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ACCULTURATION OF EXPATRIATE EXECUTIVE MANAGERS IN CZECHIA

GÄRTNER, M., DRBOHLAV, D. (2012): Acculturation of expatriate executive managers in Czechia. Geografie, 117, No. 4, pp. 349–370. – Acculturation of expatriate executive managers was examined in the sample of 16 sojourners working in Czechia using a longitudinal study (questionnaires plus interviews). The aim of this research was to gain a better understanding of the process of acculturation of sojourners responsible for the transfer of management know-how across international borders. The success of their acculturation was measured by the Goldberg's GHQ index and satisfaction scales. Two surveys were conducted, six and eighteen months after respondents' arrival in Czechia, between 2006 and 2010. The results indicate that acculturation of sojourners in Czechia was successful and proceeded approximately according to the Hofstede's "U" acculturation curve. In addition, several hypotheses concerning the effect of some known predictors of acculturation success were tested. KEY WORDS: expatriate executive managers – sojourners – acculturation process – cultural adaptation – longitudinal survey – Czechia.

1. Introduction

Since the Revolution in 1989, Czechia has quickly become an important transit and later also destination country for immigrants. As for the immigration, at least until 2008 (the start of the global economic crisis) its intensity has been quite unique within Central/Eastern Europe, but the country has also represented a significant migratory magnet even among other European Union countries (see e.g. Drbohlav et al. 2010, Drbohlav 2011). Two main factors that attract immigration to Czechia are economic opportunities and reasons revolving around family. Czechia currently hosts around 400,000 legally registered immigrants (as of June 30, 2011 – 417,424 – see in Horáková 2011, p. 3). Such a high number must have some impact upon society and therefore no wonder, there are several important studies devoted to immigrant integration in the Czech society – see e.g. Brouček (2003); Uherek, Černík (2004); Drbohlav, Janská (2004); Drbohlav, Ezzeddine-Lukšíková (2004); Horáková (2006, 2010); Drbohlav, Dzúrová (2007); Uherek, Korecká, Pojarová (2008); Čermáková, Nekorjak (2009); Nekorjak (2010); Rákoczyová, Trbola, eds. (2010). Majority of the studies focus on immigrant groups from the east – mostly from countries of the former Soviet Union, or from the Far East – chiefly from Vietnam. These studies concentrate mainly on immigrants who participate in the Czech labour market in manually, rather than intellectually demanding, jobs.

By contrast, this paper is focused on expatriates – sojourners, who came to Czechia as executive managers between 2006 and 2010. The total number of executive managers who worked in Czechia during this period was, according to the Czech Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, between 7,000 and 8,000 persons per annum. Their task is to transfer technical and managerial know-how to companies which operate in Czechia. According to literature, this is a unique process of international knowledge transfer, which is rarely possible through other means (Hocking, Brown, Harcing 2007). Sojourners have profound effect on the economies and sociocultural systems of their host countries and have been prime agents of the global integration of industry (Sam, Berry 2006).

Their missions are important for Czech economy since their abilities and skills also contribute to industrial competitiveness of the country. Therefore, these experts also deserve a special research attention – in terms of both basic and applied research. The success of their missions is at least partially dependent on the success of their acculturation to Czech culture. In their own words, without adaptation to Czech culture their missions would have been less successful.

According to our knowledge, this kind of research has not been undertaken in Czechia[1] yet. This contribution is therefore the first attempt to map out the process of acculturation of expatriate executive managers in Czechia. The research is concentrated on specifics of this acculturation process. When dealing with such issue several aspects have to be included in the analysis. First, it is important to consider the circumstances under which the sojourner enters the mission. In the majority of cases, one has to cope with a temporary transfer from a company headquarters, to an affiliate company in Czechia. The transfer is usually well organized, and the sojourner and, in some cases his or her family, are convinced that their sojourn in Czechia will be trouble free. Research shows that this expectation may not be always realistic (Berry et al. 2002). Second, one has to take into account personal characteristics of the sojourners and characteristics of their employers before departure. Regarding sojourners a number of variables come into play: demographics, knowledge of languages, technical and managerial skills, intercultural competence etc. As far as employer firms are concerned, one should pay attention, for instance, to: company culture, strategic planning and various forms of support afforded to sojourners and their families. Third, consideration needs to be given to factors which may influence expatriate acculturation after arrival in Czechia. In this regard, following aspects are important above all, namely: attitude of the sojourner to the acculturation process, strategies used to deal with stressful situations, sojourner's support given to the family members during acculturation, social support provided by other sojourners and/or Czechs and support from the employer in Czechia[2]. Last but not least, a place where the sojournes live in Czechia and their country of origin may play an important role in their

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[1]   There is one possible exception – a dissertation thesis currently undertaken by M. Moravcová from Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague.

[2]   In other words, acculturation as such is influenced by a range of factors (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001; Berry et al. 2002). On the individual or psychological level, the main factors influencing cultural adaptation of expatriates are: demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, level of education), situational factors (e.g., acculturation phase, cultural distance, participation in social support groups, previous acculturation experience) and

Positive

W1 interview

W2 interview

Feelings

Negative

0–2 Months | 2–6 Months | 6–18 Months | 18+ Months

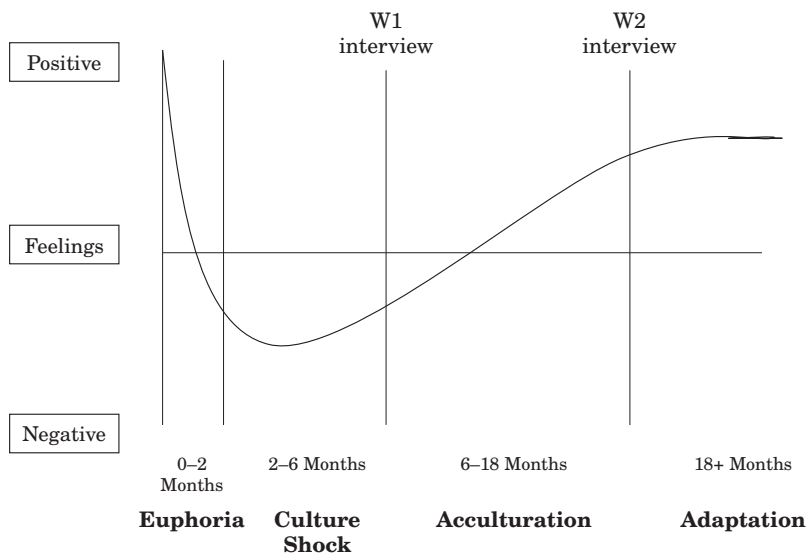**Euphoria** | **Culture Shock** | **Acculturation** | **Adaptation**

Fig. 1 – The acculturation curve. Adapted from Hofstede (1997).

acculturation. In this regard the sample of our respondents is very homogeneous: all but two of them live in Prague and all come from Euro-Atlantic region (plus Australia) with a dominant Christian cultural tradition (see more below in section titled "sample and data collection").

