($R^2=.28, p=.031$). As one might expect, when participants sought out language training, coping with language differences increased. Additionally, societal differences was predicted by whether or not the assignment was required ($R^2=.02, p=.035$). If the assignment was required, societal coping also increased. (See Table 11)

Governmental difference coping was predicted by five variables. Most notably, when an expatriate sought out information on the local customs and traditions of Germany and about the German company, their coping with governmental differences decreased ($R^2=.001, p=.007$ and $R^2=.07, p=.028$ respectively). A similar relationship existed for months of service to the company. As the expatriate had been with the company longer governmental differences coping decreased ($R^2=.001, p=.030$). As would be expected when willingness to take the assignment increased, governmental coping also increased ($R^2=.002, p=.022$). Lastly, governmental difference coping was predicted by whether or not a company provided German language training ($R^2=.11, p=.047$). More specifically, as training increased, governmental difference coping also increased.

Finally, overall cultural coping was predicted by two variables, willingness to take the assignment (Item 130) and whether or not the assignment was requested (Item 127) ($R^2=.22, p=.001$ and $R^2=.001, p=.019$ respectively). More specifically, if the participant was willing to take the assignment and requested it, overall cultural coping increased. (See Table 11)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

Research on expatriate adjustment has been slowly evolving over the years, but is still not fully understood. This research aimed to explain yet another facet of the coping predictors that have been shown to affect adjustment. In addition to examining the relationship between the general coping strategies of problem-focused, problem-reappraisal, and avoidance coping and adjustment, this study looked at the new dimension of culture-specific coping. By measuring culture-specific aspects of coping, it is now possible to predict adjustment to Germany-based assignments with greater precision than when general coping strategies were the sole predictor utilized.

Furthermore, the current study makes a contribution to the literature by examining the independent effects of two facets of emotion-based coping: problem-reappraisal and avoidance. While emotion-focused coping is sometimes viewed as less adaptive, the level of adjustment has been found to depend on the particular type of emotion-focused coping used by expatriates. In our research, we found independent effects of each facet. More specifically, avoidance coping was negatively related to interactional and work adjustment. Given that we did not find similar results for problem-reappraisal coping this suggests that these two facets have very different effects on adjustment, and their effects are also dependent on the type of adjustment under investigation.

Findings and Implications

The current research looked at not only the new culture-specific subscales, but also looked at the relationship between general coping and adjustment. We found that avoidance coping, as predicted by past research, has a negative impact on both

interactional and work adjustment when examined in combination with problem-focused coping. The interaction between problem reappraisal and avoidance revealed that high levels of avoidance can decrease the functional effects of problem reappraisal.

Clearly shown here, avoidance coping is not the most effective coping strategy for American expatriates in Germany. Given the negative relationship between avoidance and both work and interactional adjustment, avoidance coping may not be the most effective coping strategy for American expatriates in Germany. In fact, companies may wish to assess potential expatriates to determine their preferred coping styles, and provide training on recognizing when they are engaging avoidant strategies and provide methods for reducing the use of such strategies, if necessary.

This training might involve having the expatriate identify areas where they need support or training, either before the assignment or after it begins, since it may take time to realize one's deficiencies. For example, instead of the expatriate avoiding a difficult task such as communicating in the workplace, they can be taught methods for overcoming potential language barriers such as seeking out advice from more experienced expatriates or proactively seeking a native-speaking mentor. This type of training would result in a shift of coping styles from avoidance to a more approach oriented method. Note that we do not expect to shift a major coping style; instead, we advocate providing the information and guidance needed to shift the style when dealing with a particular cultural challenge.

Some may argue that it would simply be easier to select those with more adaptive coping styles. In reality, many overseas assignments are not purely voluntary and companies may not be willing or able to choose those with positive coping styles. It may

also be the case that even the most adaptive person with strong coping skills may be overwhelmed in countries whose cultures are very different from their familiar culture.

