RETENTION

of international employees
in Copenhagen

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ABSTRACT

Abstract

Organizations are becoming increasingly reliant on international employees to improve competitiveness in the global labor market due to accelerating globalization. Moreover, foreign employees are found to contribute positively to public finances, provide specialized labor to organizations in Denmark and ensure economic growth. Thus, retention of international talents is important for organizations operating in Denmark. Several factors are found to influence the retention of international employees, but especially the creation of social networks has been found to have a significant impact. Yet, this is an area where Denmark has ranked as one of lowest countries on recent global surveys. Therefore, this thesis explores the factors that influence international employee's ability to create a social network in Denmark. Moreover, this thesis investigates the role that organizations play as well as which factors organizations can manipulate to facilitate the creation of social networks.

Existing literature within this research domain highlights the importance of international employees' ability to create social networks, specifically with Host Country Nationals. Creating social networks were found to help international employees adjust, both to general life in the host country as well as in relation to work-related and social aspects.

To answer the research questions presented in the paper, 26 highly skilled employees working in the Copenhagen area were sampled using a maximum variation strategy. The sample consisted of both international and Danish employees who work in international teams. Moreover, an expert interview with Head of Global Talent in the Confederation of Danish Industry, Linda Duncan Wendelboe, and two reports made by Oxford Research with data from expats living in Denmark were included in the analysis to triangulate the findings.

A thematic analysis showed that a plethora of factors influenced the degree to which international employees had been able to form a social network in Denmark. The identified factors were grouped on three overall themes; societal, organizational and individual. Findings from the analysis showed that international employees with great ease could create social networks with other internationals, but that significant barriers continue to exist in relation to creating social networks with Danes. Especially, the host country language and lack of cultural training were found to impact the creation of such social networks with Host Country Nationals i.e. Danes.

Following the analysis, the role of the organization was discussed and found to have an important role if the organizations wish to retain international talents in the future. Consequently, recommendations were presented in the thesis in relation to the factors that organizations are able to manipulate. Firstly, these recommendations emphasized that organizations can benefit from collaborating with publicly available initiatives for creating social networks. Secondly, the importance of providing language courses and cultural training was confirmed. Finally, it was recommended that the international employees should receive ongoing support from various sources to facilitate social networks, which ultimately would lead to higher retention.

As it was confirmed that social networks are pivotal for retention of international employees, it is recommended that more research needs to conducted within this field. Recommendations for future research thus include examining how social networks are created in the highest-ranking countries in the global surveys and whether these findings are replicable to other countries. Moreover, longitudinal and observational studies may uncover nuances that this study could not due to the limitations of the methods chosen.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DI – Confederation of Danish Industry

HCL – Host Country Language

HCN – Host Country National

HR – Human Resources

ICS – International Citizen Service

IHC – International House Copenhagen

OCB – Organizational Citizenship Behavior

SIT - Social Identity Theory

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INTRODUCTION

01 INTRODUCTION

Accelerating globalization has led organizations to "[...] increasingly rely on expatriate assignments to boost their competitiveness in the global market place" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 3). During recent years, rapid rises in mobility of international labor have created new challenges that require major organizational changes. Consequently, "[...] organizations have to face new challenges in managing international human resources (Collings et al. 2007 as cited in Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 80). Despite, the changes in recent years, "[...] recruitment and retention policies of foreign workers are occurring at a very slow pace" (Collings, Scullion & Dowling 2009, as cited in Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 94). Therefore, an increased focus must be placed on the importance of understanding and managing the expatriation process (Sappinen, 1993). The urgency is moreover due to the high costs associated with employing talents from abroad (McNulty & Tharenou, 2005). Thus, it is important that companies understand the factors the influence whether they are able to retain the international employees that they attract.

This is especially important for organizations that operate in Denmark due to the current labor shortage, which is expected to further increase during the coming years (Dansk Industri, n.d. a). This labor shortage is caused by demographic developments, as the Danish population is aging (Strack, Booker, Kovács-Ondrejkovic, Antebi & Welch, 2018). Furthermore, Danish companies are struggling to attract enough young talents. These difficulties both lie in attracting international talents as well as young Danes, who are increasingly attracted to careers abroad (Hansen, 2018). Highly qualified foreign employees thus serve as a means to minimize the labor shortage, but "[...] Denmark is in a global competition when it comes to attracting and retaining global talents" (Dansk Industri, n.d., a). Consequently, the former CEO of the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) proclaims that "[...] more and more companies are forced to turn down orders due to a lack of skilled workers and highly-educated specialists. This isn't only a problem for [Danish] companies. It's also a barrier to growth in Denmark [...]" (Olsen, 2019).

As outlined above, it is important for Denmark to retain international talents. Hence, it is imperative that international talents feel welcome in Denmark as this may affect retention (InterNations, 2018). Yet, during recent years, Denmark has consistently scored low in global surveys that measure, among other things, the ease with which international employees are able to settle in and find friends (InterNations, 2018). Accordingly, the Expat Insider report, "[...] one of the world's largest

and most comprehensive surveys on life abroad [...]" (InterNations, 2018, p. 2) states that international employees moving to Denmark should prepare for a rough welcome that will be as cold as the Danish weather. One of the surveyed expats from the report had come to "[...] the unfortunate conclusion that while a country such as Denmark may have the very best infrastructure, healthcare system, etc., as an expat, if you cannot connect with the local people and make friends, there is very little meaning or purpose to your life abroad" (InterNations, 2018, p. 132). This example was mentioned in the report to show that making friends as an expat in Denmark is currently a challenging process (InterNations, 2018). Therefore, the expatriates' ability to settle in and find friends in Denmark may thus be linked to retention, as Denmark scores lower than other Nordic countries in The Global Competitiveness Report in relation to the country's capacity to retain international talent (World Economic Forum, 2015).

This development can potentially have catastrophic consequences for Denmark's reputation, both for the country and for the employers, if efforts to retain employees are not made; "Denmark's ranking makes it clear that we have a challenge when it comes to retaining international employees. Many leave again within the first years, and five years down the line more than half of highly-educated foreigners have left Denmark" (Wendelboe, 2018). Therefore, this is an area that must be researched in more detail as the status quo is simply "[...] not good enough, because international employees make an essential contribution – both to Danish companies, which are in dire need of labour, and to public finances" (Wendelboe, 2018). Hence, this is a critical challenge for Denmark and "[...] a concern that will most likely only increase in the years to come" (Hansen, 2018).

1.1 Research question

In order to address the abovementioned challenges that Denmark is currently facing, the following research questions have been formulated:

- *Which factors influence international employees' ability to create a social network in Denmark?*
- *Which role does the organization play and which factors can an organization manipulate to facilitate the creation of social networks?*

1.2 Research objective and structure

The main objective of this thesis is thus to gain sufficient knowledge and insights into this specific field of research to provide answers to the two research questions formulated above.

To answer the research questions, first a literature review will outline previously published literature relevant to this subject. Then, the details of the research design will be presented as well as how data was collected and analyzed. The findings of the analysis will then be presented and discussed in order to generate recommendations for organizations. Finally, limitations, applicability, and recommendations for further research will be offered.

1.3 Clarification of concepts

Below clarifications and definitions of key concepts used in this thesis are presented.

Culture

Various definitions of *culture* are offered by different researchers. Drawing on Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Phillips and Sackmann's conceptualization of *culture*, the term *culture* is defined in this thesis as the following:

> The core of culture is composed of explicit and tacit assumptions or understandings commonly held by a group of people [...] these assumptions/understandings serve as guides to acceptable and unacceptable perceptions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours; they are learned and passed on to new members of the group through social interaction; culture is dynamic – it changes over time (as cited in Ooi, 2007, p. 113).

Although this definition is very broad, it is widely accepted by researchers within the field (Ooi, 2007).

Host Country Nationals

By definition, "in an international firm, an *HCN* is a person whose nationality is the same as that of the country in which the company is operating" (HCN, 2019). As the organizations mentioned in this thesis operate within Denmark, the *HCNs* mentioned throughout will refer to local, Danish citizens.

International employees

Within the context of this research, focus is on highly skilled and educated individuals who work in another country than their own. As various terms are often used to describe these individuals, a clear definition of this concept is required before the thesis proceeds.

One of the commonly used terms to describe these individuals is *expatriate*. An *expatriate* is often described as "a legally working individual who resides temporarily in a country of which they are not a citizen [or] someone who has relocated abroad either by an organisation, by themselves or been directly employed by their host country" (Nash, 2017). This definition denotes that an *expatriate* may relocate with the intention of moving back to their home country after their assignment ends. This entails that an *expatriate* is only residing in the host country temporarily and is thus expected to return to their own country in the future.

An *immigrant*, however, is defined as "a person who leaves one country to settle permanently in another" (Immigrant, 2019). In contrast to an *expatriate*, this definition denotes that an *immigrant* often moves with the intention of staying in a foreign country indefinitely. Still, an *immigrant* is free and able to leave Denmark should they wish to do so.

Regardless of the initial motivation to move aboard, both terms indicate that the individuals who are relocating do so voluntarily and are able to move back to their home country. This is in sharp contrast to a *refugee* who also lives in a country other than their own, but is "one who flees, especially to another country, seeking refuge from war, political oppression, religious persecution, or a natural disaster" (Refugee, 2019).

Moreover, it has been acknowledged that the terms *expatriate* and *immigrant* may have different connotations. Therefore, it has been decided to use the term *international employee* throughout this thesis. The term *international employee* will be used as an umbrella term to include highly skilled individuals who have moved to Denmark to work, regardless of whether they have an intention to stay in the host country prior to moving. In conclusion, the term *international employee* relates to highly skilled and educated individuals who live and work abroad out of their own free will.

Social networks

The concept of *social networks* is in this thesis defined as "[...] a "structure of relationships linking social actor [and] the set of actors and the ties among them" (Pescosolido, 2006, p. 208). Moreover, Pescosolido (2006) argues that "relationships or ties are the basic building blocks of human experience, mapping the connections that individuals have to one another" (p. 208).

LITERATURE REVIEW

02 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will outline previous research that has been conducted in relation to the field examined in this thesis. The purpose of the literature review is to develop "[...] a clear argument about what the published literature indicates is known and not known about [the] research" (Wallace & Wray, 2011, as cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016, p. 72). Therefore, it is important to uncover "[...] concepts and ideas, as well as the major issues and debates about [the] topic" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 72). Furthermore, the literature review can help researchers clarify their research question and increase their knowledge about the chosen area of study (Saunders et al., 2016).

Moreover, the literature review can enable the discovery of the extent to which current literature can be used to answer the research question. Consequently, creating a literature review is an important process of any research paper as the significance of the research findings "[...] will inevitably be judged in relation to other people's research and their findings" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 72). Thus, the literature review will be used to show how the researchers' findings relate to research made prior to it.

Saunders et al. (2016) suggest several ways to structure the literature review; one of these being the use of a funnel strategy. This entails starting at a general level, exploring key themes, and then narrowing it down to the researcher's specific research questions and objectives. Secondly, this strategy entails highlighting aspects where the researchers believe that they can provide new insights and then using this to "[...] lead the reader into subsequent sections of [the] project report, which explore these issues" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 80).

The literature review in this thesis will make use of both secondary sources (e.g. previously published journals) and grey literature (e.g. reports published by either governments, academics, businesses or industries). First, this section will explore the general concept of expatriate adjustment. Second, literature will be reviewed in relation to how social networks are created by international employees, which includes the role of HCNs, as well as benefits and barriers to facilitating such relationships. Third, the role of the company in this regard will be explored and finally, gaps in current literature will be identified.

However, it should be noted that it is not possible to find and review all the literature published within one area before collecting the data (Saunders et al., 2016). Instead, the "[...] literature review will review the most relevant and significant research on [a] topic" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 74).

2.1 Expatriate adjustment

Several factors may influence whether international employees choose to stay in their host country. However, lack of expatriate adjustment has been found to be directly linked to intentions of withdrawal from the assignment abroad (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018). Moreover, if expatriates fail to adjust to a host country this results in lower job engagement, failure in performance and will reduce the effectiveness of the international employee in the host country (Bruning, Sonpar & Wang, 2012). Although a wide array of potential explanations for such failures are offered in expatriate literature, "[...] adjustment to the host culture has been among the most prominent" (Feitosa, Kreutzer, Kramperth, Kramer & Salas, 2014, p. 135). Regardless of the expatriate's skills, all expatriates go through a process where they adjust to the new environment, which is perceived as a critical determiner of the expatriate's success in the host country (Sappinen, 1993). In relation to retention, it is, therefore, important to study expatriate adjustment in relation to retention (Haslberger, Brewster & Hippler, 2012), as "the most commonly cited reason for failure of premature return is usually related to some sort of adjustment and not a lack of job skills" (Lueke & Svyantek, 2000, p. 390).
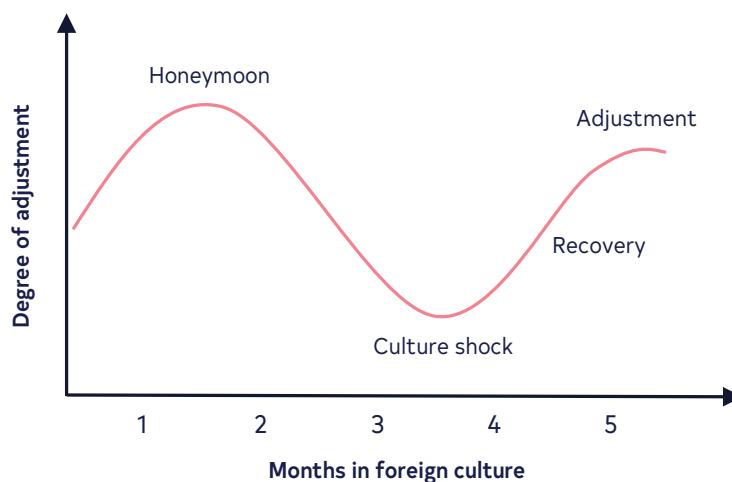

Figure 1. U-curve model of adjustment
Source: Adapted from Lysgaard, S.(1955) as cited in *Expatriate Adjustment on Foreign Assignment*, 1993. Sappinen, J. (1993).

The U-curve model

A classic model used to illustrate the expatriate adjustment process is the U-shaped curve, as the one depicted above (Figure 1). The U-curve, also known as the *culture shock cycle*, depicts four stages of expatriation; honeymoon stage, crisis, recovery and ends with a time of adjustment (Sappinen, 1993). This figure depicts the temporal aspect of expatriate adjustment, where it is suggested that it is reached after approximately six months.

In the literature of expatriate adjustment, the concept of culture shock has received a lot of attention. Culture shock gained publicity as it is considered a common and very disturbing phenomenon (Sappinen, 1993). When individuals "[...] are in a place where the traditions and customs are foreign and unexpected, we may loose [*sic*] our balance and become unsure of ourselves" (Harris & Moran, 2011 as cited in Sappinen, 1993, p. 4). Accordingly, culture shock may lead to feelings such as anxiety, frustration and rejection from the members of the new culture. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that individual adjustment processes may not follow this U-shape and may in fact have any shape depending on the individual expatriate (Sappinen, 1993). Lastly, efforts to describe the entirety of the expat adjustment have not been offered in the original U-curve hypothesis (Sappinen, 1993).

Framework of international adjustment

In attempts to describe the entirety of the expatriate adjustment, many studies "[...] have adopted the view that adjustment is multifaceted" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 289). Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) have proposed one of the most influential models which includes three main dimensions of international adjustment: "[...] general adjustment (comfort associated with various non-work factors), interaction adjustment (comfort associated with interacting with host country nationals [HCNs]), and work adjustment (comfort associated with the assignment job)" (Shaffer, Harrison & Gilley, 1999, as cited in Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008, p. 34). These three dimensions constitute a "[...] useful, integrative, and comprehensive model for understanding cross-cultural adaptation in the international organizational context" (Strubler, Park & Agarwal, 2011, p. 116). The framework is known as the Framework of International Adjustment (FIA). The advantage of FIA is that "[...] it begins to move away from the strictly linear model of adjustment, based on time, toward the recognition of adjustment as a broad multifaceted construct with interacting dimensions (Strubler, Park & Agarwal, 2011, p. 105). This theoretical framework covers sociocultural aspects of the

adjustment process, which have been validated by various empirical studies (Selmer, 2006). Researchers consider this a reasonable development of how the expatriate adjustment process is viewed, as the amount of time needed for adjustment is dependent on the individual expatriate (Strubler, Park & Agarwal, 2011). Lastly, it has been argued that "interaction adjustment may be the most fundamental of the three dimensions of sociocultural adjustment since both general adjustment and work adjustment are based on interpersonal interactions (Bell & Harrison, 1996, as cited in Selmer, 2006, p. 354).

Socializing with Host Country Nationals

Consequently, Selmer (2006) argued in a study of interactions between Western expatriates in China that interactions with HCN is "[...] likely to have a positive effect on both their general adjustment and work adjustment" (Selmer, 2006, p. 354). As a result, Bruning, Sonpar & Wang (2012) state that "an emerging trend in the literature is the recent focus on the role played by expatriates [*sic*] social networks in their adjustment and performance" (p. 444). Moreover, "[...] social interaction and social support during the global assignment is one of the most critical determinants of cross-cultural adjustment" (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 762). Accordingly, Toh & DeNisi (2007) argue that social support from HCNs can help expatriates adjust on all of the above-mentioned dimensions; general adjustment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment.

Establishing a network with HCNs has been found to be important as "[...] the knowledge and support that HCNs can offer may not be available in expatriate-only support networks, and thus, several scholars have argued that gaining the support of HCNs is critical to expatriate success" (Wang & Varma, 2018, p. 671). Previous studies have "[...] reported that the frequency of interactions between expatriates and host country nationals (HCNs), and the amount of support that expatriates receive from HCNs are two important determinants of expatriate adjustment [...]" (Wang & Varma, 2018, p. 671).

Moreover, in relation to the abovementioned U-curve model, creating friendships with HCNs "[...] can help the expatriate overcome culture shock and any feelings of loneliness or isolation experiences being away from home and their previous support networks" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 289). Thus, social interaction with HCNs "[...] is an invaluable source of information about culturally acceptable norms and behaviours and reduce uncertainties associated with work and non-

work situations" (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 762). Hence, HCNs in particular have an "[...] important part to play. It lies in their potential significance as a valuable socializing agent and facilitator of the expatriate's role in the host unit organization" (Toh & DeNisi, 2005, p. 134). HCNs are consequently considered "[...] reservoirs of valuable organizational information that newcomers need to learn in order to become effective members of the organization" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, pp. 281).

Three types of social support

Wang (2002) states that "because the expatriate's uncertainty and stress mostly come from his or her unfamiliarity with the local culture and environment, local nationals can be an extremely important source of informational, instrumental, and feedback support" (p. 327). Caligiuri & Lazarova (2002) argue that the interaction adjustment of expatriates can be facilitated through three types of social support: instrumental, emotional and informational.

First, instrumental social support relates to the "[...] the creation of a supportive environment by providing [the] expatriates with necessary resources. These resources may include money, baby-sitting, helping with yard work, lending books or giving free lessons in the host-country language" (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 769). Second, emotional social support relates to psychological comfort and the feeling of affiliation and belonging. Such emotional support can be exemplified as a sympathetic colleague who takes their time to listen to an expatriate colleague's feelings, uncertainties and issues (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). As originally illustrated by the U-curve, "the initial stage of most expatriate assignments is often associated with stress, disorientation and loneliness" (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 762). At this stage, emotional support can reduce psychological factors such as isolation and loneliness, while enhancing feelings such as self-identity and self-esteem (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). Third, informational social support "[...] provides feedback regarding appropriate behaviours and, in turn, helps the expatriates develop sensitivity towards the cultural norms by creating an understanding and appreciation for the host culture" (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 768). In turn, this allows the expatriate to adapt to the host country and new organization. Establishing a social network is thus pivotal for expatriates to create as "a lack of initiative to re-establish a social network in the local environment will be reflected in social network characteristics, such as a small network size, and will hinder the maintenance of psychological well-being" (Wang, 2002, p. 324).