2. Theoretical and conceptual background

The process of cultural adaptation is similar for all types of migrating individuals including sojourners. This process is to a considerable extent influenced by the culturally contingent mutual perception between expatriates and the members of the host culture in the process of intercultural communication. Within the same culture, the process of interpersonal communication is based on evaluating behaviour of senders and recipients of messages on the basis of known attributes of that culture. The communication process is evaluated according to known cultural formulae. However, when people from different cultures are communicating, lack of knowledge of the culturally contingent encoding and decoding of messages can lead to misunderstanding and misinterpreting of information. This can cause serious communication difficulties (Zadražilová 2004). Intercultural environment contains many pitfalls which can negatively influence the process of acculturation and its ultimate success. In this article, acculturation is defined as individual or psychological acculturation which refers to changes that an individual (expatriot) experiences as a result of being in contact with another culture (Berry a kol. 2002). For the acculturating individual on temporary assignment, the contact with the new culture has a

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attitudinal factors (e.g., attitude of host nationals, strategies used by expatriates to deal with adaptation problems).

specific pattern. It usually starts with a short period of euphoria, followed by the period of culture shock when real life starts in the new culture, followed by acculturation when the sojourner has learned how to live in the new cultural environment (Hofstede 1997). This process is known as an acculturation curve (Hofstede 1997; Sam, Berry 2006; Berry et al. 2002; Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001; Bennett 1998). This curve has a form of the letter "U", because positive feelings of euphoria are followed by the negative ones of the culture shock to be replaced again by the positive feelings of cultural adaptation. The positive feelings of euphoria, sometimes referred to as "honeymoon", usually last only several weeks. Several months into the assignment, some authors refer to 2 to 6 months (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001), the depression of culture shock usually sets in typified by disorientation, confusion, loss of self esteem, frustration, anxiety, anger and alienation including rejection, stereotyping and hostility towards individuals from the new culture. Usually several months later a functional adjustment starts to set in when the sojourner has learned how to survive and has developed coping strategies. This functional adjustment leads to adaptation with newly acquired self-confidence and positive feelings (Hofstede 1997). Hofstede's acculturation curve is presented in Figure 1.

Instead of culture shock, Berry uses the term "acculturative stress"[3] (Berry et al. 2002). The concept of acculturative stress is particularly important in connection with psychological acculturation and both concepts are important for expatriate acculturation. Berry differentiates between two levels of acculturation: cultural level and psychological level (Berry et al. 2002). The psychological acculturation is particularly important for this study of executive manager sojourners, because it takes place on an individual basis. Sojourners usually move from one culture to another as individuals or small family units, not as groups of individuals as may be the case with other migrants.

Berry's concepts of psychological acculturation and behavioural changes of culture shedding and culture learning during acculturation are of fundamental importance to this study. A close relationship to Hofstede's and Berry's acculturation theories has Bennet's theory of intercultural sensitivity. In his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity – DMIS (Bennett 1998, p. 26), Bennett explains intercultural adaptation as an evolution of the attitudes and behaviour of the adapting individuals from ethnocentric to ethnorelative stages. DMIS is based on cognitive psychology and radical constructivism according to which our perceptions construct, rather than reflect objective reality. According to DMIS, the ethnocentric stages comprise: denial (of reality), defense, minimization (of cultural differences), while ethnorelative stages comprise acceptance, adaptation and integration (Bennett 1998, p. 26). Bennett's model is in this sense similar to the acculturation curve as it conceptualizes movement from the negative feelings of denial and minimization equivalent to the culture shock stage to the acceptance, adaptation and integration equivalent to the cultural adaptation stage. Bennett emphasizes that for the DMIS model is crucial the

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[3] What some authors call culture shock, Berry calls acculturative stress (Berry et al. 2002, p. 362). Berry argues that while culture shock has pathological overtones (it was first used by Oberg in 1960), acculturative stress is a response of individuals to life events. As such it can be viewed more positively as it implies movement from a stressful – negative situation to a more positive – adaptation (Berry et al. 2002, p. 362).

evolution of the attitudes of individuals from the ethnocentric (emphasis is on the requirements of the home culture of the adapting individual) to the ethnorelative attitudes (the requirements of both the home and the host cultures are considered).

Despite emphasis of the DMIS on immigrants, the model is also useful in the study of sojourners. The concept of ethnorelative ethics, on which is the DMIS based, is important for adaptation of sojourners. The shift from lower to higher level of intercultural sensitivity when trying to understand work of colleagues and of other individuals from the host culture is a good strategy for managing often difficult situation in which the expatriate executive manager find themselves.

According to Berry, gender has variable influence on the acculturation of migrants (Berry et al. 2002, p. 366). While there is evidence that females are more at risk to develop problems than males, this generalization depends on the relative status and treatment of women in the two cultures. For instance, attempts by females to take on new roles available in the culture of settlement may bring them into conflict with their heritage culture (Berry et al. 2002, p. 366). According to other authors, migrating females are less autonomous and more rigid than males (Scott, Scott 1989). Lukomskyj and Richards (1986) found, that more women than men have returned back home during acculturation in Australia. As far as women sojourners are concerned, according to Ward, Bochner, Furnham (2001), expatriate women managers were less adjusted than men in masculine cultures and their adjustment was negatively affected by the male dominated work values that may characterize some host cultures (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001, p. 186).

Research points to differences in the success of cultural adaptation for different age categories of migrating individuals. According to Berry et al. (2002), if acculturation starts at more mature age, there is an increased risk of adaptation difficulties. Similarly, Lukomskyj, Richards (1986) indicate that younger migrants have fewer problems with spatial mobility than older migrants. On the other hand, it is necessary to take into account the interplay of age with other factors, such as culture-specific influences. For instance, in his research on expatriate managers in Hong Kong, Selmer (2000) established that in Chinese culture, older sojourners were valued more positively than younger individuals with positive consequences for acculturation of the more mature individuals.