An addition to past research, the culture-specific information adds a new dimension not previously examined in conjunction with coping and adjustment. By examining this information we are now better able to pinpoint the factors that differentiate successful and unsuccessful expatriates. For example, overall culture-specific coping (one subscale) predicts general adjustment over and above general coping and the numerous control variables included in the study. Additionally, societal and language differences offer incremental prediction of interactional adjustment. Although the remaining culture-specific scales of managerial differences, sense of time, and governmental differences were not found to add incremental prediction, they were in many cases significantly correlated to general, interactional, and work adjustment. This suggests that with adequate power, we may find significant incremental prediction with these constructs as well. These findings, both incremental and correlational, suggest that examining only general coping eliminates a part of the puzzle that appears, from this study, to be critical in understanding adjustment: culture-specific coping.

The results presented here present several potentially new options for employers. Based on the findings, companies may wish to select individuals for expatriate assignments based on culture-specific coping factors and provide training prior to departure so that the expatriate will be equipped with the appropriate culture-specific information. Such selection and training practices will save not only money but time as well.

Limitations

As with any research, there are several limitations that must be addressed. The first and perhaps most significant impediment is the small sample size in this study. Despite extensive recruiting, (75 companies were contacted), we were unable to obtain a large enough sample to have the desired power. This was in part due to the initial length of the survey; many potential participants may not have had the time to complete the survey, or simply did not wish to take that much time away from their family during non-work hours. The length of the original survey probably served as a deterrent to participation, given that participation rates were much higher when the survey was shortened.

Recruitment was also difficult given that the participants were located in Germany at the time of the survey. The time difference and location separation made following up with potential participants more difficult and in some cases impossible. Given that several mass emails were distributed with the survey link on behalf of the researchers, it was impossible to re-contact the recipients of the email to provide a reminder to participate. Finally, several companies with large contingencies of American expatriates in Germany were unable to participate in the research for legal and company policy reasons. Each of the components resulted in a much smaller participant base than was initially anticipated.

As with many online studies, in this case, it was possible that anyone who either received the link or found it could complete the survey. Although it is unlikely that someone who was not an American expatriate would complete the survey, it is a possibility and therefore a limitation of this study. Given that the study was anonymous

and the link was distributed through mass emails and posted on several forums, it would have been quite easy for a non-American expatriate to complete the survey. In many cases, however, this response would be detected as an outlier, and therefore, was not a large concern in the current study.

In an effort to reduce the time necessary to complete the survey and consequently increase participation, several control variables were eliminated. By taking this action, we were limited in clearly defining our participant base. More specifically, the initial survey included measures assessing previous experiences abroad, language proficiency, and the type of cultural training the participant may have received or sought out. These measures would have provided more insight into our sample, but they were leading participants to not complete the survey. When these measures were taken out, the survey length went from 150 items to 143 items. Therefore, despite the heightened control these variables would have brought to the study, they were deleted in an effort to be respectful of expatriates' time constraints and to increase participation. Control variables that were not included in the analysis addressed prior experience abroad as well as the reason for traveling in the past. Additionally, the deleted control variables assessed language skills and past training on different cultures that the expatriate may have received or sought out.

Finally, the culture-specific scale was developed specifically for this study. Unfortunately, we were unable to refine this scale prior to using it in the current study. A pilot study may have been able to help tap the culture-specific construct more succinctly and effectively. Given the limited access to American expatriates in Germany, however, this initial refinement simply was not possible. The final versions of the culture-specific

scales suggest that affective reactions to cultural differences may be more reliable and meaningful measures than knowledge-based assessments of cultural differences.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Ultimately, the results reported here can aid not only expatriates, but companies as well. Expatriates will now be better able to understand what is necessary to be successful overseas, and prepare for the differences. Companies will also benefit on many levels. As discussed earlier, they will be able to structure their training programs for expatriates more effectively and focus on more relevant processes and information during training. This research will also aid in selecting and preparing better and more successful expatriates, which will result in lower indirect and direct costs for companies.