2.2 Creating a social network in a new country

As previously mentioned, the expatriation process is very stressful and uncertain in the beginning. Therefore, "[...] social support from different sources such as local nationals and peer expatriates, is extremely important in helping expatriates adjust to this stressful environment" (Wang, 2002, p. 327). Caligiuri & Lazarova (2002) argue that all three social support types mentioned above can come from various sources such as the expatriate's family, other expatriates, mentors and HCNs colleagues.

Furthermore, Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001) argue that international employees can create three types of social networks; culture compatriots, HCNs and other foreigners. Interactions with peer-expatriates can help provide emotional support as other expatriates in the new home country are "[...] important sources for emotional and feedback support. Because the expatriate can share his or her positive or negative experience with similar others, the interactions with peer expatriates will decrease the level of the expatriate's frustration" (Wang, 2002, p. 328). Moreover, Wang (2002) argues that expatriates "[...] tend to interact more with their peer expatriates due to language-related and culture-related problems in interacting with locals [...] (Wang, 2002, p. 328). However, it has been found that "frequent contact with members of the expatriate community delayed adjustment whereas frequent contact with HCNs lead to faster adjustment" (Briody and Chrisman, 1991, as cited in Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008, p. 37). Therefore, Wang (2002) proposes that "[...] local people in the expatriate's personal network can provide more and better social support to promote psychological well-being because local partners know the local environment better and they have more access to various local resources" (p. 328). Thus, expatriates can benefit from social support from both peer-expatriates as well as local colleagues, or HCNs.

2.3 Barriers to creating social networks

Even though the relationship between HCNs and expatriates are found to be of huge significance, certain factors have been argued to hinder the formation of these relationships.

Length of stay

The first barrier identified in the literature is the perceived uncertainty regarding the duration of the expatriates stay. This can prove to be a significant barrier to the creation of relationships between HCNs and expatriates as "[...] HCNs may be less willing to exert effort to teach expatriates or

develop friendship with them when they expect them to leave again very shortly" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 293).

In-group and out-group

The second barrier is the creation of in-groups and out-groups between HCNs and the expatriates. Toh & DeNisi (2007) argue "[...] that the extent to which HCNs perceive expatriates as outgroup members will affect the role information and social support that might be provided to expatriates" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 289). A theory commonly used to explain the likelihood of whether the expatriates will be categorized as in-group members is *Social Identity Theory (SIT).* SIT is a social psychological theory which focuses on social categorization and intergroup relations, which is the "[...] most influential and most useful for understanding the plethora of problems that can arise between members of different groups" (Hogg & Terry, 2001, p. 183). Wang & Varma (2018) state that "[...] prior research has primarily drawn upon the social categorization perspective to examine expatriate-HCN relationships and argued that characteristics such as nationality, ethnicity and status differences are salient to HCNs" (2018, p. 672). However, the prevalence of these differences is dependent on the degree to which the individual holds ethnocentric attitudes. When communicating with individuals that are considered to belong to an identity group dissimilar to one's own, there is a tendency that people exhibit out-group differentiation and in-group favoritism (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Moreover, if HCNs "[...] are highly ethnocentric, national identity is likely to be salient in the minds of HCNs and expatriates will more likely be considered and treated as outgroup" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 287). HCNs that are highly ethnocentric "[...] tend to draw clearer boundaries between themselves and expatriates" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 288). Yet, this also applies to expatriates. Toh & DeNisi (2007) propose that "expatriates who are unwilling to communicate or possess ethnocentric attitudes have greater difficulty in becoming comfortable with their social interactions at work" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 288). Hence, if expatriates are categorized as out-group members, HCNs will be less likely to provide support to the expatriates. Although, in-groups and out-groups may be formed based on "[…] racial features, the type of dress its members wear, the food they eat, the houses they build or the group's totem, insignia, tattoos and specific practices, it is the language that distinguishes groups of people most precisely" (Khokhar, Memon & Siddique, 2016, p. 234).

Language proficiency

Accordingly, the third barrier that poses a threat to the creation of relationships between HCNs and expatriates is related to language. Although, "local language proficiency's relationship to expatriate adjustment has intuitive appeal [...]" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 83) this is a field of research that has received very little empirical support. The expatriate's host country language (HCL) proficiency has been found to facilitate the general adjustment to the host country as well as improve interactions with HCNs, both at work and outside the workplace (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018). This "[...] proficiency can induce and foster expatriates' daily interactions with locals and help them to understand the local culture" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 83). This allows expatriates to be able to interact more effectively with HCNs as HCL proficiency leads to an increased understanding of the host country culture, whereas "[...] insufficient HCL proficiency can consequently act as a natural barrier to intercultural communication and information flows in the workplace [...]" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 83). Expatriates with insufficient HCL proficiency can result in them being "[...] excluded from communication networks due to the natural tendency of people to interact in their native languages" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, p. 84). Moreover, low HCL proficiency is found to have a negative correlation with the general and interactions adjustment facets of expatriates (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018). Correspondingly, insufficient HCL proficiency "[...] can limit a foreign worker's social interactions in the HC to other foreigners or to a small number of host nationals who are proficient enough in English or some shared language" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018, pp. 83-84).

Zhang & Peltokorpi (2015) draw on SIT to explain how language influences expatriate adjustment. They argue that "language is asserted to be one of the most characteristic markers of social identity due to the functional and psychological barriers they impose on social interaction" (Giles and Byrne, 1982, as cited in Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 5). Put differently, inclusion and exclusion are based on similarities and dissimilarities in language between individuals and groups (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015). Ultimately, "[...] findings suggest that language creates a strong functional and identity-based boundary between expatriates and HCNs in both work and non-work related settings" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 13).

Role of personality

Finally, personality has been found to play a role in the creation of HCN and expatriate relationships. Accordingly, Caligiuri (2000) "[...] urges a focus on personality as a predictor of adjustment and performance" (as cited in Bruning, Sonpar & Wang, 2012, p. 445). In relation to social networks, two personality traits have been found to be of particular importance; extraversion and openness to experience. Extraversion relates to talkativeness and sociability, whereas openness to experience relates to the degree with which individuals are willing to experiment and be adventurous (Bruning, Sonpar & Wang, 2012).

Regardless of the abovementioned barriers, some researchers "[...] suggest that high levels of adaptive behaviour can have undesirable effects because HCNs react negatively when out-group members threaten their group identity" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 13). These researchers believe that HCNs will exclude expatriates, even if the expatriate learns the HCL and cultural norms. Hence, "[...] attempting to behave like a native may not achieve the same effect as being a true native" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 13).

2.4 Suggested solutions for creating a social network

Overall, the literature on expatriate adjustment has "[...] been expatriate-centric in discussing the adjustment process. Typically, the responsibility to adjust successfully to the expatriate assignment belonged primarily to the expatriate and factors associated with him or her [...]" (Toh, DeNisi & Leonardelli, 2012, p. 234). However, as mentioned above, social interactions between HCNs and expatriates have been found to be beneficial for the expatriate's adjustment.

Shifting from a solely expatriate-focus to also include HCNs has practical consequences for companies as "it makes it clear that [organizations] must be concerned about the commitment and performance of *all* its employees - not just the expatriates" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 294). Therefore, the recommendations that have been identified in relevant literature pertain to both expatriates and HCNs. Consequently, Wang & Varma (2018) recommend that companies "[...] should increase the interaction between expatriates and HCNs both during (e.g. work projects) and after (e.g. social events) work" (p. 682). Moreover, Katz & Seifer (1996) suggest that that best way to facilitate socialization is the contingency approach, which entails that "[...] the organization

should take into account the individual situation instead of taking the same approach with everyone" (as cited in Lueke & Svyantek, 2000, p. 389).

Accordingly, Caligiuri & Lazarova (2002) argue that "[...] given the importance of the contact of expatriates with host-national colleagues, organizations could provide training for the host-country nationals [...] (p. 769). Hence, Sappinen (1993) argues "[...] that the first and perhaps most important step in cross-cultural adjustment is awareness, understanding and acceptance of both the home and host culture and the difference between them" (p. 11). Therefore, Caligiuri & Lazarova (2002) and Toh & DeNisis (2012) argue that companies must facilitate training for both expatriates and HCNs in areas such as cross-cultural sensitivity, cultural diversity and communication. It is imperative to also offer training to HCNs as it "[...] may heighten the cultural awareness of host-country nationals and confront their biases and stereotypes (Aycan, 1997a; Florkowski and Fogel, 1999; Vance and Paik, 1995 as cited by Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002, p. 769). In turn, this may positively influence the likelihood of support offered by the HCNs to the expatriates (Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002). Moreover, "[...] expatriates should be made aware of the dissonance they are likely to experience at the workplace [...]" (Bruning, Sonpar & Wang, 2012, p. 449). This can be done by aligning expectations through the use of cross-cultural training as this "[...] provides individuals with useful information for reducing uncertainty associated with the impending international transfer and for forming accurate expectations about living and working in the prospective host country" (Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991, p. 306)

In addition, hereto, Takeuchi, Wang, Marinova and Yao (2009) argue that most studies "[…] assume that HCN ties are voluntary, which may not be the case" (as cited in Bruning, Sonpar & Wang, 2012, pp. 444-445). Therefore, the second recommendation emphasized in the literature is to create incentives for HCNs to socialize with expatriates. Toh & DeNisi (2007) emphasize that "[...] where organizational incentives are available for helping, HCNs are more motivated to engage in socializing behaviors" (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 290). Consequently, companies can play an important role in facilitating HCN and expat relationships. However, "[...] most socializing behaviors that HCN coworkers, for example, might display would be beyond their call of duty [...]" Toh & DeNisi, 2007, pp. 281-283). Companies must therefore be mindful regarding the "[...] HCNs need to be motivated to play this role, as it is often not in their job descriptions nor are, they formally rewarded for it" (Toh & DeNisi, 2005 as cited in Toh et al., 2012, p. 239). In short, "[...]

HCN employees tend to avoid extra duties" (Zhang & Peltokorpi, 2015, p. 14). However, Toh & DeNisi (2007) argue that:

> There may also be personal rewards for helping expatriates. HCNs may help simply because they want to. HCNs who are interested in developing their international experience could gain from knowledge exchange with incoming expatriates and consequently, will be more willing to develop good relationships with the expatriate (Toh & DeNisi, 2007, p. 290).

When HCNs decide to engage in social interactions with expatriates without any formal incentives it is labelled organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). OCB "refers to anything that employees choose to do, spontaneously and of their own accord, which often lies outside of their specified contractual obligations" (Thiruvenkadam & Durairaj, 2017, p. 46).

2.5 Gap in the literature

In sum, expatriate adjustment has been found to be multifaceted with interaction adjustment being an important factor for an expatriate's overall adjustment success. Several actors play an important role in helping expatriates in their adjustment, but especially HCNs have been found to play a pivotal role in helping expatriates with both instrumental, emotional and informational support. However, "[...] there has been little attention paid to understanding the role of HCNs in the expatriate adjustment process [...]" (Toh et al., 2012, p. 235). Consequently, only "few studies have actually examined HCNs in the context of expatriate assignments" (Toh et al., 2012, p. 235).

Researchers Wang & Varma (2018) encourage "[...] future research to consider the effects of both expatriate-HCN interactions at work and outside work" (p. 682). Therefore, factors that influence the adjustment process of expatriates may unlock the retention potential "[...] as various measures of cultural adjustment affect job performance, job satisfaction, premature withdrawal from the assignment and quality of life (Aryee and Stone 1996; Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer and Luk 2005; Harrison and Shaffer 2005, as cited in Friedman, Dyke & Murphy, 2009, p. 253).

Moreover, the literature reviewed neglected to offer country-specific advice on how to improve the interaction adjustment process for expatriates in Denmark. The studies found during the preparation for this literature review seemed to be limited in the sense that they are context-bound to a certain

degree by the countries that they examined. Therefore, "future studies can show to what extent the findings are generalizable to other contexts" (Rodríguez & Yepes, 2018 p. 95). As previously mentioned, Denmark has consistently ranked as one of the lowest countries in the world in categories relating to building social networks and adjustment of expatriates. Therefore, this is an important area to explore further to help the adjustment of expatriates located in Denmark.

2.6 Summary

This literature review outlined key findings relating to the adjustment process of international employees in host countries. Previously, literature within this field has primarily focused on expatriate adjustment, which was found to also influence the retention of expatriates. Within the expatriate adjustment process, three types of adjustment were identified; work adjustment, general adjustment and interaction adjustment. Moreover, an emerging trend in literature was identified; the expatriate's social network and how it may positively influence the adjustment process. From the literature review, it became clear that one of the most critical determiners of adjustment was related to socializing with HCNs as this interaction was found to support all three dimensions of adjustment.

However, several barriers to creating relationships between expatriates and HCNs were found. The barriers that had received most attention in previous literature centered on the duration of the expatriate's stay, how in-groups and out-groups were formed based on salient characteristics, HCL proficiency and the role of personality. Yet, current literature only presented few recommendations for bridging these barriers; to go beyond the current expatriate-focus and include all employees in relation to e.g. cross-cultural training as well as how incentives should be created to increase interactions between expatriates and HCNs.

Ultimately, it became clear that little attention was paid to the role of HCNs and consequently, only a limited number of studies have examined its significance. Moreover, the studies found during the literature review of previous research on HCL were limited to Germany and China as host countries. Accordingly, this thesis seeks to fill the gap in literature by examining factors that affect how international employees build social networks in Denmark whilst investigating which role the HCNs play in the process.

METHODOLOGY

03 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter introduces the methodological approach to the research undertaken in this thesis; hence this section explains the methodological considerations in relation to the collection of empirical data for analysis. Furthermore, the methodological approaches taken in this thesis are outlined to ensure visibility of the research process. Although the data collected for this thesis provides the foundation for analysis, it is necessary to understand the theory behind the scientific stances made, which influence how the empirical data collection is interpreted (Thurén, 2010).

3.1 The research onion

The following methodological insights are presented in the sequence dictated by the model, *the research onion.* The different layers are illustrated in Figure 2 and will be peeled back to reveal how the scientific choices impact the data collection and data analysis.
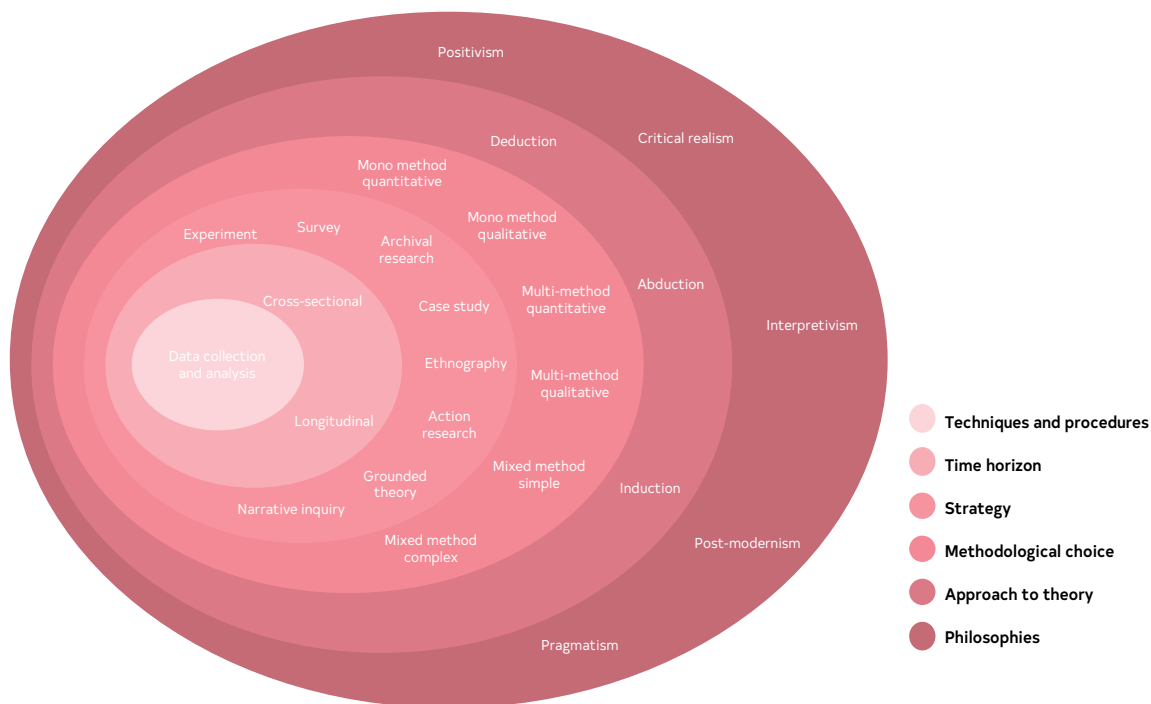

Figure 2. The Research Onion
Source: Adapted from *Research Methods for Business Students*, 2016. Saunders, M., Lewis, P. & Thornhill, A. (2016).

Philosophy of science

In any academic research, the research design is imperative as "it is the link between the research issues, the theories, the methods, and the results of the project" (Kuada, 2012, p. 55). An imperative aspect of this link is the paradigmatic grounding of the project, as it strongly influences the overall strategy of the project (Kuada, 2012). In research texts, paradigms have received varied attention, and "the role of the paradigm can, therefore, appear somewhat mysterious" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 1). Yet, the choice of paradigm "[...] influences the way knowledge is studied and interpreted" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 194). Although some researchers are reluctant to nominate a paradigm as the first step, without it "there is no basis for subsequent choices regarding methodology, methods, literature or research design" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 194).

The social science paradigm, interpretivism, has been chosen for this study as it is typically used in management and business research "[...] to generate fresh insights into real-life issues and problems" (Burrell & Morgan, 1982; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 119). The interpretivist philosophy adopts an empathetic stance and seeks to understand the world from the view of the research subjects by entering their social world (Saunders et al., 2009). This entails that the interpretivist researcher relies on how the research subjects present the studied phenomenon. Generally, interpretivists do not base their research on a pre-existing theory (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Instead they seek to inductively develop patterns of meanings during the research process (Creswell, 2003). The overarching term, research philosophy, reflects the "[...] assumptions about the way in which you view the world" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108). Consequently, a critical approach is taken towards the positivist traditions as this thesis operates with the belief that rich insights into this complex, social world of business and management are lost if "[...] such complexity is reduced entirely to a series of law-like generalisations" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116). In part, the philosophy adopted in this thesis will also be impacted by practical considerations, which will be elaborated upon below.

Approach to theory development

When peeling back the next layer of *the research onion* the researchers need to decide on the approach to theory development. This thesis adopts an inductive approach to research, where "[...] the researcher begins with as open a mind and as few preconceptions as possible [...]" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 104). Whereas positivist approaches often test pre-formulated hypotheses, one of the

distinguishing features of the interpretivist approach "[...] is its reluctance to enter the hypothetico-deductive paradigm [...] because there is a recognition that the researcher influences the research and because the research is much more open and emergent in qualitative approaches" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 173). Therefore, researchers pursuing an inductive approach should aim to voluntarily free themselves of "[...] all prior knowledge and even dispense with prior reading of theoretical and empirical studies in their subject area, in order to embark upon the research field in as unprejudiced a way as possible" (Meinefeld, 2004, as cited in Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke 2004, p. 154).