According to Ward, Bochner, Furnham (2001) previous cross-cultural experience should be one of the factors associated with positive adjustment during acculturation (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001, p. 179). It could be therefore expected, that those sojourners who had prior acculturation experience would show a more pronounced increase in mental health and a larger reduction in stress than those who did not have such experience. A possibility of an opposite result, when the less experienced sojourners would have fewer adaptation problems is described in the Gudykunst management theory of anxiety and uncertainty "Anxiety/Uncertainty Management" AUM (Gudykunst 2005, p. 420). According to this theory, expatriate acculturation depends on their ability to reduce anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural communication through the ability to predict the behavior of hosts in certain situations. Sojourners with previous acculturation experience, according to Gudykunst, have a tendency to excessive self-confidence and lose interest whether their prediction is correct or

not. In addition, previous acculturation experience in China or India does not prepare expatriates for the pitfalls of communication in Czechia because the prediction of behavior can be quite different in different cultures. Adaptation-experienced sojourners may therefore underestimate the problems associated with adaptation to Czech culture, and may have bigger problems than adaptive newcomers who came to Czechia with undistorted and enthusiastic outlook.

Previous research indicates that acculturation is more successful for those sojourners who have social contact with local populations (Berry et al. 2002, p. 369). According to the above-mentioned AUM theory (Gudykunst 2005), expatriate acculturation is aided by their ability to predict the behavior of hosts in certain situations. This ability is enhanced by social contact with the hosts. If there is a lack of access to the knowledge of the host culture, this could lead to the expatriates creating their own knowledge schemes in relation to the host culture, which may not correspond to reality as described in the Gudykunst's theory of adaptation schemes – "Schema Theory of Adaptation" (Gudykunst 2005, p. 23). The sojourners whom do not associate with the local population, tend to concentrate on those aspects of new culture which are important for them, rather than for the hosts. This could complicate the acculturation process.

3. Empirical research

3.1. Aims of the study, research questions and hypotheses

Taking into account the relevant acculturation theories and concepts, the aim of this study is to investigate the process of acculturation of executive manager sojourners in the Czech cultural environment, giving special consideration to various factors influencing their cultural adaptation. More specifically, the most important aim of this research is to determine, whether acculturation of sojourners in the Czech culture proceeds in a standard way as is the case described in many other countries throughout the world – e.g., in Canada (Berry et al. 1987), in Australia (Sam, Berry 2006), or in New Zealand (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001). Related goal is to study the way acculturation proceeds, including shedding some light on which of the internationally known predictors are behind the expatriate acculturation in Czechia and how successful it is.

Besides enhancing knowledge in terms of basic research (especially searching for – "how it works and what is behind" at more general level), there is also the authors' endeavor to help improve management at the company level through better understanding of the process of acculturation of expatriate executive managers in Czechia. In other words, an important aim of this study is to gain better understanding of the unique process of international knowledge transfer (mainly of the management know-how), which is rarely possible through other means (Hocking, Brown, Harzing 2007).

The aims of this study are reflected in research questions and hypotheses focusing on two main areas: the process of sojourner acculturation in Czechia in comparison to the rest of the world, and identify factors which influence this acculturation process.

Research questions:

1. Is the course of expatriate acculturation in the Czech culture consistent with the internationally accepted Hofstede's acculturation "U" curve?
2. In what way do some of the internationally known predictors influence expatriate acculturation in Czechia?

Hypotheses and premises:

1. It is expected that the course of expatriate acculturation in the Czech culture will correspond with the internationally accepted Hofstede's acculturation "U" curve (Hofstede 1997). Because the period under investigation is consistent with the growth period on the "U" curve, it is expected that the values of Goldberg's GHQ index[4] and the levels of satisfaction will be increasing (see more on these indicators below).
2. It is expected that younger age of sojourners will positively influence their acculturation in the Czech culture. Past research indicates, that younger sojourners will be more successful in cultural adaptation than their older colleagues because they may have less problems with spatial mobility (Lukomskyj, Richards 1986). Therefore, GHQ scores and levels of satisfaction are expected to show greater increase in younger sojourners than in the older respondents.

Because of the data limitations, we are not able to test other "full-blown hypotheses" in which we can juxtapose one characteristic to its opposite. However, what we can do is to "partly measure" a role of other selected variables (via one of the parameters: males, those with previous acculturation experience and those with social engagement with Czechs) that may be, in the context of other studies, relevant and important. What we are not able to do, however, is to uncover changes over time which relate to females, those without previous acculturation experience and those without social engagement with Czechs.

Thus, it may be expected (in keeping with previous experience of other studies) that values of Goldberg's GHQ index and the levels of satisfaction in male respondents who acculturate in the Czech culture will be increasing over time (Selmer 2000; Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001). Also, it is anticipated that values of Goldberg's GHQ index and the levels of satisfaction will increase in the case of respondents with previous acculturation experience (e.g. Selvarjah 2003; Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001) and finally, with those respondents whom had social contacts with Czechs (Berry et al. 2002; Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001).

3.2. Methodology

This research investigates the process of expatriate acculturation after their arrival in Czechia. In order to follow the dynamics of this process, it is essential to use a longitudinal research instrument, which will register changes over time. Such an instrument is a structured longitudinal questionnaire and related in-depth interview used in this study. Via this questionnaire (and related

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[4] The GHQ contains questions researching into how people have been feeling recently. It ascertains issues related to sleeping, feelings of unhappiness and respondent's ability to enjoy everyday activities. There is a specific scale through which the feelings are measued.

interview) we were able to register responses of the studied individuals at two points of time. The two time horizons we focused on are referred to as: the first wave of interviews (W1) and the second wave of interviews (W2). The first wave of interviews was carried out approximately 6 months, and the second wave was carried out about 18 months after expatriate arrival in Czechia. The interviews took place at different times during the 2006 to 2010 period, as the individual respondents became available. However, the first interview (W1) was always carried out approximately 6 moths and the second interview (W2) approximately 18 months after each individual respondent's arrival.

3.2.1. The sample and data collection

The sample is made up of 16 respondents/sojourners – executive managers[5] (13 males and 3 females), aged between 31 and 54, from six countries: the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, the USA and Australia, who came to Czechia between 2006 and 2010. The sample was obtained through a snowball method, from companies known to have foreign participation[6].

The respondents were contacted through company personnel managers via e-mail or telephone. An agreement to participate in the interview was obtained directly from the respondent. The interview time and place were organized with the respondent, or in some cases, with their personal assistants. The respondents were assured that the information obtained in the interviews will be used strictly for research and scientific purposes, and that it will be treated as strictly confidential. Interviews were carried out in English by one of the authors.