Before looking at what information and topics should be addressed in training, it is important to note that when expatriates had to seek out information on the assignment, branch, and German culture, general adjustment decreased. It is possible that expatriates who perceived that they were not provided with enough information and had to seek it out on their own resented the company for a lack of support and therefore were not as interested in adjusting to their new surroundings. This type of relationship may be domain specific. More specifically, it may be the case that expatriates expect to receive information about the branch, but not necessarily the culture and customs of the country. This suggests that a more concerted effort to provide expatriates with pertinent information is necessary, at least in certain domains. In order to further understand this relationship between information seeking and adjustment, in the future it would be helpful to know whether people are gathering information because they are anxious about the change or out of pure interest. These types of individual differences and

psychological states may actually moderate the relationship between adjustment and seeking information. Time may also play a role in the relationship; expatriates that have enough time to seek out the information for pleasure rather than those who do not have adequate time to prepare for the assignment may adjust differently. These reasons, motivations, and circumstances for seeking out information may be critical to understanding the relationship with adjustment.

Providing general information in training, however, is not the only addition needed. With the information provided in the current study, it is now apparent that cross-cultural training programs should focus not only on general coping, but on overall culture-specific coping, language and societal differences as well. It should also be noted that time, language, and societal differences all significantly predicted interactional adjustment. This finding suggests that although societal differences and sense of time may not be emphasized in current training programs, it may be a necessary addition in the future. Activities such as providing expatriates with practice conducting business meetings while following the German cultural norms may be useful training devices.

The current research will help expatriate training programs to provide useful information to expatriates rather than devoting valuable time to facts that may be useless. If these streamlined programs are indeed implemented into companies, not only will expatriates feel more comfortable in their role overseas, but their work should also be of higher quality, and success rates should rise.

In the future, researchers should examine the culture-specific coping construct with larger samples and continue to refine the subscales presented in the current study. Additionally, studies should be conducted in other countries with the same culture-

specific dimensions to determine if this construct holds true in other countries as well as for expatriates traveling anywhere in the world, or if this measure is confined to Americans traveling to Germany. Additional culture-specific dimensions should also be examined for their ability to add incremental prediction to adjustment. Finally, training methods for expatriate assignments need to be examined. The best methods for conveying information as well as increasing the perception that the expatriate has received adequate and valuable information need to be tested and then implemented. For example, are mentor systems best, paper orientations, classroom training, or a combination of many different methods? Until these questions are answered, adjustment to expatriate assignments will not be fully understood, and businesses will continue to have expatriates who fail in their assignments.

APPENDICES

Appendix ADemographics

137. Age: _____
138. Gender:
 Male
 Female
139. National Origin:

140. Length of Employment with your company (months/years):
Months: _____
Years: _____
141. Highest Level of Education Achieved:
 Some High School
 High School Diploma or GED
 Some College (no diploma issued)
 2-year College Diploma
 Bachelor's Degree
 Master's Degree
 Doctoral Degree
 Post-Graduate Education
 Other (please specify): _____
142. Current Job Level
 Hourly Worker
 Manager
 Director
 Supervisor
 Executive
 Other (please specify): _____
143. Job Title and Specialty (if applicable)
Title _____
Specialty _____

Appendix B

Current Assignment

Please answer the following question using the scales provided.

124. What is the length of your assignment in Germany? (i.e., 6 weeks, 12 months, multiple trips for 1 week at a time, etc.)

or

___ I do not know how long my assignment will be.

125. How long have you been in Germany on assignment? (ex. 3 months, 4 days)
- Months: _____
- Days: _____

Please answer the following questions using the scale provided:

1 (Strongly Disagree)

2 (Disagree)

3 (Not Sure)

4 (Agree)

5 (Strongly Agree)

126. This assignment is a promotion.
127. I requested this assignment.
128. This assignment is required by my supervisor.
129. I felt that I had to participate in this assignment to avoid negative job consequences.
130. I am very willing to take this assignment.
131. I feel this assignment is important to the company.
132. Completing this assignment is important to me.

Appendix C

Pre-Departure Training

Please answer the following the questions to the best of your ability using the scales provided.