Methodological choice

The interpretivist researcher typically relies on qualitative data collection methods and analysis. However, "[...] quantitative data may be utilised in a way, which supports or expands upon qualitative data and effectively deepens the description" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 3). Accordingly, many business and management related research studies typically combine quantitative and qualitative elements (Saunders et al., 2016). To accommodate the interpretivist approach in a research study, "[...] researchers may, for example, use quantitative analysis of officially published data followed by qualitative research methods to explore perceptions" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010 as cited in Saunders et al., 2016, p. 169). This thesis makes use of both quantitative and qualitative data to explain the richness and complexity of human behavior more fully by studying it from more than a single perspective. Research methods function as filters that affect how the environment is selectively experienced, which consequently entails that no one method provides a neutral representation of the world (Cohen et. al, 2007). Therefore, if the researcher chooses to solely rely on one method, the researcher may become biased and the way in which the findings are perceived may be distorted. To avoid this, "the researcher needs to be confident that the data generated are not simply artefacts of one specific method of collection" (Lin, 1976 as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 141). Hence, if different methods yield substantially the same results, such confidence is achieved (Cohen et al., 2007).

Strategy

The research strategy, ethnography, is chosen for this research study as it "[...] is rooted firmly in the inductive approach" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 149). Although, this particular research strategy is not dominant within the field of business, "[...] ethnography may be very appropriate if you wish to

gain insights about a particular context and better understand and interpret it from the perspective(s) of those involved" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 150). At the core of employing the strategy of ethnography is the aim "[...] to understand another way of life from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Accordingly, ethnographers utilize what people say in the pursuit of describing their culture, hence "rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people" (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). Ethnographers make cultural inferences in their field work from three sources: "(1) from what people say; (2) from the way people act; and (3) from the artifacts people use" (Spradley, 1979, p. 8). Yet, language is considered the primary vehicle for transmitting culture, as both tacit and explicit culture is encoded in linguistic form (Spradley, 1979). Correspondingly, language is not only a means of communication about reality; it is also a means of constructing reality (Spradley, 1979). However, in our complex society, ethnographers "[...] must recognize the existence of subtle but important language differences" (Spradley, 1979, p. 19). Thus, different languages are used as tools to create and express different realities (Spradley, 1979). Ergo, people from different groups may observe the same event but have drastically different interpretations of it (Spradley, 1979). In societies that are multicultural, subcultures and ethnic groups sometimes speak different languages, whether they are bilingual or merely use a different dialect of the same national language (Spradley, 1979). Ethnography yields empirical data that allow "[...] us to see alternative realities and modify our culture-bound theories of human behavior" (Spradley, 1979, p. 13). The principal task of ethnography is, hence, cultural descriptions that facilitate the understanding of the human species (Spradley, 1979).

Time horizon

The methodological choice in a research project typically influences the selection of an appropriate time horizon (Saunders et al., 2009). As with most academic research projects, the time available to complete the project is naturally constrained (Saunders et al., 2009). This thesis aims to be "[...] the study of a particular phenomenon (or phenomena) at a particular time" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 155), and is therefore considered cross-sectional. Accordingly, "[...] cross-sectional studies provide a 'snapshot' of the outcome and the characteristics associated with it, at a specific point in time" (Levin, 2006, p. 24). Consequently, this thesis is based on interviews that have been conducted over a relatively short period of time. However, to support the findings yielded from the snapshot of the interviews, secondary quantitative data will be integrated in the analysis.

Techniques and procedures of data collection

Social scientists utilize many different data collection strategies to collect empirical data (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Within qualitative research design, the data collection strategy "[...] typically involves collecting a large amount of data on a rather small, purposive sample, using techniques such as in-depth interviews [...]" (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). Accordingly, this section will focus on the collection of all of the data collected for this thesis, also referred to as the data corpus of the research. Researchers distinguish between primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data is "[...] collected for the specific research problem at hand, using procedures that fit the research problem best" (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 593). Accordingly, collecting primary data adds to the existing store of social knowledge. Secondary data, on the other hand, is data that is collected by other researchers and then made available to the general research community for reuse (Hox & Boeije, 2005). Therefore, when integrating either qualitative or quantitative secondary data in a research project "[...] differences in definitions, classifications, and concepts among studies may have an impact on the reusability of the data" (Hox & Boeije, 2005, p. 598).

3.2 Primary data collection

In this thesis, the primary sources of data consist of 26 interviews conducted between 2 February and 30 March, 2019. Saunders et al. (2016) defines the research interview as "[...] a purposeful conversation between two or more people, requiring the interviewer to establish rapport and ask concise and unambiguous question, to which the interviewee is willing to respond, and listen attentively" (p. 388). Collecting data using interviews can help the researcher "[...] gather valid and reliable data that are relevant to your research question and objectives" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 388). Below details regarding the sample will be elaborated upon.

Sampling strategy

A sampling strategy is concerned with how informants for a study are selected. An informant can be defined as any "[...] human beings with problems, concerns, and interests" (Spradley, 1979, p. 34). Together with the ethnographer, the informants enable the production of cultural descriptions (Spradley, 1979).

Overall, research sampling strategies can be divided into two categories; probability or non-probability (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 102). A probability sampling strategy draws a random sample

from the wider population and is useful "[..] if the researcher wishes to be able to make generalizations, because it seeks representativeness of the wider population" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 110). However, when choosing a non-probability sampling strategy "[...] the researcher has deliberately - purposely - selected a particular section of the wider population to include in or exclude form the sample" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 110).

A purposive sampling strategy is often utilized in small-scale research, which "[…] is frequently the case for some ethnographic research [...]" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 113). Accordingly, this research study adopts a purposive sampling strategy. Purposive sampling can have different nuances, but common for all is that "[...] participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective" (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006, p. 61). Consequently, "[...] purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people', i.e. those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues [...]" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 115).

For this thesis, a maximum variation sampling strategy, also commonly referred to as heterogeneous sampling, was chosen. This strategy entails "[...] selecting cases from as diverse a population as possible in order to ensure strength and richness to the data, their applicability and their interpretation" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 115). Selecting informants using this strategy is based on the researcher's "[...] judgment to choose particular participants with sufficiently diverse characteristics to provide maximum variation possible in the data collected" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 301).

Defining the sample

Saunders et al., 2016 state that "the sample selected is related to the population that is highlighted in the research question and objectives" (p. 275). This entails defining the overall population of which the research is centered on. However, "[...] such populations may be difficult to research as not all elements or cases may be known to the researcher or easy to access" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 275). Therefore, researchers must define a subset of the population also known as the target population. For this research study, the target population is international and Danish employees working in international teams in the Copenhagen area. The next step is then to draw a sample from the specific target population. This entails selecting individuals who will make good informants and choosing an appropriate sample size (Saunders et. al., 2016).

Selecting good informants

Spradley (1979) argues that "although almost anyone can become an informant, not everyone makes a good informant" (p. 45). Moreover, he argues that a good informant will help the ethnographer learn about the informant's culture and sets out various requirements for selecting good informants. As a guiding rule, "[...] an informant should have at least of year of full-time involvement in a cultural scene" (Spradley, 1979, p. 48). Therefore, the first criteria for informants participating in this study is that they should have been in Denmark for minimum one year in order for them to be thoroughly enculturated. The second criterion is that informants must be currently involved in the cultural scene studied. Spradley (1979) argues that "the ethnographer wants to interview people who have expert knowledge, informants who have first-hand, current involvements in the cultural scene" (Spradley, 1979, p. 49). The reason for this is that "when people are currently involved in a cultural scene, they use their knowledge to guide their actions" (Spradley, 1979, p. 48). Consequently, informants for this study were all currently living and working in Denmark. As "informants who leave a cultural scene forget the details and can only remember general outlines of the activities that went on" (Spradley, 1979, p. 49), individuals who had left Denmark were not chosen as informants for this thesis. Thirdly, "[...] many ethnographers begin their ethnographic studies on cultures very different from their own" (Spradley, 1979, p. 50). Therefore, the unfamiliar cultural scene being studied in this thesis centers on the experiences of full-time employees working in international teams, both international and Danish employees. Accordingly, both researchers are business university students without full-time experience working in international teams and do not have personal experiences with expatriation in Denmark, as both researchers are Danish citizens. However, it is acknowledged that the researchers by virtue of their experiences as business students are not completely new to the cultural scene that is being explored. The fourth criterion is that when choosing good informants "[...] high priority should be given to someone who has adequate time for the research" (Spradley, 1979, p. 52). Furthermore, Saunders et al. (2016) argue that when expectations about the amount of time required have been established clearly and when informants understand the objective of the study, they are generally willing to be interviewed and generous with their time. Therefore, several precautions were taken to impose as little as possible in the lives of the informants. When selecting the location for the interviews it is important to make sure that "the location should be convenient for your participants, where they will feel comfortable and where the interview is unlikely to be disturbed" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 403). Accordingly, upon the informant's confirmation of willingness to participate, the interviews

were arranged to be held at the interviewees' preferred location and convenience. To suit the informant's schedules, the interviews were set to be maximum one hour. Moreover, most interviews took place at the informants' workplace. Finally, all informants were briefed about the overall subject prior to the interview and were informed that they did not have to prepare anything for the interview.

Sample size

Whereas calculating the sample size for a probabilistic sample strategy is generally straightforward, no rules exist when it comes to determining the sample for size for a non-probability sampling strategy (Guest et al., 2006). However, as a rule of thumb "in ethnographic or qualitative research it is more likely that the sample size will be small" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 102). Yet, different scholars have argued for different minimum sample sizes. Bernard (2000, as cited in Guest et al., 2006) argues that ethnographic studies should be based on 30-60 interviews, whereas Bertaux (1981 as cited in Guest et al., 2006) argues that 15 interviews should be considered the smallest acceptable sample size. Hence, a multitude of different suggestions for the adequate sample size exist. To address the issue of determining the sample size, research textbooks recommend continuing data collection until data saturation is reached; "[...] in other words until the data collected provide little, if any, new information or suggest new themes" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 297).

To ensure maximum variation within the defined research area the sampled informants were chosen to represent different characteristics, such as variations in ages, company details, sectors, reasons for moving, nationalities and positions. Consequently, for this thesis, a total number of 26 informants were interviewed: 20 of them were international employees and 6 were Danish employees (see Table 1 and Table 2 for an overview of interviewees). The division between international and Danish employees is an expression of the fact that saturation was reached faster with the Danish interviewees.

The interviewees selected for the sample were, as a result of the maximum variation sampling strategy, citizens from China, United States, Italy, Denmark, Maldives, Belgium, Argentina, Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Malaysia, Germany, Holland, Sri Lanka, India, Israel & Canada (as illustrated in Figure 3).

20
International employees

06
Danish employees

16
Nationalities

Figure 3. Nationalities of the sample
Source: own creation

OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWEES (1/2)

Interviewee	Industry	Gender	Kids	Duration of stay	Reason for moving	Status	Danish partner
A	Pharma	Female	Yes	5 years	Job	Married	No
B	Pharma	Male	Yes	6 years	Job	Married	No
C	Pharma	Female	No	1,5 years	Job and boyfriend	In a relationship	Yes
D	Humanitarian	Female	Yes	5 years	Job	Married	No
E	Humanitarian	Male	No	4 years	Study	In a relationship	Yes
F	Pharma	Female	Unknown	N/A	N/A	Unknown	Unknown
G	Energy Equipment	Female	Yes	10 years	Job	Married	No
H	IT Solutions	Female	No	10 years	Job	Unknown	Unknown
I	IT Solutions	Male	No	16 years	Job	Married	No
J	IT Solutions	Male	Yes	N/A	N/A	Married	Unknown
K	Energy	Female	No	1 year	Job	Single	N/A
L	Hearing Aid Solutions	Male	Yes	4 years	Study	Married	No
M	Hearing Aid Solutions	Female	Yes	20 years	Job	Married	Yes
N	Engineering	Male	Yes	5 years	Job	Married	No
O	IT Solutions	Female	No	17 years	Job	Married	No
P	IT Solutions	Male	No	N/A	N/A	In a relationship	No

International employee
Danish employee

Table 1. Overview of interviewees
Source: own creation

OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWEES (2/2)

Interviewee	Industry	Gender	Kids	Duration of stay	Reason for moving	Status	Danish partner
Q	IT Solutions	Female	Yes	2 years	Job	Married	No
R	Shipping	Male	No	1 year	Job	In a relationship	No
S	Shipping	Male	No	1 year	Job	Married	No
T	Consulting	Male	No	4 years	Study	Single	N/A
U	IT Solutions	Male	Yes	N/A	N/A	Married	Yes
V	IT Solutions	Female	No	7 years	Job	In a relationship	Yes
W	Consulting	Female	No	3 years	Study	In a relationship	Yes
X	Energy Equipment	Male	Yes	N/A	N/A	Married	Yes
Y	Educational Services	Male	Yes	N/A	N/A	Married	Yes
Z	Energy Equipment	Female	Yes	13 years	Love	Married	Yes

International employee
Danish employee

Table 2. Overview of interviewees
Source: own creation

Type of interview

The researcher can utilize different styles of interviewing which will to a large extent depend "[...] on the demands of the research, the expectations of the participant, and external circumstances" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 125). However, "most qualitative methods textbooks distinguish structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 125). For this thesis, semi-structured interviews were decided to be appropriate as these provide the researcher with the opportunity to probe for answers where they want the informants to explain their responses. Moreover, "interviewees may use words or ideas in a particular way, and the opportunity to probe these meanings will add significance and depth to the data you obtain" (Saunders et al, 2016, p. 394). This type of interview also opens up the conversation to discuss areas that had not previously been considered by the researchers but may be significant to address to answer the research objectives (Saunders et al, 2016).

Interview guides

To conduct the semi-structured interviews, two interview guides were created; one with guiding questions for the international employees and one for the Danish employees. This distinction was made in an effort to provide insights into the different experiences they may have from working in international teams. The questions prepared in the interview guides were open-ended questions which centered on aspects, such as their current place of employment, their social networks and the process of settling in. Open-ended questions were prepared as they encourage answers that can generate relevant information (Saunders et al., 2009). An example of one of the questions asked to international employees includes: "Could you describe what, if anything, your company does to help employees who are not from Denmark?" (Appendix 1b), whereas questions for the Danish employees included questions such as: "Could you tell us about a time where someone not from Denmark joined your team?" (Appendix 1a). As evident in the interview guides, more general questions were asked in the initial phase of the interview as "the most important thing is to get informants talking" (Spradley, 1979, p. 80). For a complete overview of the questions included in the interview guides, please see Appendix 1a and Appendix 1b.

The first drafts of the interview guides were tested by the researchers by interviewing each other. After having revised the interview questions, several pilots were held to ensure that the new

interview guides would yield meaningful responses and that the questions were easily understandable.

Ethical considerations

To ensure that the ethical rights of the informants were protected, various ethical aspects of collecting the primary data were considered. Spradley (1979) sets out several ethical principles that can be used as guidelines when conducting ethnographic interviews: consider informants first, safeguard the informants' rights, interest and sensitivities, communicate research objectives, protect the privacy of informants, do not exploit informants and make reports available to informants. These aspects were safeguarded by communicating the research objectives to all informants prior to interviewing them and preparing a consent form that was signed by the informants (see Appendix 4). Moreover, the identities of the informants have been anonymized in the written versions of the interviews by removing names of the interviewees, names of colleagues, company names, department details, information relating to the informant's nationality and other identifiable details that were shared by the interviewees. Additionally, this thesis will only include the transcribed versions of the interviews to ensure that the anonymity of the informants is protected. The audio files upon which the transcribed interviews are based will be deleted after the submission and grading of the thesis. Ultimately, all informants were offered to either receive the full thesis or a short summary of the main findings.

Expert interview

For this research study, Linda Duncan Wendelboe, Head of Global Talent in the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), was interviewed (Appendix 3a). DI's Global Talent department works to ensure that Danish companies can attract and retain highly skilled international employees in Denmark (Dansk Industri, n.d., b). Expert interviews are a method of qualitative empirical research that is designed to specifically explore expert knowledge. Expert knowledge is characterized by being influential within a specific area of research. It is the researcher that ascribes the expert status to the role of their informant (Meuser & Nagel, 2009). Therefore, Linda Duncan Wendelboe was considered as an expert within the field of talent attraction and retention in Denmark. As, the literature review did not offer any Denmark-specific research findings within this field, an expert interview was considered necessary to triangulate and the findings of the study.

3.3 Secondary data collection

Answering a research question within the field of business and management research, will often require using multiple data sources (Saunders et al., 2016). The secondary data can either be raw data without little, if any, processing or compiled data which has been selected or summarized in some form (Saunders et al., 2009). The secondary data sources applied in this thesis are all summarized to some extent and are therefore considered to be compiled data. When including secondary sources in the analysis, undertaking longitudinal studies become feasible as the time constraints for many research projects only permit cross-sectional studies (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, the comparison of data that the researchers have collected with secondary data can be very useful, as the new findings can be placed "[...] within a more general context or, alternatively, triangulate your findings [...]" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 269).

The Expat Study

The secondary data applied in this thesis includes the written report *The Expat Study,* which is considered a continuous and regular survey. In this survey type, data is collected throughout the years and repeated at regular intervals. Having "[...] regular survey data provide useful resource with which to compare or set in context your own research findings from primary data" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 322).

The Expat Study was published in 2010 and 2014 respectively. The Expat Study 2010 was conducted by Oxford Research and The Copenhagen Post, and The Expat Study 2014 was conducted only by Oxford Research. Both reports were included in the analysis, as small variations in the factors that they examine exist. The 2014 report presents "[...] data from a questionnaire survey conducted among approximately 1,800 highly skilled expatriates who live and work in Denmark" (Oxford Research, 2014), whereas the 2010 report was conducted among 1,505 expats living and working in Denmark (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010). The Expat Study reports have also been published in 1998 and 2006, however, only the two most recent studies have been included as they reflect the newest tendencies in Denmark within the expat community. The Expat Study examines how expats in Denmark perceive their lives and the underlying reasons for their perceptions of life in Denmark. The reports are created to allow "[...] stakeholders within the expat field to assess how the attractions and retention of highly skilled expats has progressed [...] and identify and address potential areas for improvements" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 4).

The Expat Study yields "[...] the most solid knowledge to date on the expats who have actively chosen Denmark and as such are able to evaluate Denmark as a country to work and live in" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 4). Accordingly, the aim of the Expat Study reports is to "[...] assess the qualities of Denmark as a place to work and live for the foreign knowledge workers who are so important for the future competitiveness of Danish business and industry" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 7). The Expat Study will serve as the quantitative data element to support the qualitative findings yielded from the interviews to enable data triangulation.

3.4 Data analysis

When analyzing ethnographic interviews, it is pivotal that the researcher is mindful of the fact that "[...] every ethnographic description is a translation" (Spradley, 1979, p. 22). This means that the end-product of conducting ethnography is considered as a description of the cultural scenes that have been studied (Spradley, 1979). Hence, the findings of the ethnographic interviews are dependent of the researcher, as they are an expression of the researcher's translation competences.

In general terms, "[...] ethnography is about exploring, uncovering, and making explicit the detailed interactive and structural fabric of the social settings that social researchers suspect to be sociologically interesting" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 14). Therefore, the researchers should approach their study with a naive and almost childlike perspective. Accordingly, when adopting an inductive approach to research, the researcher must be openminded (O'Reilly, 2009). Thus, in the analysis hereof, the research transitions from the childlike perspective in gradually becoming more like a detective "[...] systematically sifting through very general evidence, looking for clues and reflecting on their significance" (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 15). In ethnographic research, the researcher aims to uncover why people act and talk about the things that they do (O'Reilly, 2009). Albeit the analytic goals of such research may vary, they include derivation of generalizations through inductive and inferential logic (Van Maanen, 2011).

Step 1: Transcribing qualitative data

The process of transcribing interviews "[...] involves translating from an oral language, with its own set of rules, to a written language with another set of rules" (Kvale, 2011, p. 98). Although the interview is a live social interaction, the tone of voice and bodily expressions are not accessible to

the readers of the transcripts. Hence, transcripts are interpretive constructions which are useful tools for various purposes and not copies of representations of original realities.