3.2.2. Collected information

The longitudinal approach made it possible to follow the course of expatriate acculturation at two critical adaptation phases: the phase of culture shock, the high acculturative stress period – the first interview W1, and during the phase of acculturation: the period of gradual reduction in acculturative stress – the second interview W2 (see Fig. 1). The information sought was collected in two questionnaires: The first (W1) and the second (W2) questionnaire. The information collected in the questionnaires included: 1. name (confidential), age, marital status, family, gender, country of birth, citizenship, education,

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[5] In this study, a typical respondent is defined as an executive manager responsible to the management board through the chief executive officer, or is the chief executive officer himself/herself. His/her duties include: controlling an area with large number of employees organized in teams. In our sample are senior executive managers and other senior managers. Socio-economic status of all managers-respondents was uniformly high, with average monthly income over 90,000 Kč (about 5,000 USD). In the beginning of 2011, the average monthly wage in Czechia was about 1,300 USD.

[6] Senior managers from the following companies have been included in this research: Škoda auto a.s. in Mladá Boleslav, Ahold Czech Republic a.s. in Prague, Price Waterhouse Coopers a.s. in Prague, Telefonica O2 a.s. in Prague, Exxon Mobil in Prague, Abbott Laboratories s.r.o. in Prague and Syngenta AG in Prague.

profession, knowledge of languages, experience, financial situation (confidential); 2. current employment, employer, field of work, current position, motivation and process of coming to work in Czechia; 3. previous adaptation experience; 4. adaptation experience in Czechia, satisfaction with social, economic and physical environment; 5. attitudes and perceptions – knowledge of local language, attitude of Czech hosts, attitude of management, attitude of work colleagues, social support from the Czechs, contact with the home country; 6. health including psychological well being. It is important to point out that during the longitudinal survey (two personal interviews were carried out – W1 and W2) the respondents were not informed about any of the "working hypotheses". The respondents were not made to anticipate that their psychological well-being should improve over time.

3.2.3. Indicators used

Research concerned with cultural adaptation requires reliable indicators of psychological adjustment of individuals under investigation. For the purpose of studying cognitive and emotional aspects of the expatriate psychological adjustment, we have used selected indicators of the success of acculturation: so called "Reflective Effect Indicators" – REI[7] (Lester 2009). As the main indicator of the acculturation success we have used Goldberg's "General Health Questionnaire" (GHQ), see Goldberg (1970). It is used to measure expatriates' subjective mental well-being as an indicator of expatriate psychological adjustment during their acculturation, particularly the acculturative stress reduction between the high stress (culture shock) period several months after arrival (W1) and a year later (W2).

The GHQ has been found to be a useful tool when researching both "psychological" and migrants' integration related issues and has been validated for reliability and internal consistency – see e.g. Goldberg, Blackwell (1970); Gärtner (1996); Selmer (2000); Krch (2000); Donath (2001); Montazeri et al. (2003). The GHQ-12 used in this study contains a number of questions as to how people have been feeling recently. It includes questions about sleeping difficulties, feelings of unhappiness and respondent's ability to enjoy everyday activities. Each question is evaluated on a four point scale ranging, from "less than usual" to "much more than usual" or "not at all" to "much more".

The other indicators of the success of acculturation used in this study were "satisfaction scales". First, we formulated a single question asking the respondents to indicate their overall level of satisfaction with life in Czechia. Second, we have asked the respondents to indicate their level of satisfaction with specific aspects of life in Czechia, such as physical environment, high culture, housing and various services. These questions were evaluated on the five point scale: "very satisfied", "satisfied", "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied", "dissatisfied" and "very dissatisfied".

The course of expatriate acculturation is in this study defined as the difference, positive change, in the values of the GHQ and satisfactions, between the

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[7] Besides the GHQ, REI includes questions about general as well as more specific aspects of expatriate satisfaction with life in the new culture.

first (W1) and the second (W2) interview. These differences form the basis for statistical analyses undertaken in this study.

3.2.4. Statistical tests

For the purpose of evaluating differences in the mental well-being and satisfaction between the first and the second interview (W1) and (W2), reflecting the success of respondent acculturation in Czechia, we used two non-parametric tests. The main reason for using non-parametric tests, rather than parametric tests, is the fact that the former make fewer assumptions about the sample, are more flexible and applicable to "non-quantitative" data. Very important is also the fact that both the sign test and the Wilcoxon paired test make no assumption about population distribution or sample size. While both tests are used for measuring value differences in "pairs", particularly when comparing two time horizons in a single sample population on 95% and 90% level of significance, the simpler sign test works with the existence of a positive or a negative change, while the Wilcoxon paired test uses the order of magnitude of the value differences (see more on methods in e.g. Robinson 1998; Hindls, Hronová, Seger 2004; Řezanková 2010). In our view, via applying these tests we are able to fulfil our particular research goals. Of course, due to rather a "limited strength" of the tools within this quantiative approach (there are, however, no better at one's disposal), results have to be formulated very carefully whilst "indicating" rather than providing evidence.

The following variables are subject to the ensuing statistical analysis:
1. Dependent variables: For the purpose of this study, dependent variables are defined as the differences in recorded values of the Goldberg's GHQ index and the overall and specific satisfaction between the first (W1) and the second (W2) observation points.
2. Independent variables: age, gender (males only), previous acculturation experience, social engagement with the Czechs.

The independent variables were selected from the range of known factors which, according to international literature e.g. Berry et al. (2002), Sam, Berry (2006), Ward, Bochner, Furnham (2001), are influencing socio-cultural adjustment of migrating individuals including sojourners. For the quantitative analysis are suitable those factors which are readily quantifiable and which show evidence of differences between respondents. Some potentially suitable factors (education, socio-economic status, knowledge of Czech language) did not meet such requirements and therefore could not be analysed. Other factors were not suitable for quantitative analysis and were analyzed qualitatively. This qualitative analysis one can find in a separate article (Gärtner, Drbohlav, forthcoming).

The ensuing quantitative analysis brings important results in the international and particularly in the Czech context, but it has to be interpreted with caution because of the sampling limitations (the sample is limited in size and not strictly representative of the studied population) and, consequently, problems of projection the data into statistical testing (see above).

3.3. Results

The crucial question is whether acculturation of sojourners in the Czech cultural environment occurs and whether this process is equivalent to that known from international literature. Two measures reflecting expatriate cultural adaptation were used: their mental well-being and satisfaction.