Please answer the questions using the scale provided:

1 (Strongly Disagree)

2 (Disagree)

3 (Not Sure)

4 (Agree)

5 (Strongly Agree)

133. Company Information

- a. **My company** provided me with adequate information on the German branch/company that I am traveling to on assignment.
- b. **I independently** sought out information on the German branch/company that I am visiting.

134. The Assignment

- a. **My company** provided me with information on the assignment I am completing while in Germany.
- b. **I independently** sought out information on the assignment I am completing while in Germany.

135. Language Training

- a. **My company** provided German Language instruction or provided me with a self-study course to adequately prepare me for this assignment.
- b. **I independently** sought out German Language instruction or a self-study course.

136. Local Customs and Traditions

- a. **My company** provided me with adequate information on the local customs and traditions of Germany.
- b. **I independently** sought out information on the local customs and traditions of Germany.

Appendix D

Coping Strategies

Please focus on how you typically approach work-related stressors that have occurred while in Germany and respond to each item with this in mind. Use the following scale to rate how often you used the following strategies:

- 0 – Not At All
- 1 – Used Occasionally
- 2 – Used Often
- 3 – Used a Great Deal

Problem-Focused Coping

- 2. Tried to get the person responsible to change his or her mind.
- 4. Talked to someone to find out more about the situation.
- 6. Confronted my supervisor with problems.
- 8. Talked to someone who could do something concrete about the problem.
- 9. Took a big chance or did something very risky.
- 10. Talked to someone about how I was feeling.
- 12. Stood my ground and fought for what I wanted.
- 14. Came up with a couple of different solutions to the problem.
- 16. I went over in my mind what I would say or do.
- 18. I thought about how a person I admired would handle this situation and used that as a model.
- 44. Talked the problem over with colleagues.

Problem-Reappraisal Coping

- 7. Forgot work when I finished for the day.
- 17. Looked for the silver lining, so to speak; tried to look on the bright side of things.
- 20. Just concentrated on what I had to do next; the next step.
- 21. Didn't let it get to me; refused to think too much about it.
- 23. Made light of the situation, refused to get too serious about it.
- 24. Just accepted that it was another job, and got on with it.
- 26. I tried to keep my feelings from interfering with other things too much.
- 28. Simply took one day at a time.
- 29. Tried to be very organized so that I could keep on top of things.
- 30. Tried to see this as an opportunity to learn new skills.
- 32. Put extra attention on planning and scheduling.
- 34. Thought of myself as a winner – someone who always comes through.
- 38. Thought how much better things are for me compared to the past or to my peers.
- 39. Established some sort of routine.

Avoidance Coping

- 1. Wished that the situation would go away or somehow be over with.
- 3. Left work as soon as possible.
- 5. Told myself the difficulties were unimportant.

11. Went along with fate; sometimes I just have bad luck.
13. Began a non-work activity.
15. Expressed my irritation and frustration by swearing, slamming things down and crumpling paper, and so forth.
19. I tried to forget the whole thing.
22. Wished that I could change what happened or how I felt.
25. Got busy with other things in order to keep my mind off the problem.
27. Tried to make myself feel better by eating, drinking, smoking, using drugs or medication, etc.
31. Avoided other staff members.
33. Tried to pay attention only to my work duties in order to avoid the difficulties in my work situation.
35. Slept more than usual.
36. I daydreamed or imagined a better time or place than the one I was in.
37. Had a good cry.
40. Criticized or lectured myself.
41. Hoped a miracle would happen.
42. Took it out on other people.
43. Had fantasies or wished about how things might turn out.
45. Expressed my irritation and frustration to myself.
46. Avoided being with people in general.

Appendix E

Culture-Specific Coping

Please answer the following questions using the scale below about your time in Germany. When answering these questions, please think about your own feelings, thoughts, and beliefs and answer according to these, not how you think others might answer.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Slightly Disagree
- 3 = Neither Disagree nor Agree
- 4 = Slightly Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

A. Managerial Differences (Based on the concept of power distance) (no reverse scoring)

- 47. In Germany is it common for managers making decisions without consulting their subordinates. (True)
- 48. In Germany, there is a clear class separation that exists throughout society. (True)
- 49. In work-related matters, managers should expect obedience from their subordinates in Germany. (True)
- 50. In Germany, once a top-level executive makes a decision, it should be accepted without question. (True)
- 51. I am willing to accept a decision and not question it.
- 52. I am comfortable living in a society in which an inequality of people (due to group, class, career, etc.) exists.
- 53. I am most comfortable working in an environment that does not treat all employees equally.
- 54. I think I'm adjusting well to the managerial practices in German work life.