There are few standard rules in relation to the transcription process from audio recording to text, which involves technical and interpretational issues, particularly with verbatim versus written style (Kvale, 2011). However, Kvale (2011) argues that researchers must "[...] state explicitly in the report how the transcriptions were made" (p. 95). This could be in relation to whether the interviews are transcribed word by word, whether pauses are included or whether the interviews are transformed into a formal written style. These choices are dependent on the use of the transcripts i.e. the way that the data will be analyzed (Kvale, 2011).

The interviews conducted for this thesis were audio-recorded. To ensure that the researchers and interviewees were able to focus on the process of the interview rather than the audio-recorder, a small, discrete digital audio-recorder was used. Audio-recordings allow the most precise replication of what is said during interviews and was, therefore, decided to be the most beneficial tool to enable data analysis. Pauses and nonverbal communication were not included in the transcriptions, as the focus in this study is on the themes and factors mentioned by the informants rather than linguistic and behavioral elements of the interview. Although the transcription of interviews is a very time consuming process, it is argued that "[...] the time spent in transcription is not wasted, as it informs the early stages of analysis, and [the researchers] will develop a far more thorough understanding of [the] data through having transcribed it" (Apadat and Lindsay, 1999, as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). Ultimately, "transcribing the interviews from an oral to a written mode structures the interview conversation in a form amenable to closer analysis and is in itself an initial analysis" (Kvale, 2011, p. 94). Although the informants shared many valuable insights during the time that the interviews were being recorded, additional details were shared before and after the recordings. These were, however, not captured by the audio-recordings and hence are not included in the transcriptions nor the thesis.

Anonymity

An ethical consideration relating to the transcription of the interviews pertains to the anonymizations of the interviewees. Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger (2015) argue that "anonymity is one form of confidentiality - that of keeping participants' identities secret" (p. 617). However, as

"[...] the primary researcher knows who participants are, true anonymity is by definition never achievable, i.e., there will always be at least one person with access to participant information" (Scott, 2005, as cited in Saunders et al., 2015, p. 617).

Saunders et al. (2015) state that "[...] anonymising is not, in practice, something that can be done on automatic pilot with a 'one size fits all' or 'find and replace' approach [...]" (p. 617). However, as a first step in anonymizing data, "many official ethics guidelines recommend disguising the personal identities of research participants [...]" (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 617). This includes The British Sociological Association which advise that "[...] methods for preserving anonymity should be used including the removal of identifiers, the use of pseudonyms and other technical means for breaking the link between data and identifiable individuals" (British Sociological Association, 2002, p. 5). In accordance herewith, the following identifiers have been removed: names of informants, names of colleagues, names of family members, names of companies, names of cities and countries of origin, job titles and departments as well as religious and cultural signifiers and artefacts. In the transcriptions, the beforementioned identifiers have been replaced with generic terms and all interviewee names have been replaced with letters from the alphabet.

However, anonymization is a balance between protecting the rights and identities of the informants while maintaining the value and integrity of the collected data (Saunders et al., 2015). Therefore, enough information to illustrate the maximum variation strategy has been included and made available to readers of this thesis while preventing compromising the identities of the informants. Yet, it should be noted that anonymization is an ongoing process of compromising at times leading to "[...] sacrifice some of the integrity of the data in order to maximise anonymity and other times we may have risked compromising anonymity in order to maintain the integrity of the data" (Saunders et al., 2015, p. 627). Therefore, to balance this while ensuring anonymization, the overview of the interviewees (Table 1 and Table 2) do not include national identifiers, as most interviewees worked in small and highly specialized teams. Instead, nationalities were illustrated in Figure 3 to provide an overview of how maximum variation had been ensured.

When referencing the transcribed interviews in the analysis and discussion, the interviewees will be cited using the letter that they have been assigned. The expert interview with Linda Duncan

Wendelboe is stored as Appendix 3a, whereas the rest of the interviews are available in Appendix 2a-2z. All transcriptions can be found on the attached USB stick.

Step 2: Thematic analysis

After having transcribed and anonymized the interviews, the next step involves data analysis. Approaches to analyzing qualitative data are diverse, complex and nuanced. One of the research techniques that are used to make replicable and valid inferences from data is content analysis (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Although, "the content analytic method is appealing because it offers a model for systematic qualitative analysis with clear procedures for checking the quality of the analysis conducted" (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 57), this analytic method relies exclusively on frequency outcomes.

Therefore, in order to avoid removing meaning from its context, thematic analysis has been employed in this research study. Thematic analysis offers "[...] the systematic element characteristic of content analysis, but also permits the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning *in context*, thus adding the advantages of the subtlety and complexity of a truly qualitative analysis" (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 57). Hence, "[...] thematic analysis should be seen as a foundational method for qualitative analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Thematic analysis offers several benefits, and flexibility is one of the them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Through the theoretical freedom of thematic analysis, a flexible and incredibly useful research tool is provided, "[...] which can provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78).

The method of thematic analysis is employed in this thesis to identify, analyze and report patterns, or themes, within a data set. Yet, more often than not, this method goes beyond this and interprets various aspects of the topic being researched. Although, thematic analysis is considered a generic approach for analyzing qualitative data, "[...] there is no clear agreement about what thematic analysis is and how you go about doing it" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79).

The process of thematic analysis begins when the researcher starts to "[...] notice, and look for, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data - this may be during data collection" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86). Thematic analysis does not occur in a simple linear progression, but

is instead concurrent and circular (Saunders et al., 2016). Accordingly, through the phases of thematic analysis, the researcher constantly moves back and forth "[...] between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86).

Thematic analysis involves six phases of analysis: becoming familiarized with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and finally producing the report.

The initial phase in thematic analysis includes becoming familiar with the data as transcripts of the interviews are produced, as outlined above (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Moreover, this phase includes reading and re-reading the data set. Accordingly, the transcripts are initially examined after anonymization to discover meaning and recurring themes and patterns. Once the researcher has become familiarized with the transcripts, an initial list of ideas regarding the reviewed data is compiled. In the second phase, initial codes are produced from the transcripts. Such *codes* are used to "[...] identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst, and refer to 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way [...]" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The coding performed in this thesis was performed using a software program called Dedoose, "a cross-platform app for analyzing qualitative and mixed methods research with text [...]" (Dedoose, n.d.). Once the data has been initially coded and collated, the third phase begins. In this third phase, the codes are then sorted into potential themes and collating the relevant coded data extracts within these themes. At this phase, the researcher combines codes to create overarching themes. Some of the initial codes may constitute main themes, whereas other codes may form sub-themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Creating thematic categories is essential because "[...] without thematic categories, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 86). The fourth phase takes its point of departure in the sub-themes that were identified in the prior phase, based on the coded extracts of data. This phase reviews and refines those themes in order to create themes that adequately capture data that has been coded to create a 'thematic map' (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second level of this phase involves the data set in its entirety. The validity of individual themes in relation to the data set are considered as well as whether the thematic map based on the themes so far is an accurate representation of "[...] the meanings that are evident in the

data set as a whole" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). The entire data set is thus re-read for two purposes; to ascertain whether the themes match the data set and whether any themes have been omitted in the early coding stages (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Finally, once the ongoing analysis has been finalized and the themes have been refined, the findings of the interviews are related back to the analysis of the research question and relevant literature to produce a scholarly report of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.5 Methodological limitations

Regardless of the methodological choices made in a research study, some limitations to these choices will exist as "no one procedure or method can provide a complete description" (Hoyle, Harris & Judd, 2002, p. 1). This section seeks to outline potential strengths and weaknesses of the methodological implications of the study.

Saunders et al. (2016) stipulate three types of potential bias that all researchers must consider when conducting interviews; interviewee/response bias, participation bias and researcher bias. Interviewee bias is concerned with the "[...] comments, tone or non-verbal behaviour of the interviewer [...]" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 397). These factors may create bias in the way the interviewee responds to the questions asked. Interviewee bias may be "[...] caused by interviewee's perception about the interviewer, or perceived interviewer bias" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 397). This bias is often present when conducting semi-structured interviews as these interviewees may "[...] be sensitive to the unstructured exploration of certain themes" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 397). This may result in interviewees choosing not to reveal or disclose certain topics or themes. Hence, interviewee bias can result in interviewees only providing a "[...] partial 'picture' of the situation that casts himself or herself in a 'socially desirable' role, or the organisation for which they work in a positive or even negative fashion" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 397).

Moreover, participation bias is concerned with which informants choose to agree to be interviewed. As an example, "the amount of time required for an interview may result in willingness to take part by some" (Saunders et al. 2016, p. 397). However, this aspect was addressed as a part of the sampling strategy and outlined above.

Thirdly, the findings may be influenced by researcher bias. Because both researchers are Danes, the informants may have been reluctant to share their true feelings about Danes and about their experiences in Denmark if these were negative due to effects of social desirability. However, the overall impression of the informants was that they were very comfortable, open and willing to share their experiences, as many personal stories and in-depth examples were disclosed throughout. Another aspect that can relate to researcher bias is the general critique of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is typically criticized for abstracting "[...] abstracting issues from the way that they appear in life, organising material according to the researcher's sense of how it connects, rather than the inter-relationship of themes in the participant's mind or lifeworld" (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 66). However, the goal of thematic analysis in this thesis is not "[...] to undertake an in-depth analysis of the inter-connections between meanings within one particular narrative" (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 66). Instead, thematic analysis is here used to describe how themes are elaborated on by various informants "[...] and identify meanings that are valid across many participants [...]" (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 66).

Furthermore, conducting ethnographic interviews is a time-consuming process that requires a lot of planning and coordination. Therefore, time is a limiting factor in this thesis as cross-sectional studies are merely snapshots of the analyzed phenomenon where "[...] the situation may provide differing results if another time-frame had been chosen" (Levin, 2006, p. 25). If additional time was available to complete the project, the informants could have been interviewed several times in order to build a deep and trusting relationship between the interviewers and interviewees, which is a key aspect of ethnographic research (Spradley, 1979).

Another limitation relates to reliability of the study. The transparency of research design, research questions, context, findings and how these are interpreted should be offered to allow fellow researchers to design and conduct similar studies, but in a different setting (Saunders et al., 2016). Accordingly, the issue of reliability "[...] in relation to findings derived from using in-depth or semi-structured interviews is that these are not necessarily intended to be repeatable since they reflect reality at the time they were collected, in a situation which may be subject to change" (Saunders et al., 2016, p. 398). Therefore, it is recognized that the findings presented in this thesis may not be yielded by researchers if they were to interview other informants at a different time.

Finally, the issue of validity may affect the collection of empirical data. An example of this, relates to the fact that responses from informants "[...] are inaccurate; memory does decay exponentially with time" (Bernard, Killworth, Kronenfeld, Sailer, 1984, p. 509). Therefore, this type of bias may involve limitations in terms the informants' ability to recall communication and social interactions precisely (Bernard et al., 1984). Yet, one way to minimize the effects of this issue "[...] is to ask informants about conceptual variables like beliefs and attitudes. This is based on the assumption that internal states (belief and attitudes) generate behavior and must be highly correlated with it" (Bernard et al., 1984, p. 505).

3.6 Summary

This chapter aimed to provide an overview of the research design of the project. To structure the methodological choices made, the *research onion* was used. This study adopts an interpretivist philosophical stance to guide the inductive, ethnographic, cross-sectional research study presented in this thesis.

The primary data which will provide the foundation for the analysis is collected using a maximum variation sampling strategy. The empirical data consists of 26 semi-structured interviews, where six of the interviewees are Danish employees working in international teams in Denmark and 20 of the interviewees are international employees. Maximum variation was ensured using the following parameters; industry, gender, having kids, civil status, whether the interviewee has a Danish partner, duration of stay in Denmark, reasons for moving to Denmark and nationality. An expert interview with Linda Duncan Wendelboe, Head of Global Talent for DI, was collected as an additional source of primary data for this study. The secondary data sources for this study was the continuous and regular survey, The Expat Study. This report was published every four years, but only the two most recent reports were included in the analysis. These were included in the analysis to triangulate the findings that the primary sources yielded. Once the data collection was complete and theoretical saturation was reached, the data analysis was conducted. All conducted interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and anonymized. The data then underwent a thematic analysis, supported by the software program Dedoose.

In every research project, certain methodological limitations will exist as no one procedure or method can provide a complete description of a phenomenon. Consequently, limitations of this study pertain to biases related to the interviewees and the researcher.

ANALYSIS

04 ANALYSIS

This section, the findings of the thematic analysis will be presented. The aim with the data analysis is, in accordance with the previously stated research question, to explore the various factors affecting international employees' ability to form social networks in Denmark. Three overarching themes were identified, which are used to structure the factors presented by the interviewees below; societal factors, organizational factors and individual factors. The societal factors provide a broader perspective, which pertains to the Copenhagen area and what opportunities exist to support the adjustment of international employees. The organizational category all relate to factors identified within the companies that the interviewees currently work for, whereas the individual category pertains to factors that are tied concerned with the individual interviewees. The identified factors within each of these categories will subsequently provide the foundation for the discussion of the role that the organization plays and which factors that the organization is able to manipulate to facilitate the creation of social networks. The below figure was created to provide a visual overview of the factors that were identified within each category.
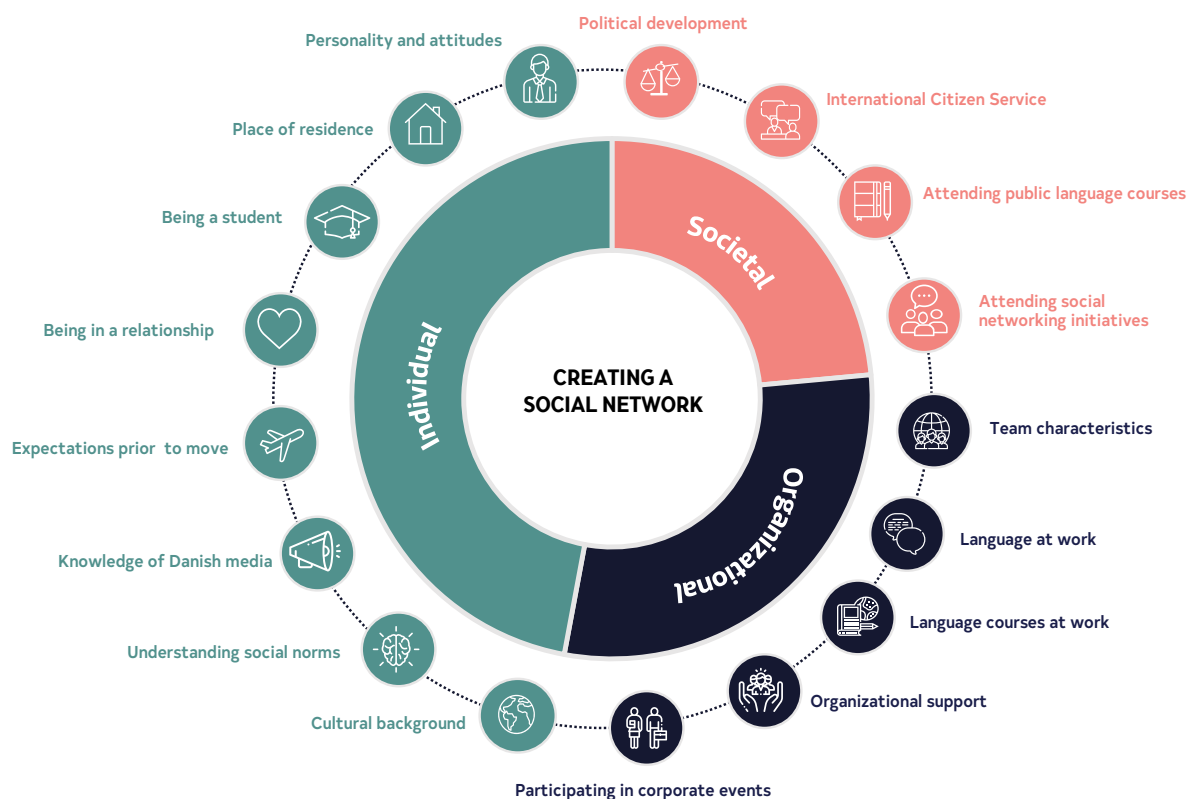

Figure 4. Summary of analysis
Source: own creation

4.1 Societal factors

As mentioned above, the first set of factors that has been identified as having an impact on the international employees' ability to create a social network in Denmark relates to societal factors i.e. factors that the interviewees identified as having an influence on their experiences in Copenhagen outside of working hours. These factors pertain to recent political developments in Denmark and how services offered by municipality institutions have affected the interviewees' ability to create social networks.

Political development

Several interviewees commented on the recent political development in Denmark in relation to how foreigners are currently viewed and portrayed, as this was found to have a significant impact on some of the interviewees' perception of the Danes openness towards them as foreigners. Accordingly, many interviewees saw that the current political debate was tainting their view of Denmark: "I think it's a beautiful country. Your politics are killing it" (Interviewee Q). As mentioned in the literature review, many HCNs are reluctant to form social networks with international employees if they think that they only have plans to stay in the host country in the short-term. Therefore, it can prove problematic if the international employees feel discriminated against, both by the public and in legislation, as these aspects will potentially lead to them leaving the host country prematurely. This was reflected by the interviewees, who felt that the recent developments made it harder to settle down in Denmark:

> "[...] if they do want the highly skilled people to stay in Denmark, I think they need to make it easy for them to kind of settle down here [...] So, I don't know why they want to make it harder, I just don't understand" (Interviewee T).

Another interviewee felt that the ongoing clampdowns on Danish immigration policy reflects that they do whatever is in their power to contribute in a positive way to Danish society, but still do not feel welcome due to the legislation that affects them:

> I think unfortunately a lot of the laws are generic generalized. They affect the general public and I think I've done everything I could to support Denmark since I joined, I paid my taxes,

you know, I don't do any harm and still I'm affected by the Danish laws that are generalizing all the non-EU people instead of looking at me as a person (Interviewee W).

Accordingly, this political progression is considered to be one of the drivers that make international employees not feel welcome in Denmark: "I think in general politics hasn't really helped because I mean it's gotten, gotten worse and worse in Denmark. I mean like, you really don't feel welcomed any more" (Interviewee Q). Other interviewees provide a broader perspective on the issue that they perceive as a general trend that goes beyond Danish borders, but has a direct effect on their daily lives, also at work:

> That is not something that's only happening in the Danish workplace is happening with Danish society, it is happening the Danish Parliament, it's happening in Europe. So basically, all the stereotyping and social racial profiling that's happening in the world is of course present in the workplace (Interviewee L).

Another aspect that the international employees emphasized during the interviews was that they felt that the treatment of foreigners was unfair, as refugees and international employees are often treated the same in Denmark. This unfairness was ascribed to the fact that the interviewees feel that they actively contribute to Danish society: "I should feel a little bit more welcome as well. I don't want to be treated like someone who is trying to take from the system because I give to the system" (Interviewee G). This perception was also recognized by Linda Duncan Wendelboe, who emphasized the inherent benefits of attracting international employees to Denmark, that go beyond the fact that they pay taxes: "They don't draw anything from the public finances, they are educated when they come here, and they just pay taxes and they will leave again before they get old and becomes a liability again" (Wendelboe, 2019).

Despite the benefits that international employees may provide, one of the interviewees shared two episodes in particular where she felt discriminated against because she is foreign. The first episode related to a trip to a public swimming pool where her personal hygiene was questioned by a complete stranger, which she ascribed to her having dark skin and being visibly foreign: "I could last 10 minutes in the swimming pool because I felt unwelcome. I felt dirty. I felt ashamed. So, we left" (Interviewee G). Another episode was experienced at a local pizza shop where a woman yelled

at her for not picking up her pizza fast enough: "And why did she talk to me that way? Is it because of my color? Is it because I look foreign? Is it because I spoke English?" (Interviewee G). This interviewee attributed these episodes to her *non-Danish appearance*: "[...] my husband he doesn't feel this at all. It's because he could pass for a Dane quite easily. So, I think this is what's making me feel maybe it's time to go home" (Interviewee G). In turn, this perceived discrimination against foreigners may potentially serve as a significant barrier to the retention of international employees. As a result, this interviewee felt an immense pressure to always be on her best behavior: "I feel I have to be very, very good because I am a foreigner. I feel if I break any rules, if I get into a fight, or if I get into some kind of trouble, it reflects upon all foreigners" (Interviewee G).