3.3.1. The expatriate mental well-being: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ)

Table 1 shows means and standard deviations of the GHQ values provided by respondents at the two observation points: the first interview (W1) and the second interview (W2). The information is provided for all respondents and according to selected independent variables.

Over time (between the two waves of interviewing), there was a statistically significant improvement (see below) in the mental well-being of sojourners in

Tab. 1 – Means and standard deviations of the values of the index of mental well-being (GHQ) comparing W1 and W2 interview results for all respondents and according to selected independent variables

| Independent variables | GHQ | | | | | |
| | W1 interview | | | W2 interview | | |
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
All respondents	16	3.10	0.37	16	3.40	0.25
Gender						
Males	13	3.15	0.34	13	3.37	0.25
Females	3	3.10	0.37	3	3.34	0.10
Age						
Up to 40 years	7	2.91	0.43	7	3.41	0.13
Over 40 years	9	3.26	0.25	9	3.34	0.30
Previous acculturation experience						
Yes	10	3.04	0.42	10	3.33	0.24
No	6	3.22	0.28	6	3.45	0.23
Social engagement with the Czechs						
Yes	13	3.13	0.35	13	3.38	0.26
No	3	3.00	0.53	3	3.37	0.15
Country of origin						
The UK	2	2.95	–	2	3.55	–
Spain	2	3.15	–	2	3.30	–
The Netherlands	1	2.90	–	1	3.60	–
Germany	9	3.20	0.38	9	3.33	0.27
The USA	1	2.40	–	1	3.30	–
Australia	1	3.40	–	1	3.40	

Notes: a) The larger the value, the better the mental well-being of respondents; b) on the scale 1 (min.) to 4 (max.).
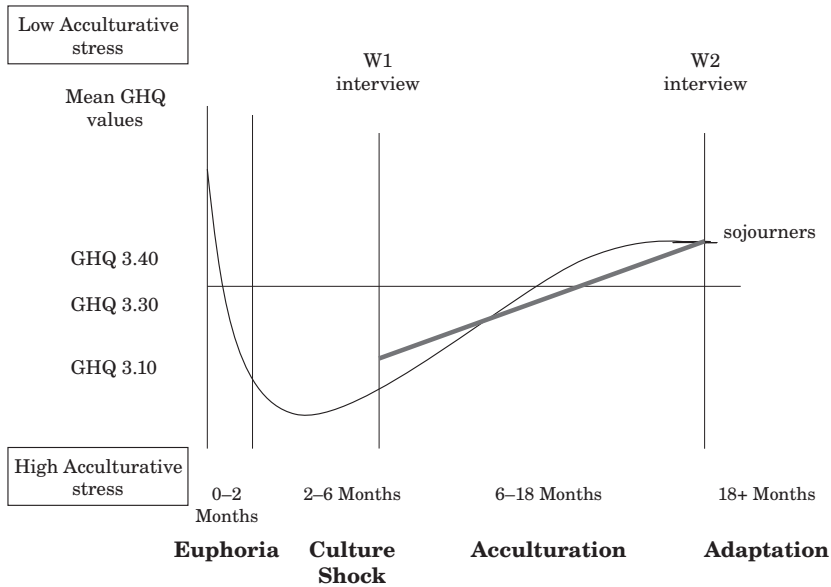
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Fig. 2 – The acculturation curve, executive manager sojourners in Czechia. Adapted from Hofstede (1997, p. 210).

Czechia, where the GHQ value for the whole group of respondents increased significantly from 3.10 to 3.40 (N = 16). For sojourners working in Czechia, there was a clear and vigorous correction of the culture shock according to Hofstede's "U" curve. In addition, the table shows that there is a greater variability in SD values at the time of first interview (W1) high stress/culture shock as compared to the second interview (W2) adaptation phase (SD 0.37 versus SD 0.25). This result points to a greater variation in the mental well-being at the time of first interview, during the high stress period of culture shock.

The statistical significance of differences in GHQ values between the first (W1) and second (W2) interview (rejection of the null hypothesis) is supported by the sign test: N = 11, $r^+ = 10$, $r^- = 1$, test criterion T = 1, $T_{0.05} = 1$ (thus, $T = T_{0.05}$), p = 0.0117. In other words the test shows that the expatriate subjective mental well-being has statistically (significantly) improved in the second interview (W2) in comparison to the first interview (W1). See also Figure 2.

Equally, the Wilcoxon paired test has indicated statistically significant improvement in the expatriate subjective mental well-being (increased GHQ values) in the second interview (W2) in comparison to the first interview (W1) for the combined sample of all respondents. N = 11, $r^-_r = 9$, $r^+_r = 57$, test criterion T = 9, $T_{0.05} = 10.7$ (thus, $T < T_{0.05}$).

Table 2 compares the differences in GHQ values between the first (W1) and second (W2) interview according to age, gender, previous acculturation experience and social engagement with the Czechs using the sign test. These comparisons form the content of hypothesis and premises formulated above.

As far as the age of the respondents is concerned (hypothesis 2), the sign test indicates that for the younger respondent (up to 40 years of age), the subjective mental well-being has statistically improved in the second interview (W2) in

Tab. 2 – Sing test of the values of the index of mental well-being (GHQ) comparing W1 and W2 interviews results according to selected independent variables

	N	N (redu-ced) *	r^+	r^-	Testing criteri-on T	T_α	P
Age							
Up to 40 years	7	5	5	0	0	0.10	0.0625
Over 40 years	9	6	5	1		0.10	0.219
Gender							
Males	13	9	8	1	1	0.05	0.0215
Previous acculturation experience							
Yes	10	7	6	1	0	0.05	0.125
Social engagement with the Czechs							
Yes	13	9	8	1	1	0.05	0.0391

comparison to the first interview (W1) at 90% level of significance. Such an improvement was not indicated for the older respondents. This result, however, shows the weakness of the sign test. In fact, when looking at absolute figures one can reasonably ask whether a fact that all five young managers improved the values of their GHQ is really different based on a fact that out of six older managers "only" in five cases the value of the GHQ has increased. To summarize, in this case it is too difficult to draw any robust conclusions.

As far as differences for male respondents are concerned, the results of the sign test indicate (see Table 2) that the subjective mental well-being (GHQ) has statistically improved in the second interview (W2) in comparison to the first interview (W1) at 95% level of significance. Given the small sample of females, (there were only 3 women in the sample) the change over time could not be measured.

When the influence of previous acculturation experience on psychological adjustment of respondents was tested by the sign test, the expected improvement in mental well-being (GHQ) by the second interview (W2) for those whom did have previous acculturation experience was not realized. The result was not statistically significant. The sample was too small to test the effect on psychological adjustment of no previous acculturation experience.