B. Sense of Time (Information gathered from Beeth, 1997; Earley & Erez, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Honeycutt et al, 2003; Roberts, 2000).

Reverse score = 57, 58, 59, 63

**High score = good understanding of the German sense of time, Low score = poor understanding of the German sense of time

- 55. I believe that Germans allot their time to create the greatest efficiency possible. (True)
- 56. Even if I do not always keep a precise schedule, I am open to doing so while in Germany. (True)
- 57. I believe it is acceptable in German culture to be up to 10 minutes late to business meetings. (False – reverse score)
- 58. Most Germans prefer to schedule business meeting for early morning rather than late afternoon. (False – reverse score)
- 59. In Germany, when expecting a delivery or shipment you can always expect it to arrive on time. (False – reverse score)

60. Despite a rigorous work schedule, long vacations are often taken in the months of July, August, and December in Germany. (True)
61. It is unusual for a method of transportation, such as trains and airplanes, to run late in Germany. (True)
62. The typical workweek is similar to America, Monday through Friday, 8 or 9 a.m. to 4 or 5 p.m. in Germany. (True)
63. It is acceptable for business appointments to be scheduled as little as one day in advance in Germany. (False – reverse score)
64. It is not customary to hold business meetings during breakfast in Germany. (True)
65. I think it will be easy to adjust to the business schedules of Germany.
66. I believe that I am flexible in terms of being able to change my schedule to suit German preferences.
67. The German sense of time and scheduling are very comfortable to me.
68. I think I'm adjusting well to the sense of time in German work life.

C. Governmental Differences (Information gathered from “Best-in-the-world practices”, 1994; Davidson, 1993; Earley & Erez, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Lewis, 1995; Theil, 2004)

True = 70, 72, 73, 75, 77

False = 71, 74, 76, 78

** High score = understand the governmental procedures of Germany, Low score = don't understand the governmental procedures

69. I am familiar with and understand the labor-management relation system known as co-determination utilized in Germany.
70. Employees participate on corporate boards as full, voting members in Germany. (True) (This checks if participant knows what codetermination is)
71. Germany relies on individual action at the national level of government. (False – reverse code)
72. According to German legislation, employees must participate in decision-making. (True)
73. There is a strong national chain-of-command that must be followed in many German firms. (True)
74. Most German firms have very informal systems for making decisions involving the business. (False – reverse code)
75. Most of the organizations found in Germany are highly bureaucratic. (True)
76. Apprenticeships are not recognized as a legitimate part of training in Germany. (False – reverse code)
77. Many of the German business practices and laws originated from the European Union. (True)
78. Although unions are legal in Germany, they are not a strong entity and therefore rarely come to the aid of workers. (False – reverse score)
79. I am comfortable with the relationship between employees and management in Germany.
80. I think that the system of government involvement in German work life is a positive influence.

81. I think I'm adjusting well to the level of government involvement in German work life.

D. Language Differences (Information gathered from *Beeth, 1997; "Doing business with Germany", 2002; Harris et al, 2004; Roberts, 2000; Sethi, 2004*)

**High Score = very familiar with German Language, Low score = not familiar with German Language

- 82. I know how to secure transportation in Germany.
- 83. I know how to make international phone calls from Germany to other countries.
- 84. I am fluent in speaking German
- 85. I am fluent in reading German.
- 86. I know how to lead business meetings/discussions in German.
- 87. I am familiar with the local "catch phrases" that are often part of everyday conversations in Germany.
- 88. I am willing to learn the intricacies of the German language that may be necessary gain a full understanding of the German culture.
- 89. I feel comfortable making international phone calls from Germany to other countries.
- 90. I am comfortable securing transportation and navigating through Germany.
- 91. I am comfortable using the Germanic language in informal conversations.
- 92. I am comfortable leading business meetings/discussions in German.
- 93. I think I'm adjusting well to language differences in German work life.