Several factors that influence the international employees' perception of Denmark within recent political discussion were emphasized by the interviewees. These include revised laws for Danish citizenship and permanent residency, A-kasse opportunities and funding for Danish language classes: "I think for Danish the laws, because now the laws are really against immigration. A very good example is the permanent residence" (Interviewee D). This development was recognized both by the Danish and international employees as being dangerous for the integration of international employees: "We can look at history and say the previous couple of attempts we tried at nationalism and closing our borders ended up with world wars. Let's not try that again" (Interviewee Y).

Lastly, even though Interviewee G was the only interviewee to explicitly share episodes of harassment, this issue was also known to and addressed by some of the Danish interviewees: "I know foreigners that are reluctant with the recent years of policy in Denmark. I know that it is stopping some families of coming as they are afraid of being harassed" (Interviewee F).

The International Citizen Service

Although, recent political developments in Denmark were negatively perceived by the interviewees, many government-funded initiatives do exist to support the creation of social networks between international employees and Danes. As stated in the Expat Study "The reception of newly arrived expats play [*sic*] a crucial role in helping them settle into their new lives" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 5). When arriving in Denmark, international employees may have contact with various authorities upon arrival. These include among others the municipality, The Danish Customs and Tax Administration and Danish Immigration Services. However, "International Citizen Services

was especially highlighted positively" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 5). The International Citizen Services (ICSs) represent all authorities that international employees typically need to be in contact with, when moving to and living in Denmark: "By bringing these authorities together in the same building, expats have a one-stop entry to the Danish bureaucracy and eases their communication with the public administration upon arrival in Denmark" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 27). ICS was founded by the Danish government in 2011 to make it easier for international employees to settle down in Denmark. The ICS centers are located in the four largest cities in Denmark; Copenhagen, Aarhus, Odense and Aalborg (Moses, 2018).

In Copenhagen, International House Copenhagen (IHC) is a part of ICS. IHC is "[...] a public-private partnership specialized in the reception and retention of international talent. The objective of the house is to provide international citizens with the best possible start to life in Copenhagen by giving them the comfort of a one-point entry" (International House Copenhagen, 2019a). The IHC offers help with practical matters, such as CPR, tax, EU-registration etc., but most importantly, they offer help with navigating in Danish society as well as offering a multitude of culture and leisure activities (International House Copenhagen, 2019a).

The IHC was brought up by the interviewees, when mentioning an institution that had helped them create a social network in Denmark: "We both were signed up at International House for different courses in order to kind of get some network with people with the same background. So, that helped a lot in the beginning [...]" (Interviewee A). Even though Interviewee A mentions on several occasions that she has received a lot of help from the company that she works for and its relocation agency, she attributed IHC to helping her with several practical matters: "This was also our first place to go whenever we were encountering challenges related to authorities, related to something like tax and housing stuff" (Interviewee A).

Furthermore, Interviewee A explained that IHC offers two types of host programs: The Career Host and the Culture host program. With these programs, IHC seeks to assist international employees coming to Denmark: "Copenhagen Host Program matches newcomers who have been in Denmark for less than 5 years, with local volunteer hosts who speak the Danish language and know about the local community [...]" (International House Copenhagen, 2019b). These initiatives were described as very helpful by the interviewee who had been offered this support: "[...] this was also a great

initiative in terms of when you are new to Denmark and on the Danish labor market" (Interviewee A). Overall, the interviewees that mentioned IHC were satisfied with the help that they had received. However, when asking more about the initiatives it seemed as though they do not work as intended: "I've have gone to the international house where they had like a sports presentation of all the sports facilities or leisure activities like and then you get into this place and it's just, there's nobody there that talks to you" (Interviewee Q).

Yet, in recent years, the standard of services offered by ICS has been significantly impaired due spending cuts (Moses, 2018). This development was also recognized by one of the interviewees: "I actually had very good experiences with the International House. It worked really well. I know that they since have changed the way they work, and I see more complaints" (Interviewee Q).

Attending social networking initiatives

Similar to the activities offered by IHC, Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) has established the organization 'Expat in Denmark' which organizes several networking activities aimed at internationals, including "[...] "Expat Dinners", which give expats and Danes a way to connect over an informal dinner (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 17). These events are created as a shared purpose is necessary when planning activities to build social networks: "What we really see is that you need a purpose to come together around. If you just come together just because you need to be together then it becomes superficial" (Wendelboe, 2019). Additional initiatives include 'Let's meet in Denmark' which is a portal that matches expats and Danes (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010). However, these initiatives, although highlighted in The Expat Study and by Linda Duncan Wendelboe, were not mentioned by any of the interviewees.

Instead, several interviewees mentioned various types of local clubs that they joined in order to create a social network. These initiatives do not specifically target internationals but are available to the public. An example of the vast number and types of clubs that people can join in Denmark was highlighted by, among others, Interviewee N: "Like there's lots of groups for whatever you're into, doing sports, activities or whatever. So, whatever you're into you will find a club to join where you can get involved with meeting and socializing with people". Consequently, several interviewees emphasized that sports clubs were beneficial when wanting to create their own social network in

Denmark: "So, I've decided to go to sport, you know, and not just to the fitness center. I play football for example, just because I thought it was a good way to socialize, you know, and not be dependent on my husband's network" (Interviewee M).

The social aspect of joining these clubs was also recognized by the Danish employees that were interviewed: "I usually say join these clubs [...] That is where you get the network. I find it easier for the expats coming here to network if they have some kind of spare time hobbies [...]" (Interviewee F). Moreover, the interviews showed that although Danes help their international colleagues find these social initiatives, they do not necessarily partake themselves: "[...] if you are Dane, find out, okay, what is interesting for this guy? [...] Then try to find either some other colleague who can take him and show him or her where to go [...] You do not have to involve yourself [...]" (Interviewee J). This view is also reflected by some of the other Danish interviewees: "I do not row with anyone from work, but we do once in a while have a beer" (Interviewee F). Still, the Danes agree that these social initiatives are pivotal to creating a social network in Denmark: "I generally believe that our 'foreningsliv' is the key" (Interviewee J).

However, one of the challenges of joining the local initiatives is related to language barriers as the initiatives are often offered in Danish: "So, I found that a lot of the adult learning classes were in Danish. I did find a couple that were in English [...]" (Interviewee K). This language barrier makes these initiatives seem daunting, however, according to Linda Duncan Wendelboe this is merely a perceived barrier that in reality is easy to overcome:

> Normally, when we talk to sports clubs and associations, they say: "But we don't have everything in English". That's not necessary. If you can just make a small introduction; "This is our sports club. We are doing ice hockey in Esbjerg, for example. You are welcome." Then that is it. Because Danes they speak English very well, so when you just get people in there, it'll work. It doesn't have to be that complicated. You just have to take the first step in English so you can make the introduction, basically (Wendelboe, 2019).

Yet, this is in sharp contrast to the experiences that some of the interviewees shared: "Like, you know, there's all these clubs you can join [...] So, join all of those but yeah, you won't become a part of them until you start speaking Danish" (Interviewee C).

Attending public language courses

As mentioned above, learning the Danish language may ease the participation of these local social initiatives. In general, the Danish language barrier is considered as "[...] an essential factor for expats since it is often highlighted as a reason for leaving Denmark earlier and among the factors that can make the expats stay longer" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 5-6). However, three barriers were identified from the interviews as having an influence on whether international employees sought for and accepted the Danish language courses that were offered to them; money, time, and motivation.

Firstly, money was identified as a factor that played a large role in whether international employees wanted to dedicate their time to language courses. In recent years, language courses had been free to foreigners working in Denmark: "Well, it used to be free up until last year. So, any person who moves here could get three years of free education, but just last year government has changed the rules again, and now you have to pay [...]" (Interviewee V). This development was recognized by multiple interviewees: [...] up until August it was actually somewhat of a very cheap system to learn Danish and now it turned into, still pretty cheap, but you have to pay money" (Interviewee S).

Secondly, the amount of time available to dedicate to language courses were found to vary greatly depending on the interviewees. Some interviewees had made several attempts to learn the language but had difficulties juggling both a full-time job, having a family and the additional hours of language classes: "I've tried so many schools, so many classes. It's not my thing. I can't after working for I don't know many hours and then go to 'Studie Skolen' and sit for another three hours. It's not working" (Interviewee W). Whereas other interviewees, who e.g. did not have children were able to dedicate several hours each week to learning the Danish language: "So, I go to one in the city that I pay for – that's six to eight hours a week" (Interviewee C).

Thirdly, the interviewed international employees working in Denmark exhibited varying degrees of motivation when it came to learn the Danish language. The geographical area where the selected informants live seems to also affect the degree to which they are motivated to learn the Danish language: "I think the majority of Danes can understand and speak English, especially if you're in a big city. If you go outside the city that may be an issue for some people" (Interviewee H). Most interviewees seemed to share the belief that the Danes' English proficiency is greatest in the bigger

cities, such as in Copenhagen: "Any people from zero to sixty-five speaks English, right? [...] At least in Copenhagen [...] I assume most international employees are in the bigger cities or pick an international company" (Interviewee P). Other interviewees also emphasized that living in Copenhagen and using English as a means of communication is easy: "I think it's easy to get around, especially when we talk Copenhagen City [...]" (Interviewee I). Moreover, most found that when working in an international company, where the corporate language is English, taking Danish language courses is not necessary: "[...] I feel like that's not really motivating because in a company like this, which is so international, I am barely speaking Danish" (Interviewee V).

Yet, some interviewees mentioned that they still attended these classes only with the purpose of establishing a social network for themselves: "[...] like I didn't need to learn Danish as I work in an English-speaking work environment. So, I guess when I was going it was more for the social elements than actually learning anything" (Interviewee N). The same view was shared by several of the other interviewees: "Actually, a great place I found to meet with other internationals and make friends has been the language classes, the public language classes" (Interviewee N). Some interviewees even said that they prefer the language courses offered by the Danish municipalities: "I'd rather sign up for the free language courses provided by the commune, where you have more international people and a local teacher [...]" (Interviewee B). Many interviewees also mentioned that they had met some of their current friends from their language courses: "I have a lot of contacts from my time when I came to Denmark when I took Danish classes [...] So, it was a great opportunity to meet all the people. So, I have a lot of contacts of friends from that time" (Interviewee A).

Additionally, interviewees highlighted that learning the Danish language is a great way to become friends with local Danes: "I don't know. You can't expect that people are going to invite you into their culture if you don't speak their language [...]" (Interviewee K). Therefore, learning the Danish language also seems to help the international employees understand the culture and mindset of the local Danes: "I do not need to speak Danish but to understand the culture or to understand the mindset, I should try and learn it" (Interviewee V). The correlation between Danish proficiency and the degree to which international employees tend to socialize with Danes is supported by the findings of The Expat Study which "[...] revealed that the expats who never or rarely meet Danes outside work [...] rate themselves poorly in Danish" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 44).

4.2 Organizational factors

The second set of factors that has been identified as having an impact on the international employees' ability to create a social network in Denmark take place at work i.e. aspects within the organization. Depending on the organization that the interviewees worked for their experiences varied greatly. This was acknowledged by several of the interviewees: "It really depends on which kind of company you work for. Then you will have different experiences. Like now I work in an international company whereas in local Danish companies you might have a totally different experience" (Interviewee D). The organizational factors thus include the differences of which teams you work in, how language is used at work, practical help from the company and social initiatives offered at work to build social networks.

Working in a Danish team

The first factor that affects if social networks are created between international employees and Danes pertains to the degree of internationalization of teams, departments and the broader organization. International and Danish employees that were interviewed came from different teams and organizations. It became evident that the degree of internationalization of the teams that they worked in may vary both across departments and across the broader organization.

Working in a predominantly Danish company appeared to limit the ease with which social networks are created: "[...] I've tried to ask other people who only work in an all Danish company and then they say it's very much like there's not much social interaction" (Interviewee H). Accordingly, the team set-up was also interpreted as affecting the network of the international employees outside of work: "I would say working in a team with people only from Denmark, you don't do a lot of after-hours social things" (Interviewee S). The reason for this was explained by one of the interviewees who ascribed this tendency to the fact that Danes are very busy after working hours and that this affects how they spend their time with their colleagues outside of the office: "[...] this guy only works with Danes and he says that he only has interactions with one of them, a young guy who also has no strings attached but the rest of his team is fully blocked in their calendar after working hours" (Interviewee S).

Likewise, Interviewee Q also mentioned that Danes are busy after the working day has ended, which also limits the frequency of social initiatives: "We can't like go and have a drink on a Friday

evening because everybody makes plans and put their calendar full of stuff" (Interviewee Q). Conversely, Interviewee C ascribed the packed Danish schedule as the major barrier to creating a social network with her colleagues, beyond merely working together: "[...] I think the hardest part is that the Danish people plan so far in advance and like most of the world doesn't do that" (Interviewee C). Moreover, this is mirrored in Interviewee I's experiences: "You need to make an appointment before you go, which is for some cultures also a little bit of a different way of doing it" (Interviewee I). Interviewee S went on to explain that this behavior is not specific to Danes, as he made the same prioritizations when working in his home country, because he had already established a social network there.

Furthermore, an observation was made that in addition to the busy schedules, Danes are perceived as not going out a lot in their spare time, which affects their opportunities to socialize with colleagues: "[...] but I think the fact that Danes go out so little kind of reduces the possibility to go out and socialize with work colleagues" (Interviewee N). From a Danish perspective, the following explanation was offered:

> We've been focused on [...] family which closes in on itself. I think that may be part of the explanation [...] often we look at the weather and say well we are not such an outdoor kind, you know of race, which is also true. So, we don't have a great tradition for going out to eat and meet our friends there (Interviewee Y).

Moreover, Interviewee Y explained that Danes:

> [...] stop working at 1600 hours precisely, they will go home, and their home are their castles and the doors are shut so no one will penetrate, and no one will ever get to know what's going on there. And that's both sort of Danes between Danes but also of course in relation to internationals, which makes it extremely difficult to build a social network in your workplace in Denmark.

Working in an international team

In contrast to working in predominantly Danish teams, working in an international team seems to create opportunities to be more social: "[...] if you work in an international environment, you do a

lot more on the social activities because you don't have that social structure outside of work [...]" (Interviewee S). Correspondingly, teams that are characterized by great diversity are interpreted as having a better foundation for the creation of social networks: "[...] you can tell that the international people are closer because we also hang out outside of work, because that's who our friends are, whereas the Danish people have their own friends" (Interviewee C).

Yet, if teams are very international, the international employees may be limited in terms of not encountering as many Danes: "But then again most of the times I'm put in a situation where there's other foreigners. So, it's not like it's not that I haven't made a lot of Danish friends. It's like well, they're not there" (Interviewee H). The interviewees also recognize that the lack of Danish employees in a team can in and of itself be a reason for the lack of social network within the team: "I also think if there were more Danes in our team [...] we would be friends with them as well. So, it's not that we don't want to, it's just that given by the nature of our team it is very international" (Interviewee R).

Language at work

As mentioned above, the interviewees worked in various different team constellations. Consequently, language in the workplace was a topic that was widely discussed, where many different perceptions became evident during the interviews. Moreover, the set-up of the teams in which Danish and international employees work may be reflected in the use of the Danish language at work. A Dane working in a large, international conglomerate said: "I mean everything we write, everything, all meetings, social chats, even the canteen menu is in English" (Interviewee U). Consequently, an interviewee emphasized the importance of speaking English as it allows everyone to participate in conversations and add value to what is being discussed: "[...] it's a very important advantage to hear that whatever they are talking about any colleague from anywhere can actually understand and participate and they can join and come with comments or be a part of the conversation" (Interviewee U).

However, The Expat Study found that several expats mentioned "[...] that the corporate language is English, while a lot of the internal communication, however, is in Danish" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 28). This use of Danish is present during internal formal meetings, but also during informal meetings in the office. The same view was reflected by the interviewees in this study, despite the

fact that all of the companies that the interviewees work for had English as their corporate language, and only a few companies had adopted a dual corporate language.

The first area where the Danish language is present in the workplace is at formal meetings. Even in the companies where English is the corporate language, instances where colleagues spoke Danish with each other were mentioned: "There have been occasions where I've been the only non-Dane in a meeting and there's been like maybe ten Danes and somebody who's not so comfortable with English has just asked "is it okay if we do this in Danish?"" (Interviewee N). Moreover, the usage of Danish was also evident in meetings with international employees: "I've have heard from another guy who's not learned any Danish yet that people have started in a meeting to speak Danish amongst themselves and kind of excluded him out of it" (Interviewee N). Another interviewee stated that quarterly meetings for specific departments were also held in Danish:

> [...] we have a quarterly meeting coming up and I talked to somebody from another department and he told me he feels kind of left out every time because he's the only non-Danish in his department and they even have their quarterly meetings in Danish and I was quite surprised to hear that because it sounds pretty rude (Interviewee A).

One interviewee stated that he "[...] was the only international at the project, at the team [...] So, all and all the important information was in Danish" (Interviewee T). When Danes speak to each other in Danish, the international employees may lose out on important information regarding their work:

> [...] when you don't understand what is being communicated around you that is kind of, it's not annoying, but it's like kind of frustrating. Because then I feel like I'm being left out a bit, because maybe I could contribute in terms of my knowledge and if they have a problem then I would understand it and then I could give my opinion on it (Interviewee T).

This further emphasizes the importance in colleagues being able to communicate with each other in the same language.

The second area where the Danish language is present in the workplace is at informal meetings. The Expat Study found that even though "[...] all Danes are willing and competent to speak English [...]

some expats experience that even though the official work language is English a lot of small talk is in Danish" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 28). Moreover, The Expat Study found this to be "[...] important in a social perspective because they feel uncomfortable making everybody speak English" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, p. 28). This further goes make the complexity of the effect and significance of the Danish language explicit. This perception was reflected by both Danish and international interviewees in this study. Hence, the use of Danish language for social and informal purposes at work seems to also contribute to the feeling of being excluded and limits the international employees' ability to participate in social conversations:

> We have our Friday morning breakfast [...] everyone can speak English. We are 20 people, and everyone speaks Danish. That's very common. When we go to lunch, we keep talking Danish because we think that what we talk about is not of the interest of the other one, but I find it very arrogant and not very helpful (Interviewee F).

The same concern was found in The Expat Study: "It is possible to carry on conversations in English, but at work it is hard to be included in the conversations at lunch [...]" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, p. 65). Still, others perceived that when colleagues spoke to them in Danish, this was a sign of them being perceived as fully integrated in the team that they work in:

> [...] I guess I've been here for a while and they forget that I don't speak Danish [...] But you know, they don't do it because they're trying to exclude you it's just, you've obviously just become part of the team [...] (Interviewee K).

Consequently, some of the interviewees found that when their Danish colleagues spoke to each other in Danish it hindered the feeling of inclusion, both at a professional level and at a social level: "[...] both socially outside work, but also at work [...] everybody's talking Danish. If you cannot understand or you cannot participate in the conversations, it's quite difficult" (Interviewee M).

Language courses at work

As mentioned above, all companies that the interviewees work for have either English as their corporate language or as one of the languages in their dual corporate language. Still, several of the companies seem to recognize the importance of Danish proficiency, even when working in a

company in Denmark with an English corporate language. Thus, many of the interviewees were offered language courses through their place of employment. The significance of learning the Danish language was also made evident in The Expat Study which found that 61% of expats find it important that the workplace offers Danish language courses (Oxford Research, 2014). Therefore, from a working environment and integration perspective, the Danish language is considered important (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010).