For those respondents who reported having social engagement with the Czechs by the time of second interview, there was a statistically significant improvement in their mental well-being by the second interview (W2) at 95% level of significance. The sample was too small to test the effect on psychological adjustment on those respondents whom did not engage with the Czechs socially.

3.3.2. The expatriate overall satisfaction with life in Czechia

Table 3 shows means and standard deviations of the values of overall satisfaction with life in Czechia provided by respondents at the first (W1) and the second interview (W2). The information is provided for all respondents and also

Tab. 3 – Means and standard deviations of the overall satisfaction values comparing W1 and W2 interview results for all respondents and according to selected independent variables

OVERALL SATISFACTION						
Independent variables	W1 interview			W2 interview		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
All respondents	16	4.13	0.50	16	4.38	0.62
Gender						
Males	13	4.23	0.44	13	4.46	0.66
Females	3	3.66	0.58	3	4.00	0.00
Age						
Up to 40 years	7	4.14	0.38	7	4.43	0.53
Over 40 years	9	4.11	0.60	9	4.33	0.71
Previous acculturation experience						
Yes	10	4.20	0.63	10	4.30	0.67
No	6	4.00	0.00	6	4.50	0.55
Social engagement with the Czechs						
Yes	13	4.15	0.55	13	4.46	0.66
No	3	4.00	0.00	3	4.00	0.00
Country of origin						
The UK	2	4.50	–	2	5.00	–
Spain	2	4.00	–	2	4.00	–
The Netherlands	1	4.00	–	1	5.00	–
Germany	9	4.11	0.60	9	4.33	0.71
The USA	1	4.00	–	1	4.00	–
Australia	1	4.00	–	1	4.00	

Notes: a) The larger the value, the higher the satisfaction of respondents; b) on the scale 1 (min.) to 5 (max.)

according to selected independent variables. The results reflect respondents' answer to a simple question: "What is your overall level of satisfaction with life in Czechia?" The scale for possible answers was 1–5 from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. The mean values indicate that overall satisfaction has improved over time from 4.13 (N = 16) in the first interview (W1) to 4.38 (N = 16) in the second interview (W2). However, this improvement in overall satisfaction was not statistically significant[8] (see sign test values in Table 4).

3.3.3. The expatriate satisfaction with specific aspects of life in Czechia

Table 5 shows means and standard deviations of the values of specific aspects of satisfaction with life in Czechia provided by respondents at the first (W1) and the second interview (W2). The results reflect respondents' answers to a series of questions including: "What is your level of satisfaction with economy,

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[8] Moreover, within this test there are also many pairs omitted for which there is no difference.

Tab. 4 – Sign test of the values of overall satisfaction with life in Czechia comparing W1 and W2 interview results

	N	N (redu-ced) *	r⁺	r⁻	Testing criteri-on T	T_α	P
Overall satisfaction with life in Czechia							
Increased	16	6	5	1	0	0.10	0.219

Tab. 5 – Means and standard deviations of the values of specific aspects of satisfaction with life in Czechia comparing W1 and W2 interview results for all respondents and according to selected independent variables

SPECIFIC SATISFACTION						
Independent variables	W1 interview			W2 interview		
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
All respondents	16	3.60	0.33	16	3.70	0.42
Gender						
Males	13	3.59	0.32	13	3.70	0.44
Females	3	3.66	0.47	3	3.73	0.40
Age						
Up to 40 years	7	3.66	0.43	7	3.71	0.52
Over 40 years	9	3.57	0.25	9	3.70	0.36
Previous acculturation experience						
Yes	10	3.59	0.38	10	3.59	0.41
No	6	3.63	0.28	6	3.90	0.38
Social engagement with the Czechs						
Yes	13	3.68	0.33	13	3.80	0.41
No	3	3.30	0.10	3	3.30	0.17
Country of origin						
The UK	2	3.95	–	2	4.05	–
Spain	2	3.55	–	2	3.55	–
The Netherlands	1	3.90	–	1	4.50	–
Germany	9	3.48	0.22	9	3.54	0.35
The USA	1	4.20	–	1	4.20	–
Australia	1	3.30	–	1	3.50	

Notes: a) The larger the value, the higher the satisfaction of respondents; b) on the scale 1 (min.) to 5 (max.)

politics, social atmosphere, ecology or services in Czechia?" The scale for possible answers was 1–5 from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. As was the case with overall satisfaction, the mean values indicate that satisfaction with specific aspects of life has improved over time from 3.60 (N = 16) in the first interview (W1) to 3.70 (N = 16) in the second interview (W2). However, this improvement was not statistically significant either (see sign test values in Table 6).

As was the case with the sign test, the Wilcoxon paired test has not indicated statistically significant improvement in the expatriate overall satisfaction or

Tab. 6 – Sign test of the values of specific aspects of satisfaction with life in Czechia comparing W1 and W2 interview results

	N	N (redu-ced) *	r^+	r^-	Testing criteri-on T	T_α	P
Overall satisfaction with life in Czechia							
Increased	16	10	6	4	0	0.05	0.754

satisfaction with specific aspect of life in Czechia between the first (W1) in the second (W2) interview. All premises were rejected for satisfaction: $N = 10$, $r^-_r = 16$, $r^+_r = 39$, testing criterion $T = 16$, $T_{0.05} = 8.1$ (thus, $T > T_{0.05}$).

All in all, the overall satisfaction and satisfaction of respondents with specific aspects of life in Czechia did not show statistically significant difference between the two waves of research (W1 versus W2).

3.4. Summary, discussion and recommendations

Our interest here has been to show that acculturation brings certain levels of stress that permeate daily lives of expatriate sojourners in their quest for professional success in the new cultural milieu. This acculturative stress has to be dealt with by the individuals in addition to their professional tasks. This flow of events is influenced by a range of factors over which the individual sojourners have little or no control (age, gender, previous acculturation experience) and also by factors which can be influenced by individual sojourners (contacts with locals, knowledge of local language, adaptation strategies). In addition, employers, through selection process, can influence the type of sojourner sent to Czechia. In this context the current study may play an important role in recommending the type of sojourner suitable for Czechia.

Research on the impact of various influences on the acculturation process shows that it can be significantly impacted by a range of strategic decisions sojourners make during acculturation. The likelihood of a successful acculturation is related to the degree of personal resourcefulness of individual sojourners, particularly in terms of social engagement with the Czechs and the ability to appreciate behaviour and reactions of the Czechs (for more details see Gärtner, Drbohlav in print).