E. Societal Differences (Information gathered from *Beeth, 1997; Harris et al, 2004; Lewis, 1995; Roberts, 2000*)

Reverse Score = 95, 97, 101

**High Score = very familiar with German Language, Low score = not familiar with German Language

- 94. If you enter a room with many people in Germany, it is desirable to move through the room greeting each person individually.
- 95. I don't think I can adjust to the way businesspeople relate to one another in Germany. (reverse score)
- 96. Relationships in business are generally more formal in Germany than in America.
- 97. It is customary to invite a client to dinner at a restaurant in Germany. (reverse score)
- 98. German people generally make a stronger distinction than Americans between acquaintances and close friends.
- 99. Germans do not establish close friendships quickly, but instead remain at the acquaintance level for quite some time.
- 100. Close family ties are seen as important to Germans.
- 101. The interpersonal relationships in Germany feel very uncomfortable to me. (reverse score)
- 102. I am comfortable with the formality of business relationships in Germany.
- 103. I can cope well with the social interactions as they exist in Germany.

104. I think I'm adjusting well to societal differences in German work life.

F. Overall Cultural Coping

105. Since moving to Germany from America, I have experienced many changes in my lifestyle.

106. I feel as if I am handling the changes associated with being in Germany very well.

107. I am aware of the many cultural differences between German and American culture.

108. Although I may not accept all of the cultural practices present in Germany, I am willing to adopt/accept this way of life during my assignment.

109. Overall, I think I am adjusting well to the lifestyle in Germany.

Appendix F

Adjustment

Using a scale from 1 (not very well adjusted) to 7 (very well adjusted), please indicate how well you feel you have adjusted to the following aspects of life in Germany:

General Adjustment

- 110. Living conditions in general
- 111. Housing conditions
- 112. Food
- 113. Shopping
- 114. Cost of Living
- 115. Entertainment/recreation facilities and opportunities
- 116. Health care facilities

Interactional Adjustment

- 117. Socializing with host nationals
- 118. Interacting with host nationals on a day-to-day basis
- 119. Interacting with host nationals outside of work
- 120. Speaking with host nationals

Work Adjustment

- 121. Specific job responsibilities
- 122. Performance standards and expectations
- 123. Supervisory responsibilities

Appendix G

Dear Expatriate,

I am a student enrolled at Clemson University in the Doctoral Industrial-Organizational Psychology program. As a part of this program, I am collecting data for my thesis project. The purpose of this study is to examine factors that can aid expatriates in overseas business assignments. Approximately 150 American expatriates in Germany have been invited to participate in this study. Your responses will help us to make suggestions for training that will ease the adjustment of future expatriates. As part of the research procedures, you will be asked to complete the survey below which addresses any training you may have received in preparation for this assignment, details about the current assignment you are completing, and how you are adjusting with the cultural differences between America and Germany. This information will allow us to better understand why some expatriates are successful in certain cultures but not in others. There are no risks involved in this study.

This survey will take approximately 12-20 minutes, please make sure that you have set enough time aside to complete the survey before beginning. Participation is voluntary. You can refuse to answer questions at any time and can withdraw without penalty. Completing this survey is deemed consent to participate in this research study.

The principal investigator on this graduate student thesis study is Dr. Mary Anne Taylor. She may be contacted at 864-656-4714 for more information on this study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at 864-656-6460. If you would like to receive a copy of the results, please send an email to me at mmhanna@clemson.edu and I will see that you receive a copy.

Thank you for your assistance in this project.