As mentioned above, challenges in relation to time available to language courses were also present in relation to the language courses offered by the organization. Another dimension of the time aspect was that although courses are made available, learning the Danish language takes time: "They have language courses, but I mean Danish, you don't get that overnight" (Interviewee B). The interviewees mention time as an issue, because it clashes with the amount of work that they have: "But the problem is the time. So, it's quite difficult to find time, especially with the amount of work you have (Interviewee T). Moreover, the frequency of the language courses offered by the company seems to also be an issue: "[...] it's like two hours a week or something and I will never learn with only two hours a week" (Interviewee C).

Furthermore, due to the high level of English proficiency amongst Danes, interviewees expressed that Danes are more than happy to switch to English once they realize a non-Dane enters the conversation: "People speak a lot of Danish. I lose out on a lot of conversations, but they try very hard when they see me around they switch [...]" (Interviewee G). Moreover, when everyone in the workplace only speaks English it may be difficult for the international employees to become motivated and improve their Danish language skills: "I would say if anything they should probably and depending on the person maybe push them to speak more Danish, because the Danes are so accommodating that it's actually difficult to learn Danish" (Interviewee N). Correspondingly, interviewees that experience that people around them always switch to English find it very difficult, as it is perceived as a missed opportunity to learn Danish: "[...] like when everyone is speaking in English, you don't get to hear that much Danish and like because of that it's hard to kind of learn the language" (Interviewee T).

However, at certain times, switching to English when foreigners attempt to speak Danish was seen as being impolite and as having a low tolerance level: "[...] be more aware of the tolerance level.

When people try to speak your language, try to understand them. I mean speaking somebody else's language in a country that's not your own, it's a huge effort" (Interviewee Q). Yet, one of the other interviewees saw the switch between English and Danish as an expression of Danes being polite: "[...] you can try to speak Danish. Up until you speak it perfectly, a Dane will very easily switch to English because if, if, if they sense that you're trying too hard, they're actually polite and help you out by switching to English. So, it's actually pretty hard to learn Danish from day-to-day life" (Interviewee S). Whether switching between Danish and English was viewed as polite or impolite, all interviewees agreed that Danish was a very difficult language to learn and that this was an additional barrier to building social networks with their Danish colleagues.

Receiving support from the organization

It became evident from the interviews, that organizations go beyond offering language courses and offer various other types of support to ensure that international employees settle in well. Although, practical help offered from organizations is not linked directly to the creation of social networks, such support is a crucial aspect to consider as it influences the ease of settling in. The Expat Study concluded that 67% of expats in Denmark believed that receiving help with practical issues outside work, e.g. housing, insurance, relocation services, had been an important help offered by their host company (Oxford Research, 2014). However, the type of help that international employees received from their host organization may depend on the type of contract that they have: "Well for me I have to say I did everything myself, also because it was kind of my decision to move. I wasn't really sent, even though they made a position for me, I'm not an expat or anything" (Interviewee Q). Furthermore, the time spent and experience in Denmark may also influence whether or not the company consider the employee as an expat: "[...] I'm not perceived as an international employee here, because I've been for so long in Denmark. I speak Danish and my CV is mainly within Danish companies, so I have not been handled specifically as a foreign employee" (Interviewee M).

For those who did receive support from their host organization, the first type of help the international employees mentioned that they had received is related practical matters in relation to the relocation process:

> They took care of everything, which was really, really good [...] We were put into a very
> nice hotel for one month and the company helped us to find accommodation. They helped us

to get our SKAT registration, National Insurance number. All of this stuff. They even took us on a supermarket tour, post office tour, train station tour. [...] (Interviewee G).

Practical help such as supermarket tours seem to be especially helpful, as those who have not been offered this same help have found it quite challenging: "I mean, like the first time I went to the supermarket I had to spend like one hour to figure out whatever I'm buying" (Interviewee T).

Moreover, the interviewees that received support from the host organization ascribed great importance to the duration of the support. An interviewee stated that help offered in the beginning of the stay is simply not enough; ongoing help and support is needed: "And I think the hardest part for any company to retain is really the preparation bit and really giving the support the first like six to 12 months, but not just like two months, but 6 to 12. Also, towards Danes" (Interviewee Z). This interviewee suggested that "[...] potentially companies have to spend a bit more time educating prior to move and really explaining basic, small things that are taken for granted by Danes, but that it could be very different elsewhere" (Interviewee Z).

Furthermore, help with settling in can also be offered from colleagues and managers. Especially, when interviewing the Danish informants, it became evident that they personally offer assistance to their international colleagues: "[...] I proactively try, if I see something, or I can hear they're talking about, or look a little confused, and then I say come here, let me help you with this one" (Interviewee J). This source of support was also recognized by the international employees that were interviewed: "I tend to turn to my Danish colleagues when I need advice" (Interviewee G). Some interviewees described this support as a part of the role of a manager working in an international team: "Also, the managers in general, they have a mindset that they have the responsibility to help international employee to settle down" (Interviewee B).

A second source of support may come from a designated buddy: "I think the most important thing is that you get a buddy as the person can introduce you to where you can go and what to do and what's fun and you know, come with recommendations" (Interviewee M). A buddy can help international employees with practical issues that may extend beyond the help they receive from the relocation company: "Find somebody that can help you and because a lot of the practical stuff that can kind of also make it all so complicated can be fixed very simple" (Interviewee M). One of the most

frequent issues that the international interviewees mentioned that they needed assistance with was in relation to the translation of official documents: "You just have to figure everything through Google. I mean every letter I get in Danish I had to like Google translate. Just imagine" (Interviewee T). The Danish interviewees also mentioned this as one of the recurring challenges that their international colleagues faced and explained what they did to help them: "The same with the authorities and the banks. So, I'm saying to them, if they get mails in Danish which is very popular from Danish authorities, I'll say to them that I can help translate to English" (Interviewee J). Thus, practical help as well as support from colleagues, managers and buddies seemed to be especially important within companies that do not offer specialized programs to welcome foreign employees: "[...] we would give them personal advice, but we don't have the programs such" (Interviewee D).

Participating in corporate events

Going beyond receiving practical help from the organization or colleagues is creating social networks with colleagues through socialization. However, doing so appeared to be difficult when analyzing the interviews. To overcome this, various social initiatives are offered by the organizations operating in Copenhagen. These include celebrations of (inter)national holidays, Christmas parties, sports clubs, art societies, Friday bars etc.: "So, when I was working with [company name] they have many clubs. They have from sailing, from bowling, from art and ping pong, badminton, squash. There are a lot, many of them. So, I joined a lot of them" (Interviewee O). Moreover, several international employees stated that their host company had initiatives in place for international employees to socialize with other international employees such as international clubs: "[...] the company has an international club. They did regularly organized Friday afternoon bars or drinks, but only for internationals [...] I'm not sure if it's helpful to make Danish friends" (Interviewee B). Furthermore, these clubs may be based on the nationality of the expats: "[...] I know one of my colleagues who has a Turkish background it's called [name of club] where people are kind of grouped based on their nationality background, meet up and get the opportunity to mingle and to network" (Interviewee A). This view was also reflected by other interviewees: "I have many colleagues here, but they stick to their own group, like the Chinese people for example" (Interviewee O). These initiatives are generally valued and appreciated by the interviewed international employees as it allows them to become friends with other international colleagues:

"So, I think the activities or the initiatives that the company provides are very well capable of spurring a flexible social network, so to speak" (Interviewee S).

Although, these events are organized by the company and are available for all employees, the international employees perceive that "it's not Danes that participate in these events" (Interviewee S). Interviewees offer the explanation that Danes make a clear distinction between work and not work: "I don't think the company can force the Danish people to mix their work and that's just how they are; work is work and not work is not work" (Interviewee C). This is said to be an expression of the typically Danish work-life balance: "It is a very work-life balance culture working in Denmark" (Interviewee L). Likewise, some of the international employees that were interviewed also seemed to want a clear distinction between colleagues and people they socialize with outside of work: "[...] I don't find it appropriate to socialize too much with your colleagues because at some point you might have a work clash with them and will affect your personal relationship, which is not nice" (Interviewee L).

Still, it seems that overall most of the interviewees agree that they like their colleagues, but that they are not close: "I have colleagues here that I like, but we don't spend time out of work. So, I wouldn't call them friends even though I can ask them anything [...]" (Interviewee Q). Some international employees take a step even further and say that they intentionally keep these relationships separate: "I try to keep a separation of colleagues and friends. I don't really like mixing them [...]" (Interviewee L). Similarly, many of the interviewees agree that they get along with their colleagues, but that they do not socialize with them: "And even though we get along very well here in the office we don't do stuff after work. It doesn't happen" (Interviewee Q). One of the explanations to this tendency was that it is left up to the individual, Danish employee whether to socialize with their international colleagues or not: "So, unless the company tells you to take this person out and socialize with them, we do not do it" (Interviewee P). In the same way, the interviewees spoke about their colleagues as merely coworkers and not friends: "I mean should I say they are friends? Not really, they're colleagues" (Interviewee V). Accordingly, this is shown in the fact that "it is very often difficult even to persuade people to stay around after working hours to have a beer or a glass of wine [...]" (Interviewee Y).

4.3 Individual factors

The final set of factors that were identified as having an impact on the international employees' ability to create a social network in Denmark relates to the individual factors. These factors pertain to the individual and are thus deemed unique. However, this section presents general trends that became evident through the analysis. These individual factors involve cultural background, knowledge of Danish society, expectations prior to relocating, relationships as well as personality and attitudes and place of residence.

Cultural background

The first factor related to the individual employee relates to the cultural background of the international employee. Depending on the interviewees, they either perceive their own cultural background as similar to or different from the Danish culture in which they now live in.

An international interviewee that perceived their own culture as very similar to the Danish culture stated: "I have to be honest I didn't have a lot of expectations of being from [country] fairly similar when it comes down to cultural behavior" (Interviewee I). Interviewees who perceived their own cultural background as similar to the Danish expressed that this made it easier for them to navigate in the Danish society: "I think maybe it's because, at least for me, Denmark is not that different to [country] [...] it's not a completely different world" (Interviewee R). These interviewees also expressed that they were very happy about their life in Denmark and that they had somewhat easily established a social network here as they knew the social rules before relocating.

In turn, other interviewees expressed that their experiences in Denmark were very different from their own cultural upbringing. This was exemplified by sharing instances were these differences manifested themselves. Some of these examples related to socializing with colleagues after work: "In [country], we're probably at the opposite extreme where there's a lot of people that go to the bar several nights a week with work colleagues" (Interviewee N) and "[...] in [country] we mix work and life a lot more" (Interviewee C). Other examples emphasized how people generally act when meeting new people: "We come from a culture where the first thing they do is to invite you into their home" (Interviewee K). Finally, some interviewees mentioned aspects of work as significantly different from what they were used to: "Because in [country] you tend to work much longer hours

and the whole society, the companies, the manager, basically they have a mindset that they don't really care about your private life" (Interviewee B).

Interviewee K explained how a simple trip to the bakery revealed that the culture in Denmark is very different from her own:

> We come from a culture that super social [...] When you go to the shop or the bakery, people chat to you. Whereas here it's a lot more transactional: you go to the bakery, you buy your bread you take it home. There's not a lot of interaction. People are friendly in that they'll, you know, if you ask them for help, they'll help you. But then other than that, when you're on the street people are just kind of looking their own way. They're not going to make eye contact and not going to say hello (Interviewee K).

These aspects that the interviewees experience as being characteristic of the Danish culture are limiting in terms of creating social networks, as these are not easily made. This was a shock to, among others, Interviewee K who had expected that she could find friends everywhere, even at the bakery, because this is what she was used to.

Some interviewees attempt to explain these cultural differences: "So, for us [nationality] everything that is foreign is much better. We are so curious about and we want to learn and take in but also because we are a country of immigrants that are used to take in other cultures" (Interviewee M). Moreover, the motivation of the individual may be driven by more than just cultural differences: "[...] you could argue moving from [country] basically escaping financial misery makes you want to integrate a lot more right?" (Interviewee L).

Finally, the Danish culture and attitude is also touched upon by some of the interviewees, who explain the perceived distance and coldness as a misunderstood expression of politeness:

> [...] it will take a bit of effort to understand the culture behind the Danish attitude which might come off as cold, but it's not. It's just a politeness that is different than what a lot of other countries do as being polite. In Italy or in Spain, Danes attitudes is extremely impolite. So, it's really a calibration (Interviewee Z).

However, many interviewees described the Danish behavior as being rather confusing as the Danish body language is typically perceived as cold, but once they are asked for help, they are more than willing to do so. This dichotomy is also reflected in the findings of The Expat Study: "The Danes themselves are to some extent regarded as closed off and difficult to form friendship with, though the attitude of the Danes towards foreigners was generally regarded as positive" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, p. 9).

Understanding social norms

Understanding social norms may create a better understanding of why Danes act the way they do. Accordingly, this section relates to the degree to which the international interviewees learn and adapt to social rules when socializing with Danes.

Interviewee L shared that he had become aware of the unwritten rules of interactions with Danes in society and when the Danes find it appropriate to engage in social interactions:

> It's surprisingly easy to start speaking to a Dane in the right context. So, you cannot start the conversation in the bus, but if you go to a bar you can just walk up to someone and start talking [...] If you see like a social everything that is flagged as a social event, you can have a social interaction. Everything that's not, don't do it (Interviewee L).

He explained how not being aware of and able to navigate in these cultural differences can reflect poorly on the individual. Hence, he has also been able to identify when it is not appropriate to engage in informal conversations with Danes:

> Don't tell to someone that they have a very nice-looking kid in a place where you do not expect to hear that. Then you just put them in a really awkward position or like if I just walk up to a colleague and sit next to them and just start chatting then we will feel weird. But if I do it in the coffee area, they would be expecting that (Interviewee L).

The same view was reflected by several of the other interviewees who emphasized the importance of learning the social norms and rules in order to integrate into the Danish society:

> I think that people have to understand that [international employees] are not where they came from any longer. There are new social rules and they have to learn those and adjust, because internationals have to adjust, not the other way around. I don't think it's that complicated. You just have to learn the rules of the game and play by those rules and try to adjust yourself to how to socialize (Interviewee M).

According to the interviewees, Denmark also has many traditions. Some of the interviewees postulated that it is important for international employees to understand and learn about these traditions: "[...] like knowing what is fastelavn and why are we eating this? And why do we see the kids walking as zebras on the street?" (Interviewee W). Although many interviewees render it important to become familiar with Danish traditions, one interviewee expressed that she felt that it is only important for the internationals to learn about the Danish way, and not the other way around: "So, you have your values, you keep them at home. When you come here you don't have to behave like them but don't impose your things on [the Danes]" (Interviewee G). However, others emphasize the importance of the Danes also learning about the international employees and where they come from and their traditions:

> [...] ask about how do they do things in their country and try to do some of these things. Small thing as bringing a 'Myse ost' from Norway to a Friday breakfast. It's a small thing and may not be important for a Dane but it's important for the person coming. It's nice to see that there's some kind of understanding that their culture might be slightly different and that one doesn't necessarily expect them to be complete copycat of Danish culture (Interviewee F).

To learn about the Danish social rules, interviewees explained that they had deliberately sought out relevant knowledge within this field: "A lot of times there are books and etcetera about what is acceptable in different culture" (Interviewee H). Moreover, Interviewee O explained how reading about Danish humor and sarcasm helped her adjustment: "I read a book, The Xenophobe's Guide to the Danes, before I came, and it is written there. So, I already mentally prepared myself to not take it to the heart [...] I mean you need to take the sarcasm" (Interviewee O). Interviewee O ascribed significance to the power of sarcasm and even indicated that individuals who are not able to

understand this form of Danish humor may be driven to leave the country: "I had a student, Malaysian student, studied PhD here and she didn't understand the sarcasm from Danish people and she really felt miserable [...] The day she graduated she left Denmark (Interviewee O).

Regardless of the significance that is ascribed to sarcasm and Danish humor, many interviewees recognize that it may pose as a barrier to people who do not understand it: "There is so much dry humor and it took some time for me to understand but at the start I was so offended and so personal about everything" (Interviewee V). Yet, some interviewees expressed that they actually like the Danish humor: "I think Danes are good-humored [...] (Interviewee Y). This may be due to the fact that they found the humor that they have seen Danes display as very similar to what they are used to: "In terms of sense of humor, I think it's actually quite similar to [nationality]" (Interviewee N). But overall, the recurring message was clear: "[...] you have to adjust to the social rules and be aware that it's so important [...]" (Interviewee O).

Having knowledge of Danish media

In addition to understanding the Danish social rules, it was found that being up to date with what was being discussed in the Danish media is an important asset for communicating with local Danes and perceived as being beneficial for bursting the expat bubble: "[...] understand things, signs, newspapers, posted announcement even television and radio. So that's all the local stuff can help you to get rid of your own tiny little world" (Interviewee B). This was confirmed by several of the interviewees: "[...] Danes talk about the Danish singers and the Danish news" (Interviewee C). The same view was emphasized by Interviewee A who stated that knowing about Danish TV series, jokes and tradition all were important aspects of being part of conversations with Danes: "All the chit chat at lunchtime it was pretty much Danish [...] You need to know all the TV series, know all the jokes and all the traditions in order to be part of the conversation" (Interviewee A). Accordingly, individuals who have been more exposed to the Danish media seem to have an advantage in this regard: "We saw Danish television at home, saw the news in Danish, newspapers at home that I could look at and so I was not shielded of the Danish language, so it was not so difficult for me" (Interviewee M). Lastly, Interviewee C explained that learning the Danish language plays an important role in obtaining knowledge about these areas: "I want to know more about it, but it's all in Danish. Like there's no news outlet for Denmark in English" (Interviewee C).

Expectations

In the analysis it became apparent that only a few of the interviewees had knowledge about Danish society prior to moving. Consequently, hardly any had expectations about the social aspects of living in Denmark prior to relocating: "I had absolutely no expectations about Denmark, you know, except rain. That was it" (Interviewee K). This was echoed by several interviewees: "I actually didn't have any expectations" (Interviewee A). Yet, those who did have expectations regarding social life in Denmark prior to moving all thought it would be fairly easy to get to know the Danes: "My expectation was that the Danes will be very welcoming" (Interviewee G). Others even said that they expected that making friends in Denmark would be no different than making friends at home: "My expectation was that it would be just as easy for me to make Danish friends as it was before and that was not the case" (Interviewee C).

Also, the Danish interviewees discussed the implications of having expectations prior to moving to Denmark that may not align with reality. They also stressed the importance of this alignment as it may in fact be able to affect the entire process:

> There's also an alignment of expectations. So, I guess when you move from one country to another you need to align what to actually expect, because if it's far off then that might also be a reason why you leave again or never feel happy. So, but how to solve it, I don't know. But it's probably a good idea to try and align expectations" (Interviewee X).

Instead, several of the interviewees had expectations prior to moving to Denmark regarding the poor Danish weather, kids' education, clean environment, high quality of life, career opportunities, favorable work environment, high English proficiency and that learning Danish would not be necessary.

Being in a relationship

As evident above, some of the relocating international employees travelled to Denmark with their family. Accordingly, relationships are another factor that affects their ability to create social networks. The interviewees for this project came from many different family constellations; some were married, some had kids, and some were in a relationship or single. During the interviews it became evident that these relationships may affect the way that the interviewees choose to socialize.

Consequently, one of the interviewees said that her friends were based on whether they were in the same stage of life: "[...] it's more about we are in the same stage of life. We have the same background. That means we are like working, we have kids, we have our family. It's those things that bring us together" (Interviewee A). How these different constellations affect the creation of social networks will be elaborated upon below.