Our data show that this approach of engagement with the Czechs is a major contributor to successful acculturation. Although we cannot draw ultimate conclusions regarding behavioural patterns of sojourners because of the small data set, we can say that our results represent a novel contribution to the emerging scenario involving international transfer of workforce and related know-how in the post-communist Europe. The present research can be regarded as a pilot study, which warrants further research in this area.

The key conclusion of the present research is that the adaptation of sojourners in the Czech cultural environment occurs and that the process of this acculturation broadly corresponds to the internationally accepted Hofstede's acculturation "U" curve (Hofstede 1997, see Fig. 1). Thus, the hypothesis 1 is

confirmed for the index of mental well-being (GHQ), while it is not confirmed for satisfaction with life in Czechia. The reason for discrepancy between these measures may be due to the better structural characteristics of the GHQ and its established reliability and validity in comparison to the satisfaction scales.

The research also shows, that at least in Czechia, the younger sojourners tend to be relatively more successful in cultural adaptation measured by the index of mental well-being (GHQ), than their older colleagues. Hypothesis 2 stating that younger expatriate managers will be more successful in cultural adaptation in Czechia, than their older colleagues was supported. Despite having statistically significant result for the index of mental well-being (GHQ), the character of the applied statistical tests does not allow us to draw as robust conclusion as we would like. The result is consistent with the conclusions of previous research involving immigrants (see e.g. Lukomskyj, Richards 1986; Berry et al. 2002), but not in line, with research on expatriates in Hong Kong, where the opposite was established (Selmer 2000). This indicates that it is necessary to take into account the interplay of age with other factors, such as culture-specific influences. For example, in Chinese culture older managers are valued more positively than younger individuals as shown in Selmer's research of sojourners in Hong Kong (Selmer 2000).

In the Czech cultural environment it may be possible that the high degree of self-confidence of older, more experienced managers and the consequent underestimation of the importance of social contacts with domestic population, might come into play here. It may have resulted in a deficit in obtaining information about Czech attitudes, behaviour, communication habits and so on in the older sojourners. For these respondents, the information deficit could have resulted in the sense of insecurity in communicating with the Czechs as described in the Gudykunst theory of anxiety and uncertainty management "Anxiety/Uncertainty Management" AUM (Gudykunst 2005). In addition, the excessive self-confidence in older and more experienced expatriates could have resulted in the limited access to knowledge of the host culture which could have lead to the creation of their own knowledge schemes in relation to the Czech culture, which did not correspond to reality as described in the Gudykunst's theory of adaptation schemes – a "Schema Theory of Adaptation" (Gudykunst 2005). On the other hand, it can be expected that younger sojourners might be, more positive and enthusiastic, and ultimately more successful in acculturation in Czechia. This finding could be relevant to companies which operate in Czechia as it may enable them to make more informed personnel decisions.

While the international literature generally supports the notion that the male sojourners experience fewer acculturation problems than their female counterparts (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001), the present research could only confirm that the subjective mental well-being (GHQ) has significantly improved over time for the male respondents. The equivalent change for females could not be tested because of the sample limitations. Nevertheless, the finding that male sojourners were able to statistically significantly reduce their acculturative stress as measured by the improvement in the mental well-being index (GHQ) is important.

The research did not confirm the expectation that those sojourners who had prior acculturation experience would show a pronounced increase in subjective

mental well-being (GHQ) and a marked reduction in stress. This result can be explained by the suggestion that respondents with previous acculturation experience may have been overconfident in their response to the new environment. According to the above-mentioned AUM theory (Gudykunst 2005), expatriate acculturation, among other things, depends on their ability to reduce anxiety and uncertainty in intercultural communication through the ability to predict the behaviour of hosts in certain situations. Sojourners with previous acculturation experience, according to Gudykunst, have a tendency to excessive self-confidence and lose interest, whether their prediction is correct or not. In addition, previous acculturation experience, for example, in China or India does not prepare expatriates for the pitfalls of communication in Czechia. Adaptation-experienced sojourners may therefore underestimate the adaptive problems in the Czech culture, and may have bigger problems than newcomers who came to Czechia with undistorted and enthusiastic outlook. For employers this means that previous acculturation experience may not be an advantage for the sojourn in Czechia.

This research has confirmed the premise that for those sojourners who have engaged socially with the Czechs, there was a statistically significant improvement in subjective mental well-being (GHQ). However, our research did not confirm, that the opposite was true for those who have not engaged socially with the Czechs. This finding is in agreement with previous research (see e.g. Berry et al. 2002). This result could be applied as a recommendation to employers in designing support programs for sojourners in terms of support for various social activities and events as means of social contact with the Czechs who will then be better informed about the local culture, including cultural traditions, ways of negotiation, communication patterns, etc.

Other variables, such as, knowledge of Czech language or socio-economic status, which did not show appreciable differences between respondents, and other factors, which may, according to international literature, influence expatriate acculturation (Berry et al. 2002; Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001), were analysed qualitatively (Gärtner, Drbohlav 2012).

Despite the fact that qualitative aspects were not discussed in this paper, they were an important part of our research (Gärtner, Drbohlav 2012). When summarizing sojourner statements relating to their acculturation problems, a list of issues they had to deal with has emerged, in particular: their dependence on communicating in English (lack of knowledge of the Czech language), cultural distance – especially the feeling of insecurity resulting from the inability to predict the behavior and attitudes of the Czechs, Czech inward mentality limiting the development a wider view of the world, lack of mutual respect between Czech colleagues, some degree of Czech xenophobia and underestimation of some adaptive attributes, in particular an underestimation of the impact of cultural/ethnic identity, underestimating problems with spouse/partner in the new environment, underestimation of the importance of support from compatriots, underestimation of social contact with members of the host culture and underestimation of benefits arising from the knowledge of the Czech language. Qualitative research has also pointed to acculturation strategies that sojourners found helpful, in particular: learning Czech, developing relationships with Czechs through schools and other social institutions, discussions on the topic of Czech culture with an independent third party (coach, teacher)

and an explanation of the attributes of their own culture to the Czechs while monitoring their reactions.

At the level of application, this research contributes knowledge that can be directly applied in the effort to improve the quality and efficiency of the process of expatriate acculturation in the Czech environment, both at the state level and at the level of individual firms.