Moira Hanna
I-O Doctoral Student
Clemson University

Appendix H: Results Tables and Figure

Table 1. Means, SD, and Skewness of the Predictors and Dependent Variables

	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Skewness Std. Error
General Adjustment	7-49	20	49	37.27	7.069	-.563	.287
Interactional Adjustment	4-28	10	28	21.00	5.143	-.414	.274
Work Adjustment	3-21	9	21	16.93	3.339	-.437	.285
Problem-Focused Coping	7-49	15	38	28.49	5.189	-.490	.283
Problem-Reappraisal Coping	14-56	19	50	36.82	6.718	-.462	.283
Avoidance Coping	21-84	21	63	35.29	8.008	.847	.287
Managerial Differences	4-20	4	19	10.75	2.852	.239	.274
Sense of Time	4-20	8	20	15.55	2.574	-.527	.276
Governmental Differences	3-15	3	14	8.92	2.223	-.726	.274
Language Differences	12-60	21	60	42.56	10.407	.288	.277
Societal Differences	4-20	8	20	14.36	2.692	-.782	.276
Overall Cultural Coping	3-15	7	15	12.65	1.546	-.442	.274

Table 2. Correlations among Predictors and Dependent Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. GA	1										
2. IA	.409 **	1									
3. WA	.049	.232	1								
4. PF	.109	.055	.247 *	1							
5. PR	.110	-.038	.007	.303 *	1						
6. A	-.159	-.286 *	-.184	.156	.303 *	1					
7. MD	.385 **	.149	.249 *	-.008	.053	-.127	1				
8. Time	.435 **	.463 **	.253 *	.138	.183	-.015	.374 **	1			
9. GD	.136	-.051	.074	-.106	.141	-.101	.229 *	.229 *	1		
10. LD	.142	.348 **	.220	.007	-.240 *	-.093	-.072	.090	-.344 **	1	
11. SD	.396 **	.464 **	.296 *	.017	-.030	-.309 **	.475 **	.405 **	.222	.128	1
12.OCC	.672 **	.435 **	.240 *	.243 *	.063	-.139	.270 *	.305 **	-.008	.174	.476 **

1. GA= General Adjustment, IA= Interactional Adjustment, WA=Work Adjustment, PF=Problem-Focused Coping, PR=Problem-Reappraisal Coping, A=Avoidance Coping, MD=Managerial Differences, Time=Sense of Time, GD=Governmental Differences, LD=Language Differences, SD=Societal Differences, OCC=Overall Culture-Specific Coping
2. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
3. *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3. Reliability for Adjustment Subscales

	Number of Items	Alpha in Past Research	Alpha in Current Research
General Adjustment	7	.84	.80
Interactional Adjustment	4	.87	.88
Work Adjustment	3	.81	.86

Table 4. Reliability for General Coping Subscales

	Number of Items	Alpha in Past Research	Alpha in Current Research
Problem-Focused Coping	11	.77	.77
Problem-Reappraisal Coping	14	.79	.82
Avoidance Coping	21	.85	.85

Table 5. Reliability for Culture-Specific Coping Subscales

	Initial Number of Items	Items Deleted (in order of deletion)	Alpha in Current Research
Managerial Differences	8	47, 48, 50, 49	.65
Sense of Time	14	59, 58, 64, 60, 62, 61, 63, 56, 57, 55	.74
Governmental Differences	13	77, 71, 73, 69, 70, 72, 74, 75, 76, 78	.72
Language Differences	12	None	.92
Societal Differences	11	94, 97, 99, 98, 96, 100, 95	.78
Overall Cultural Coping	5	105, 107	.82

Table 6. Significant Control Variables

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>p</i>
General Adjustment	Item 130	2.438	.506	.020
Interactional Adjustment	Item 129	-2.062	-.396	.045
	Item 132	-2.121	-.322	.040

Table 7. Hypothesis 1

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>p</i>
General Adjustment	Problem-Focused Main Effect	.915	.123	.364
	Avoidance Main Effect	-1.078	-.141	.286
	P-F * Avoidance	-.048	-.049	.962
Interactional Adjustment	Problem-Focused Main Effect	.176	.021	.861
	Avoidance Main Effect	-2.043	-.245	.045
	P-F * Avoidance	-.134	-.122	.894
Work Adjustment	Problem-Focused Main Effect	1.951	.247	.056
	Avoidance Main Effect	-1.996	-.252	.051
	P-F * Avoidance	-1.460	-1.445	.150