When reviewing the interviews, it became clear that having kids affects the willingness or ability to create and maintain social networks: "It was different in the five years before I had my kids. Then we used to go out more. [...] But now we have this family life. I think it's pretty similar probably to the Danes" (Interviewee G). This perception is also recognized by the Danish interviewees: "But if you have a family then all of a sudden that is number one priority, so I don't see that as much if you're a foreigner or not, it's more where are you in life" (Interviewee X). The significance of having a family with kids is lack of time: "Well, as a family with two small kids and two full-time jobs, everything's really fully packed" (Interviewee B). Conversely, interviewees that are married without kids seem to be able to embrace social life to a larger extent: "We're maybe married but we don't have children or something. So, I think that made it very easy for us to get to know each other quite well and also to find a social life in this city" (Interviewee R).

Moreover, some interviewees mentioned that relationships affect the degree to which the interviewees were able to create social networks was dependent on whether their partner was Danish or foreign. When having a Danish partner, some of the international interviewees emphasized that this enabled them to gain a deeper understanding of the Danish language and culture:

> I happen to have a Danish boyfriend. So, he is a very good source of getting me introduced to the Danish culture and language. I feel that things have been much easier ever since we met. Because, suddenly, I am so much more exposed to the culture and I understand it so much more (Interviewee V).

Similarly, Interviewee M shared that having a Danish partner allowed her to learn the Danish language better as she is exposed to the Danish language all the time: "My husband is Danish, his family's Danish, the older family cannot speak English, so I've been always exposed to the Danish language" (Interviewee M). The same view was reflected in The Expat Study (2010), where expats

shared that: "[...] amongst Danish friends and family, conversation will sometimes turn to Danish" (p. 65). Likewise, Interviewee M stresses that had she been with a foreigner she might not have had the same success with the Danish language: "So, if I was married with another foreigner, it probably would have been harder for me to learn any Danish" (Interviewee M).

Moreover, several of the international interviewees noted that had it not been for their Danish partner they would not have received sufficient practical help: "[...] my girlfriend is doing all the paperwork at home because it's just so easier, right? Like paying some of the bills [...]" (Interviewee W). This aspect was recognized by multiple interviewees: "[...] the people in my Danish class who are not dating a Dane, it's even worse for them. So, I think it helps a little to have a Dane in your household who can read documents [...]" (Interviewee C). The interviewees also emphasized that although buddy programs offered by the companies are beneficial, they cannot compete with having a Danish partner: "I mean some companies do buddy programs. I'm sure it helps but having like a person that you a Dane that you can rely on for more complicated things that is really important. It really helps" (Interviewee Z).

Likewise, the international interviewees with Danish partners cannot understand how other internationals without Danish partners settle in Denmark: "One of my good friends he doesn't have the Danish partner and I have no idea how he's doing things" (Interviewee W). Moreover, being in a relationship with a Dane seems to open the door to existing social networks for the international employees when coming to Denmark. This was exemplified by Interviewee V, who also has a Danish partner. When she was asked if she socialized with Danes outside of work her answer was clear:

> Yeah, quite a lot. Now it's quite a lot because his family, his brothers, sisters. I mean that's a big exposure to the Danish group, but I also have some friends from other EU countries or from UK. But I do hear the same kind of concerns even from them. We have somehow connected because we all have Danish spouses (Interviewee V).

However, Interviewee V stated that having a Danish partner can also limit who they socialize with as this can in some ways dictate one's social circle: "I don't really have that many friends. I'm only exposed to the group of people through my boyfriend" (Interviewee V).

Yet, being in a relationship with a Dane seems to create a deeper tie to Danes in general, from a retention standpoint:

> [...] people that are in only expat relationships, their ability to integrate, like being part of Denmark, is totally different. [...] You feel that they're just surfing and one day they'll go back to where they come from, whereas the other ones more like my situation it's a commitment to this country until maybe we go to the other country, but it's a very different (Interviewee Z).

Lastly, some interviewees perceived single people without kids to have the upper hand in terms of being able to socialize more: "I would expect if you are without a family or without any attachments or obligations [...] You have more time to spend on socializing and, and trying to get to know your colleagues better and yeah finding other friends" (Interviewee X). Likewise, some also perceived that more initiatives were aimed at the younger international population in Copenhagen: "[...] I think if you're younger or if you're single, I think these expats in Copenhagen they do try to arrange some of these things but it's very informal networks" (Interviewee Q). Contrarily, other interviewees perceived being young as a barrier to meet friends or have an interesting life in Denmark: "But, for young people, I have to say, it's quite a challenge. [...] You know because they find this place boring, really boring" (Interviewee O).

Being a student

Even though none of the interviewees were currently studying in Denmark, several of them brought up the topic of finding friends at an educational institution. Correspondingly, many of the interviewees believe that most relationships are formed in the life of a Dane during their studies: "So, I always talk with my girlfriend about how relationships in Denmark are made, I mean you stay with your friends from elementary school or many, many years ago" (Interviewee E). The fact that Danes are perceived to form their group of friends early on in life was recognized by various other interviewees: "[...] in Denmark, a lot of people have this group from childhood, from high school that they go with. It's very hard to break in [...] I would say I only have one Danish friend, she's my master thesis partner" (Interviewee W). This observation was also made by Interviewee C, who has a Danish family-in-law: "I would tell Danish people is that it's possible to make friends

after age 20. Because like my boyfriend's mom still has her Christmas party with her high school friends and she meets with her college friends every so often [...]" (Interviewee C). Consequently, if foreigners do come to Denmark, but not during their studies it may be difficult to form such friendships: "So, my point being is that I think if you're international and you didn't study here, it's hard to find Danish friends (Interviewee W). However, most interviewees who came to Denmark to study experienced that it was difficult to become friends with their peers:

> But even when I was studying it was still a challenge to kind of break into the close friend group for at least for most of the Danish students because they are mainly because I guess they're coming from their bachelor's and they have been hanging out with a certain group friends and they like kind of keep it small (Interviewee T).

Therefore, the many of the international interviewees perceived that if they were to make the deep connections that they see in Danish friends, they would need to come to Denmark even earlier than high school. Hence, some interviewees believe that Danes find their friends in primary school: "Most people have friends from back to Folkeskolen and so on. So, it's really hard to integrate a Danish network. So, a lot of international might hang out together [...]" (Interviewee Z).

Place of residence

An unexpected theme that surfaced was the significance of the place of residence of the international employees. All interviewees were sampled in the Copenhagen area and some of the interviewees mentioned how neighbors and were they lived affected their ability to make friends. An interviewee stated that he had found his apartment through a company that only rents out to expats: "I live in a house that is owned by a company that focuses on expats and rents it out to expats [...] I don't even think that there are Danes living in my apartment. So, I don't even think I have Danish neighbors" (Interviewee R). As a result, this seemed to limit his possibilities of interacting with Danes outside of work. However, even people who live in close proximity with Danes stated that the Danish neighbors are not necessarily interested in interacting with them: "I have no clue who my neighbors are except for the people right next to me. I don't know. They also look at the other way" (Interviewee Q). Yet, others perceive their neighbors as open and willing to socialize: "[...] we have quite good interaction with our neighbors as well. And we have four times a year we do like a brunch or dinner together or barbecue or something like that [...]" (Interviewee S).

Finally, some see that having children opens the door to befriending neighbors: "[...] my neighbors is a mixture of Danish and international people [...] Basically, if you have a kid we can hang out" (Interviewee L).

Personality and attitudes

There was an explicit agreement among almost all interviewees that the company and broader society can only help you to a certain extent – the rest is up to the individual:

> I think it's important that you make an effort because it doesn't come by itself. [...] So you really have to make an effort to create a network and even though you feel, ugh I really don't want to go to that party, then you have to pull yourself together and go because you have to really make an effort to get a network" (Interviewee M).

Even though several of the interviewees acknowledged that the company can play a significant role in facilitating social networks, the responsibility will always be placed on the individual: "[...] although company can help you heavily, in the end it comes down to the person and their ability to accept the environment they're in and make the best and the most out of it" (Interviewee Z). Most interviewees agreed with this view and hinted that the individual is ascribed the largest amount of responsibility when it come the international employees' ability to both settle in in Denmark and finding friends: "But, I mean, you cannot give everything to the company. You need some personal initiative also" (Interviewee P). The split between the company's responsibility and the individual's responsibility was reflected by another interviewee: "Don't always expect to be spoon fed by somebody or by your company [...] I believe that everything starts from yourself, so, I don't always expect the company to always have to do it to me [...]" (Interviewee O). The same view was shared by a third interviewee: "[...] I mean moving, relocation or integration to a new society, in my mind that's always individual. That's my own responsibility and don't just sit in the sofa and wait for somebody to come to help you. That's my attitude." (Interviewee B). Moreover, Interviewee Q expressed that it was very demanding of the international employee to adapt and create a social network:

> But I mean you need to do everything yourself. Nobody helps you. There's nobody that comes to you. So, you need to be very, very determined to want to create a network and to

want to get out there to make it happen. This is not going to come by itself. You'll need to work hard on it (Interviewee Q).

Interviewee H reflects what many of the other interviewees have that the individual's approach to the situation is also what shapes their experience: "I think as with anywhere you should be open-minded and it all really depends on your approach to the situation" (Interviewee H). This aspect of personality both applies to the international employees but also to the Danes, as this is perceived as having the ability to affect whether Danes wish to make international friends or not: "Some of [the Danes] are really open and they want to socialize and want to meet new people and I think they will of course be friendly and like to become friends with [internationals]" (Interviewee T).

Furthermore, individual personality types (i.e. introvert versus extrovert) also seemed to influence interviewee's ability to create a social network: "I don't know that many that are like very hardcore introverts that I have stayed long time" (Interviewee Z). The same view was reflected by Interviewee C who described herself as an extrovert which has helped her create a social network: "[...] like, I'm an outgoing person so I would not know how not outgoing people would do it, honestly".

Lastly, not all interviewees expressed a wish or desire to befriend the local Danish population: "[...] I'm not really trying to get in touch with the locals right, so I could do more" (Interviewee R). Moreover, Interviewee N explained that the workplace did offer various socializing activities, however, he had chosen not to participate in any of them: "[...] they do some sports activities, mountain biking things like that. None of which I participate in but they're there if I so choose [...] I don't go out. I'm not really involved in the activities here" (Interviewee N). Regardless, the message and advise was clear from most of the interviewees that had befriended Danes: "[...] take the time actually to crack through the surface of your colleagues, your Danish colleagues. It's worth the investment" (Interviewee Y).

4.4 Summary

As evident in the above analysis, many factors have emanated from the interviews conducted with international and Danish employees respectively, working in international teams. These factors fall under three overall themes; societal, organizational and individual.

The societal factors were found to be related to political developments, publicly offered services, social networking initiatives and public language courses. The organizational factors involved working in either Danish or international teams, use of language at work, language courses offered at work, receiving support from the organization and participating in corporate events. Finally, individual factors covered aspects relating to the individual's cultural background, understanding of social norms, knowledge of Danish media, expectations prior to relocating, relationship status, having studied in Denmark, where they live as well as personality and attitudes held by the individual. The plethora of factors identified in relation to aspects that affect the creation of social networks in Denmark underline the complexity of the issue. This was further complicated by the fact that even within trends that were identified in the analysis, the interviewees perceived the various factors differently. Moreover, the analysis showed that the factors are interconnected, which means that even if the international employees learn Danish this does not necessarily lead to the creation of social networks. Therefore, the factors should not be seen as boxes to be checked, but rather be seen as aspects to be aware of as all play a smaller or bigger role depending on the individual. Hence, the analysis suggests that rather than creating a more generalizable guide of how social networks are formed between international employees and Danes, these should optimally be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

DISCUSSION

05 DISCUSSION

As mentioned in the analysis, several factors were found to impact the degree to which international employees are able to create social networks in Denmark. Therefore, the first part of the discussion will center on whether the interviewees have been able to create social networks in Copenhagen and whether these primarily consist of internationals, Danes or if the concentration is mixed. The second part of the discussion will center on the three overall themes found in the analysis and discuss which of the factors that the organization can manipulate within these themes to facilitate social networks for international employees. Then, the overall role and responsibilities of the company will be discussed in relation to the retention of international employees based on the findings from this study. Finally, limitations of this study, recommendations for future research and applicability of the study will be presented.

5.1 Creating a social network in Denmark

Throughout the interviews it became evident that all interviewees had been able to create some kind of social network. It became evident from the analysis that all international interviewees had been able to befriend other internationals. This corresponds with findings from Wang (2002), who argues that expatriates often interact more with other expatriates than HCNs. The same conclusion was made in The Expat Study which found that "[...] expats socialise more often with other expats instead of Danes outside of work" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 44). Moreover, Wang & Varma (2018) argued that characteristics such as nationality and ethnicity are often used to create in-groups and out-groups as stipulated by SIT. Similar group divisions became evident in the interviews both as a distinction between international and Danish employees, but also between various nationality groups. An example of these divisions were the many associations and clubs, where membership was determined by the international employee's nationality.

This perception was further supported throughout the analysis as the international employees in this thesis unanimously emphasized that becoming friends with other expats was found to be a process without significant barriers. The international interviewees ascribed the ease with which they were able to form social networks with other internationals to the shared lack of a pre-existing social network and that they seemed to believe that internationals are keener to dedicate time to social activities outside work. These findings resonate with those of The Expat Study, which found that

"[...] expats find the possibilities to meet other expats outside of work is easier than meeting Danes" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 44). This was exemplified by Interviewee C: "[...] you can tell that the international people are closer because we also hang out outside of work, because that's who our friends are, whereas the Danish people have their own friends" (Interviewee C).

Furthermore, several of the international interviewees acknowledged the importance of having other international friends. The interviewees mentioned that one of the benefits that they experienced from these friendships with fellow internationals was that they were able to bond over the mutual challenges that they face: "I think people who are coming from other countries we connect more on our problem areas. Like, oh, I have this problem. And you also have the same problem" (Interviewee V). The bonding over similar experiences was recognized by several of the interviewees: "I think one thing we cannot deny is that international employees [...] will understand a bit more all the troubles and difficulties of coming to a new country than a local Dane" (Interviewee B). Accordingly, the interviewees that held this perception saw that Danes were not able to empathize with them in the same way and, therefore, it did not make sense for them to share their challenges with Danes: "When you are together with Danish people it's more [...] like having a good time talking about positive things which are going on. It's not too much focusing on the challenges because they don't experience that" (Interviewee A). Thus, one of the interviewees perceived that Danes and international employees live in two separate worlds:

> So, they don't really know what to talk with me about because they have their world and I have mine, whereas the international people, like we're all working, we're all international, like we all have the same things. [...] [Danes and international employees] talk about very different things (Interviewee C).

Yet, building a social network with only international friends was described by one of the interviewees as a trap: "No, I almost actively avoid that because it's a trap for expats [...] you choose to be treated differently if you enclose yourself in this community of foreigners, you brand yourself as a foreigner" (Interviewee L). While acknowledging the benefits of having other international friends, the literature suggests having only international friends may also pose as a challenge from a retention point of view. Hence, this so-called trap seems to reflect that although emotional support is available from relationships with other foreigners, it may also be a spanner in

the works for retention. This correlates with one of the previously identified barriers that related to how the perceived duration of international employees' stay affects their ability to build social networks: "But I think the relationship we tend to have with foreigners is a little bit more superficial in the sense that we expect people to move on. Nobody's expected to stay in Denmark even though some of us tend to stick around longer than they expected" (Interviewee I). The same aspect of superficiality was shared by Interviewee I who ascribed the biggest difference between relationships with Danes and internationals to the closeness of the friendships: "I think when Danes actually come out, you build a real friendship relationship, kind of almost a family type of relationship where with foreigners it might be more superficial" (Interviewee I). Also, Linda Duncan Wendelboe reiterated this perception:

> So, if you only stay in the expat environments, then it's another setup and expat environments they are typically people coming in and out of the country on a very short-term basis. So, if you are planning on staying here for 10 years, or maybe longer, then it's risky business just interacting with other expats (Wendelboe, 2019).

Consequently, the three interviewees (K, Q & R) that only had managed to make friends with other international employees all explicitly express that they had no intention of staying in Denmark in the long run. Both Interviewee K and Interviewee Q already had plans to leave the country, whereas Interviewee R saw his employment as a temporary aspect of his career development: "[...] I don't think that I will spend my entire life in this country" (Interviewee R). Although, this finding is noteworthy, it is acknowledged that other factors also may have affected their decisions to leave Denmark.

In contrast, having Danish friends may secure retention as a major difference between befriending Danes and non-Danes seems to be related to their intention of staying in Denmark in the long run. Furthermore, Interviewee S acknowledges that befriending Danes could increase retention of international employees: "So, if you want to build a social network that is similar to something you had in your home country then I would have tried to interact more with my neighbors and stuff like that, with Danes, because the likelihood of them staying here is much bigger than of expats staying here" (Interviewee S). Another example of this was shared by Interviewee Z, who has been in

Denmark for 13 years. She stated that as the years passed and the number of Danes in her social network increased, she started feeling a closer affiliation to Danes rather than internationals:

> I think that over time I started to find more affiliation towards the Danes than towards the internationals because I have been here long enough to be over the cultural shock, over the adaptation. I speak Danish quite ok, so I can relate more to Danes than I can relate to expats because their background might differ heavily from mine. So, I feel that why I mostly have Danish friends is that my relationships can be more meaningful or at least we can have more conversations about politics, about the *vuggestue*, and whatever is more everyday life. [...] I've been here 13 years. So, it's a long process (Interviewee Z).

Moreover, several interviewees recognized that having Danish friends can offer support that international employees cannot: "Actually, sometimes when I have issues or when I need help, I tend to talk to Danes and ask for help. Because they know how it works here, even my neighbor" (Interviewee B). This was emphasized in the analysis as the international employees expressed difficulties with translating official documents received by the Danish authorities. Consequently, Linda Duncan Wendelboe emphasized that initiatives created by the DI are aimed to burst the expat bubble, i.e. facilitating contact between the international employees and the Danes. Evidently, DI acknowledges that one aspect of retention of international talent is linked to the ability to facilitate relationships between expats and HCNs. However, only a few of the interviewees saw no apparent differences between their friendships with Danes and non-Danes. These interviewees did not distinguish between these relationships and perceive that these are equally beneficial: "I can't think that there's anything that I would speak about to a non-Dane that I wouldn't speak to a Dane about or vice versa" (Interviewee N). Some of the Danish interviewees had the same perception and viewed language as the only difference between these relationships: "I mean, I wouldn't do anything different just because they're foreign, except speak English" (Interviewee P).

Therefore, it is problematic that "some 69% of [...] expats either agree or strongly agree with the statement that it is difficult to form friendships with Danes" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 67). This high percentage proves challenging as "[...] satisfied expats are those who have an active social network outside of work, and who meet and socialise with other expats and Danes on a regular basis" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 5). The same view was shared by Interviewee

C who said that making Danish friends was actually the hardest thing about living in Denmark: "I think Denmark is the best place in the world and it's only this little hiccup of actually being friends with Danish people that makes it hard" (Interviewee C). Moreover, creating a social network has been rated as the second-most important factor among expats that influences international employees' intent to stay in Denmark (Oxford Research, 2014).

Consequently, the following parts of this discussion will primarily center on the relationship between Danes and international employees, as several barriers to establishing relationships across these groups were identified by the interviewees. Moreover, the research objective of this thesis is to examine which of these can manipulated, either directly or indirectly, by organizations that hire international employees. Therefore, this subsequent part of the discussion will center on elements that organizations are able to influence to answer the problem statement presented in the introduction. This will then form the basis of creating recommendations for relevant organizations.

Furthermore, the Expat Study concluded that "expats who work in small companies find the possibilities to meet and socialise with Danes outside of work easier compared to those who work in large companies [...]" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 5). This was noteworthy as the sample selected for this study primarily represented large companies operating in the Copenhagen area. Therefore, it is particularly important to find recommendations and potential solutions to the current challenges that are typically experienced in larger companies.