In conclusion, we believe that this research contributes to an important debate revolving around theoretical and conceptual migratory and integration issues in Central/Eastern post-communist Europe (here represented by Czechia) vis-à-vis reality in other highly developed immigration countries (see e.g. Drbohlav 2002). In the light of our results, again, a trend towards convergence rather than divergence between the given two worlds is indicated.

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S h r n u t í

AKULTURACE EXPATRIOTŮ, VYŠŠÍCH MANAŽERŮ V ČESKU

Příspěvek je patrně prvním systematičtějším a sofistikovanějším pokusem zmapovat průběh akulturace expatriotů, vyšších manažerů (anglicky „sojourners") v Česku. Předložená práce je studií akulturace expatriotů, vyšších manažerů, kteří přišli do Česka za účelem šíření technických a manažerských znalostí, dovedností a zkušeností firmám operujícím na území tohoto státu. Jejich poslání je natolik důležité pro rozvoj české ekonomiky, že si tato skupina expertů zaslouží zvláštní výzkumnou pozornost. Úspěch jejich misí závisí, přinejmenším z části, na úspěšném přizpůsobení těchto jedinců českým kulturním podmínkám. Bez tohoto procesu akulturace by jejich mise byly, podle jejich vlastních slov, méně úspěšné a mohly by skončit nezdarem nebo dokonce předčasným návratem do země původu.

Teorie mimo jiné poukazuje na to, že akulturace expatriotů má celosvětově určitý standardní průběh. Podle Hofstedeho se jedná o „U" křivku. Pozitivní pocity počátečního nadšení – euforie, jsou většinou po několika týdnech vystřídány negativními pocity tzv. „kulturního šoku", kdy dochází k dezorientaci, zmatku, ztrátě sebevědomí a k depresi. Dalším stádiem je odcizení – alienace od hostitelské kultury, pro které je charakteristické popírání skutečnosti, nevraživost a vyhledávání negativních stereotypů. Teprve po několika dalších měsících, doba je individuálně odlišná, dochází k funkčnímu přizpůsobení a ke kulturní adaptaci (Hofstede 1997).

Výzkumným cílem této studie je nejprve stručně popsat vybrané teorie a koncepty, které daný fenomén akulturace vysvětlují. Poté je zkoumána akulturace expatriotů (akulturací zde v souladu s Berrym rozumíme změny, které nastanou u jednotlivce následkem jedincova kontaktu s jinou kulturní skupinou (Berry a kol. 2002, s. 350) – vyšších manažerů v českých kulturních podmínkách vis-a-vis obecnějším pravidelnostem průběhu daného procesu (viz Hofstedeho „U" křivka) stejně jako je testován vliv vybraných faktorů na charakter, resp. úspěšnost akulturace – jde o vliv věku, roli mužů, existující předcházející zkušenosti s akulturací a realizování společenských kontaktů s příslušníky majoritní společnosti.

Cílovou populaci tvoří 16 expatriotů-manažerů velkých nadnárodních firem pobývajících dočasně v Česku – z toho je 13 mužů a 3 ženy, jsou ve věku mezi 31 a 54 lety a pocházejí ze 6 zemí – Velké Británie, Španělska, Nizozemska, Německa, USA a Austrálie. Cílová populace byla získána metodou sněhové koule a byla zkoumána pomocí dotazníku a navazujícího hloubkového interview longitudinálně, tj. ve dvou časových horizontech – vždy cca po 6 a poté po 18 měsících jejich pobytu v Česku, a to v průběhu let 2006 a 2010. Neparametrické testy – znaménkový a Wilcoxonův (nevyžadují normální rozložení ani určitou velikost souboru) umožnily, byť v omezené míře, na hladině významnosti 95 % a 90 % testovat zjišťované vztahy. Nekvantifikovatelné, kvalitativní aspekty dané problematiky jsou představeny v jiném příspěvku týchž autorů (viz Gärtner, Drbohlav 2012).

Výsledky prokazují, že i v Česku má akulturační „U" křivka svoji platnost. Snížení akulturačního stresu se projevuje ve zvýšené přítomnosti pozitivních a ve snížené přítomnosti negativních pocitů u adaptujících se jedinců v průběhu akulturace (Hofstede 1997). Jako hlavní indikátor reflektující úspěch kulturní adaptace byl použit Goldbergův index psychického zdraví reprezentovaný tzv. „General Health Questionnaire", GHQ-12 (Goldberg 1970). Jeho vyšší hodnoty poukazují na zlepšení psychického zdraví a snížení akulturačního stresu (rozhodující je změna během časového úseku na akulturační křivce). Statistickou analýzou bylo potvrzeno, že akulturace obecně probíhá v Česku u daných expatriotů–manažerů tak, jako jinde ve světě, tedy podle Hofstedeho akulturační křivky. Při testování vlivu vybraných faktorů na akulturaci expatriotů-manažerů (viz výše) se prokázalo, že u mladších respondentů (do 40 let věku; na 90% hladině) vis-a-vis starším respondentům a u mužů (na 95% hladině), aniž bychom však díky malému počtu případů mohli testovat průběh u žen, došlo v čase ke statisticky významnému zvýšení hodnot indexu GHQ, tedy úspěšnému naplňování akulturace. Neprokázala se důležitost faktoru již prožité zkušenosti s akulturací v minulosti na úspěšnost akulturace (vliv faktoru neprožité zkušenosti s akulturací nebyl testován). Naopak jako statisticky významný (na 95% hladině) a akulturaci pozitivně ovlivňující se vyjevil faktor realizovaných společenských kontaktů s příslušníky majoritní společnosti (opětně z důvodů malého počtu respondentů nemohl být měřen vliv faktoru nerealizovaných

společenských kontaktů s příslušníky majoritní společnosti). Celková spokojenost i tzv. specifické aspekty spokojenosti s životem v Česku nevykázaly v čase, tedy v průběhu akulturace u daných respondentů, statisticky významné posuny.

Shrneme-li již uvedené, studie tedy kromě obecněji orientovaných závěrů relevantních základnímu výzkumu (mimo jiné spíše naznačení potvrzení než odmítnutí „pravidelností" známých z výzkumů akulturace cizinců v cílových zemích v jiných regionech světa) nabízí také řadu konkrétních, „aplikovaných" doporučení, jak přispět k úspěšnějšímu průběhu akulturace expatriotů-manažerů v Česku na úrovni jednotlivých firem.

Obr. 1 – Akulturační křivka. Upraveno podle Hofstede (1997).
Obr. 2 – Akulturační křivka vyšších manažerů v Česku. Upraveno podle Hofstede (1997, s. 210).

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