Table 8. Hypothesis 2

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	P
General Adjustment	Problem-Reappraisal Main Effect	1.259	.169	.213
	Avoidance Main Effect	-1.387	-.184	.171
	P-R * Avoidance	-.656	-.671	.515
Interactional Adjustment	Problem-Reappraisal Main Effect	.298	.039	.767
	Avoidance Main Effect	-1.826	-.229	.073
	P-R * Avoidance	-.368	-.364	.714
Work Adjustment	Problem-Reappraisal Main Effect	.756	.101	.453
	Avoidance Main Effect	-1.672	-.223	.100
	P-R * Avoidance	-2.209	-2.266	.031

Table 9. Simple Effects

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>p</i>
General Adjustment	Overall Cultural Coping	5.566	.591	.000
Interactional Adjustment	Sense of Time	3.343	.352	.001
	Language Differences	2.213	.231	.030
	Societal Differences	2.650	.328	.010

Table 10. Hypothesis 3

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>p</i>
General Adjustment	Overall Cultural Coping	5.559	.646	.000
	Sense of Time	2.290	.242	.026
Interactional Adjustment	Societal Coping	(2.696)	(.329)	(.009)
Avoidance ME (No Avoidance Main Effect)	Sense of Time	2.652 (2.666)	.312 (.293)	.010 (.010)
	Language Differences	(2.082)	(.218)	(.041)

Table 11. Follow-up Analyses

DV	Predictor	<i>t</i>	Beta	<i>p</i>
Managerial Differences	Item 133b	-2.012	-.372	.051
	Item 134a	2.213	.378	.032
Governmental Differences	Item 130	2.371	.385	.022
	Item 133b	-2.283	-.382	.028
	Item 135a	2.043	.298	.047
	Item 136b	2.811	.433	.007
	Item 140	-2.240	-.334	.030
Language Differences	Item 135b	2.238	.353	.031
Societal Differences	Item 128	2.184	.355	.035
Overall Cultural Coping	Item 127	-2.434	-.400	.019
	Item 130	3.503	.591	.001

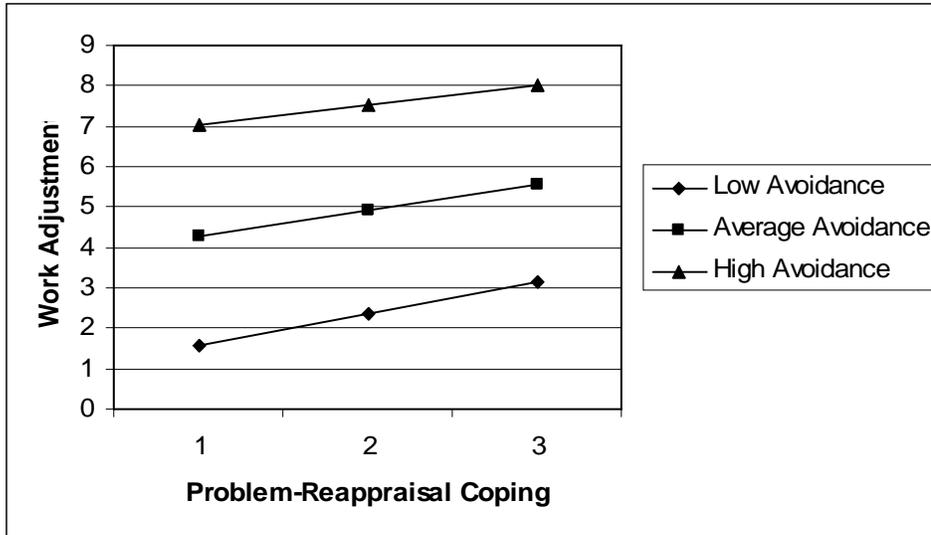


Figure 1. Problem-Reappraisal by Avoidance Coping Interaction

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