5.2 The role of the company

Before presenting recommendations for organizations, the role of the company will be discussed. As noted in The Expat Study: "it is open to debate what extent the employer hiring expats in Denmark is supposed to ensure that the expats integrate and establish a network in their new environment and get to know the culture and the language" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 28). Yet, Linda Duncan Wendelboe emphasized that "[...] companies do have a responsibility. Employees expect more today than just a contract, and a job, and a paycheck. There is so hard competition for the right talents that you need to provide more as a company".

Whether or not assisting international employees in socially adjusting in the host country is considered the responsibility of the organization, it is clearly in their interest to do what they can to ensure their return on investment:

> "[...] companies need to be able to retain international employees for a certain period of time, otherwise, companies can't get the return on investment that they need when they recruit internationally because that is really expensive and it's also a loss of knowledge if you lose an employee too soon due to circumstances beyond the job" (Wendelboe, 2019).

The same view was expressed by one of the interviewees: "So, it's maybe an investment worthwhile to make sure you keep your employees or can develop them, and you know in other functions but still within the company. So, I don't think it's their responsibility, but it could be a good investment [...]" (Interviewee X). Therefore, the following part of the discussion assumes that companies have an important role to play in the social adjustment of international employees.

5.3 Recommendations for organizations

The first part of this section will focus on how organizations can manipulate the identified factors from the analysis in order to facilitate opportunities for international employees to create a social network in Denmark. As in the analysis, the factors that can be manipulated by the organization are structured accordingly; societal factors, organizational factors and individual factors.

Societal factors

It can be argued that the factors at the societal level may be the most difficult to manipulate by organizations, as organizations are not able to directly influence these. However, the organization may be able to indirectly influence several of the identified factors within this level in order to facilitate the opportunities necessary to increase social interaction between international and Danish employees.

Increase contact with International House Copenhagen

The first way, that an organization can affect some of the factors identified at the societal level is to increase contact with IHC. As stated in the analysis, the ICS in Copenhagen, IHC, was identified as a source of support to international employees within two main areas; practical help associated with

relocating as well as social networking initiatives. Moreover, the interviewed employees who had been in contact with IHC all had positive experiences with the services that they had been offered. Specifically, the "Host Program' was emphasized as being a particularly successful initiative that had helped the international employee's adjustment process.

When reviewing the interviews, it became evident that the organizations that the informants work in offer many of the same initiatives as IHC. These include initiatives such as language courses, networking events and sports clubs. The duplication of such initiatives may be one explanation of why only three of the interviewees mentioned that they had been in contact with IHC during their stay in Denmark. Similarly, the Expat Study showed that only a limited number of international employees had been in contact with ICS upon arrival (Oxford Research, 2014), such as the IHC. Another explanation for this low number may be that the interviewed international employees were not aware of the opportunities and services offered by IHC. Therefore, it may be beneficial for organization to increase awareness of the opportunities offered by IHC, as these were positively welcomed by interviewees that had received their support. Also, from a financial perspective, this collaboration may be beneficial for organizations as they may be able to outsource their own in-house initiatives to e.g. IHC. Accordingly, there would be no need for solutions that are specialized to the individual organization as similar initiatives are already made publicly available. Therefore, Linda Duncan Wendelboe encourages organizations "[...] to collaborate with local communities, the municipalities, the local sports associations and so on, to get that connection going" (Wendelboe, 2019).

Strengthen collaboration with public services

The second way that organizations can manipulate societal factors involves strengthening the collaboration between organizations and the institutions that offer publicly available language courses. Although, Denmark is ranked fourth in Europe and fifth in world in terms of English proficiency (EF EPI, 2019), several of the interviewees from the study mentioned the importance of learning the Danish language in order to become friends with the Danes: "[...] if you don't learn Danish, it'll be way harder to establish a relationship with Danes" (Interviewee Z). In accordance with this, Interviewee W had noticed that: "Danish people are not the same when they don't speak Danish. That I've understood from day one" (Interviewee W). Consequently, although, Danes are overall perceived as speaking English fluently, the significance of the Danish language is

highlighted as a crucial aspect of creating a social network in Denmark by some: "Like I think it's very crucial when you live in a country to speak the language because it's like you're either part of the group or you're not [...]" (Interviewee W).

This correlates with findings from The Expat Study (2014) which found that learning Danish is important if international employees want "[...] to feel integrated in Denmark and socialise with Danes" (p. 6). Moreover, earlier studies suggested that a clear correlation between Danish language skills and integration had been proven (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010). Interestingly, Figure 5, shows the that out of the individuals who are able to speak Danish fluently, or almost fluently, 52% indicate that they are well integrated, whereas individuals who only are able to speak only a few words of Danish score 5% on the same level of integration.
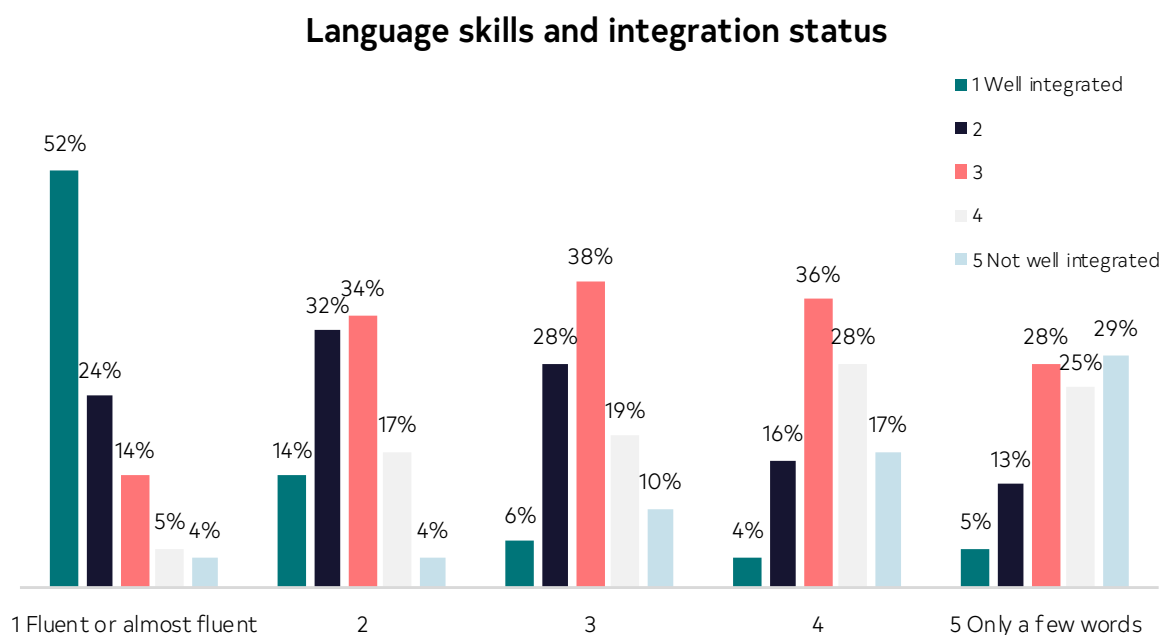
Language skills and integration status

Figure 5. Language skills and integration status
Source: Adapted from *Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post,* 2010.
Questions: How would you rate your spoken Danish language skills on a scale from 1 to 5?
How well integrated do you feel on a scale from 1-5? (n = 1449)

This further emphasizes the importance of language in the process of creating social networks in Denmark. Hence, international employees that want to stay in Denmark should consider prioritizing learning Danish, as it seems as though Danish proficiency is one of the key aspects to unlocking Danish friendships. This perception was also reflected in a study among Danes which argued that

"[...] good Danish language skills [are] considered the most important factor for integration of foreigners into Danish society" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 66).

As this was an understanding that was shared by the majority of the interviewees, many mentioned that they had actively engaged in learning the Danish language which they could either do through language courses offered by their place of employment or through publicly offered language courses. In comparison to the courses offered by companies, the publicly offered language courses are typically very costly. As mentioned in the analysis, one of the main barriers to dedicating the necessary time to language courses is that they are no longer free. However, as prices of such language courses have increased over the last years according to several of the interviewees, organizations may need to help their employees financially if they want them to attend these courses: "So, we were actually trying to find out if we can get [company name] gracious enough to pay for our Danish lessons" (Interviewee S). However, for organizations that already do offer language courses, several of the interviewees ascribed various benefits of attending the public language courses, such as finding foreign friends. Additional benefits that the interviewees mentioned were that the courses that were publicly available were held more frequently, making it easier to learn the Danish language faster. If employees are able to learn the Danish language and thereby integrate faster, the cost of paying for these courses are expected to be worth the investment. Yet, the interviewees mentioned that time was currently a barrier to learning the Danish language, which may pose as a challenge as publicly available language courses are typically held after working hours.

Furthermore, if companies supported the publicly available networking events, this could in turn help facilitate connecting international employees with Danes who have an interest in getting to know the internationals as participation in such events are typically voluntary.

The company

In contrast to the factors identified on the society level, organizations are expected to be able to manipulate several, if not all, factors pertaining to the organizational level directly for the purpose of facilitating and supporting the creation of social networks between Danes and international employees. The only barriers to these factors are expected to pertain to budget and resources.

Offer Danish language courses

The first factor that was identified, where organizations have a direct influence on the facilitation of social networks between international employees and Danes is with regards to offering Danish language courses. As mentioned above, learning the Danish language is argued to be highly beneficial for international employees who want to socialize with Danes. Moreover, "[...] in a working environment and from an integration perspective, the Danish language is important. From the perspective of keeping the expats in Denmark for a longer period language courses are also important" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 28). This further emphasizes the significance of learning the Danish language and highlights that although many Danes are very proficient English speakers, speaking English is not enough from a retention standpoint, as "[...] several of the respondents pointed to the language barrier as a reason for leaving [...]" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 52).

Furthermore, learning the Danish language is not merely important for socializing purposes. It is also important if employees wish to gain permanent residence and citizenship in Denmark. To apply for permanent residence in Denmark, the international employees must "[...] pass the Danish language test 2 (Prøve i Dansk 2), or a Danish exam of an equivalent or higher level" (Ny I Danmark, 2019). The significance hereof has evidently been recognized by several of the organizations where the interviewed employees work as many of them offer Danish language courses to their employees. Hence, the companies that do not already offer language courses are recommended to do so or to facilitate some kind of collaboration to ensure access to the publicly available language courses for their employees. Yet, seeing as both time and money were found to be barriers to learning the Danish language from the interviewees' standpoint, companies should consider offering the courses as remuneration and ensure that the courses are scheduled in a way that takes the workload of the employees into consideration.

This discussion re-emphasizes how language plays a role in the creation of in-groups and out-groups. Hence, as mentioned in the literature review, insufficient HCL proficiency can result in out-group categorization by HCNs.

Create awareness of language at work

To avoid this out-group differentiations based on Danish language proficiency, organizations should create awareness of how language is used at the workplace. As evident from the analysis, the use of Danish also had an influence international employees' ability to participate in social conversations and to the extent they were able to participate in formal meetings and conversations such as quarterly meetings and knowledge sharing between employees in the office. This view was also emphasized in the Expat Study (2014) where several of the expats mentioned: "[…] that the corporate language is English, while a lot of the internal communication, however, is in Danish" (p. 28).

To tackle these language issues, The Expat Study concluded that expats emphasized "[...] the importance of having a policy regarding language" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 28). However, one of the Danish interviewees highlighted that several challenges pertain to creating a language policy: "The thing is here that it's extremely difficult to formulate a policy which takes into consideration all possible events" (Interviewee Y). Moreover, Interviewee Y mentioned his place of employment had created an awareness campaign to create an open dialogue of the consequences of language choices at work, instead of merely formulating a language policy: "So instead of having a policy as such we decided to do a language awareness campaign [...] and basically talked about the consequences of language choice" (Interviewee Y). The interviewee stated why such language campaigns were necessary:

> "The balance we're trying to strike is between being international and using English as a normal vehicle of communication, but at the same time being a Danish organization that operates in a Danish context and is connected to the society through Danish rather than through English" (Interviewee Y).

This emphasizes that companies operating in Denmark and in Danish society will always be exposed to the Danish language to some degree. Accordingly, the type of organization that international employees work in can be argued to have an effect on the extent to which Danish is used at work. As concluded in Expat Insider, 67% of international employees work in Danish organizations and only 17% work in international organizations in Denmark (Oxford Research, 2014). Therefore, it is important to find a balance between the English and the Danish language.

However, it is imperative to keep in mind that the use of language is subject to both Danish and international employees. Although language proficiency influences the level of complexity of the conversations. As mentioned above, it is imperative that if nation specific subgroups do exist within companies that they are also mindful not to exclude any of the other colleagues by speaking their own native tongue amongst each other. Therefore, it is important that people are aware of the consequences of how people choose to use language.

Another recommendation for creating awareness of how language is used in the workplace is to appoint language ambassadors who can advocate for speaking the English language. This was also mentioned by one of the interviewees as a recommendation for organizations going forward: "[...] I think one thing that could help would be to have people advocating for speaking English, and as managers, they're usually role models so that they also are the front-runners keep speaking English with colleagues" (Interviewee F). This may beneficial as one of the interviewees mentioned that it sometimes could seem very unnatural speaking English if both individuals in the conversation were Danes that naturally shared the same mother tongue. Having language ambassadors could therefore help reinforce a company's language policy by having managers actively taking a leading role in driving behavioral change. Hence, having language ambassadors could serve as daily reminders to reinforce the corporate language and thus serve as support for or supplement to language policies. Some of the Danish interviewees also pointed out, with time interactions in English between Danes began to feel natural.

Appoint a Danish buddy

Another way for organizations to facilitate social networks between international employees and Danes is to appoint a Danish buddy, similar to the abovementioned Culture Host Program offered by IHC. The importance hereof was recognized by both the interviewees as well as in The Expat Study, which found that "[…] 45 % of the expats find assistance with [...] buddy programs, mentorships, etc. as important" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 28). Buddy programs were found to provide several benefits for the international employees. First, having a Danish buddy can help support the creation of a social network with Danes, as the premise of the program is based on Danish employees who have voluntarily offered to assist their foreign colleagues to socially adjust. As many of the interviewees mentioned that having made one Danish friend or getting a Danish partner opened a door into a network of other Danish friends, the buddy can also potentially serve

as a link to gaining other Danish acquaintances. Assigning Danish buddies was also recognized by Linda Duncan Wendelboe as an instrumental method to securing the social adjustment of international employees that companies can employ:

> I think the key to opening doors to networks, both personal and direct relations, is getting a buddy when you come to a new city or get a new job. It's a good start if the company assigns a buddy because this buddy can really introduce you to a lot of things, also after working hours. The buddy can give you some pointers of where to go and what's happening and so on (Wendelboe, 2019).

Several interviewees shared their astonishment of how international employees without a Danish partner manage to settle in and navigate in their new life in Denmark. This shows that most international interviewees see that there is a need for support that exceeds that which colleagues can provide. Therefore, a buddy may be able to assist with matters that go beyond what is typically discussed with members of the team. Also, various international interviewees mentioned that they were reluctant to ask too many questions to their peers at work as they felt that they would be a burden to those around them: "[...] if you are a foreigner, you are already a bit anxious about not asking too many questions, not disturbing, not making yourself noticed" (Interviewee M). This coupled with the fact that many interviewees noted that Danes are not known for inquiring the other way around makes the buddy program particularly helpful in a Danish setting. As one interviewee explains: "[...] when I do ask help people are friendly. They are very friendly, but not spontaneously helpful" (Interviewee Q). Therefore, a buddy program creates an open invitation where international employees can ask about all of their questions and concerns to a qualified individual who is a Danish expert.

However, one of the barriers to such buddy programs is the fact that such initiatives are seldom a part of the employee's job description and will typically lay outside of their contractual obligations cf. literature review. As a result, it is imperative that the benefits for the Danish employees are made explicit, such as the opportunity it creates to develop international experience. This opportunity is anticipated to be valued by various Danish employees, as a recent study found that between 50-60 % of Danish employees are already working abroad or are willing to work abroad (Strack et al., 2018). It may be difficult to reinforce extrinsic rewards or other incentives, wherefore

the benefits of voluntarily participating in these must be communicated clearly. This is a task for the companies, that should also mention how participating becoming a buddy can be done in a time-efficient manner by e.g. consulting with the international employee over lunch so that the imposition of the Danish employees' calendar is minimized. It is therefore important that from a company-standpoint the buddy programs are thoughtfully planned to ensure that the potential benefits are reaped. This is further recognized by Linda Duncan Wendelboe: "But of course, you need to do the buddy match in a sensible way - it needs to be somebody you can relate to as an expat" (Wendelboe, 2019).

Optimizing onboarding

Organizations can, in addition to offer buddy programs, also reevaluate their current onboarding strategies in relation to international employees. As evident in the literature review, the preponderance of previous solutions mainly centers on the expat's role in the adjustment process and creation of social networks in the host country. The evidence provided in this report clearly indicates that this focus is to some extent misplaced, as both the international employees and the Danish employees should be included in the process.

To create a better experience and start in Denmark, Interviewee Z emphasized the importance of having a Human Resources (HR) function where employees are aware of the implications of moving to a new country and are able to empathize with the challenges that the international employee meets: "[...] our HR department doesn't have a good reputation for this because I think also you need to have lived abroad to understand what it's like to move abroad" (Interviewee Z). This perception that Danes have difficulty empathizing with the challenges that the international employees face seems to be a recurrent theme. Hence, a HR function that consists of solely Danes to welcome international employees may prove problematic. The recommendation is, therefore, to also recruit non-Danes to such HR functions, or Danes that have had similar experiences of working abroad. Making sure that international employees get a good start is vital as the reception of international employees by the workplace "[...] is essential for the expats' ability to settle in Denmark as quick and easy as possible" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 22). At the same time, it currently seems as though company initiatives to support international employees presently are limited to the very beginning of the process, such as the first couple of months. This may prove challenging as the U-curve stipulates that culture-shock sets in after the honeymoon stage. Linda

Duncan Wendelboe (2019) also identified this tendency as she stated that after a period of time: "When they have started to get their head over water and looking around for something else than working, then they might be hit with reality". Yet, because the adjustment process of international employees is dependent on the individual it is uncertain when they will *be hit with reality*. Therefore, ongoing support from the organization is necessary.

Finally, it is worth noticing that several of the interviewees mentioned that a great place to find Danish friends were through their neighbors, i.e. place of residence. Therefore, companies that hire relocation companies who also offer assistance with housing must be aware that if the residences offered are only reserved for international employees, this may decrease the opportunity for international employees to gain contact with Danes. However, it is uncertain to what degree organizations are able to directly influence this, but it may be worth considering when choosing which relocation company to partner with.

Social activities

The last area which the organization has full control over is the type of social initiatives that the organization offers to its employees. Results from the Expat Study revealed that the majority of expats answered that they made friends through work and sports or recreational activities (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010). Accordingly, "[...] many workplaces have increased their range of activities for their international employees in the past few years, including [...] social integration in the workplace" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 9). Moreover, the Expat Study found that "all the expats, regardless of the size of their workplace, think that the workplace should assist with social networking and events. This shows that the expats find social networking important and may be difficult on their own" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 29). As a result, "the respondents calls [*sic*] for more socializing groups and networks" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 45).

The same view was to a certain extent mirrored by the interviewees from this study. Several of the interviewees mentioned having participated in various social activities at work in order to meet new people and create a social network. However, the friends made from work in these cases mainly seemed to be other international employees as Danes were found not participate as frequently in these social events and activities. Also, most of the interviewees mentioned that the driving force behind such social initiatives and teambuilding activities was often the international employees

themselves. The interviewees unanimously held the perception that international teams tend to plan more activities than if the team predominantly consisted of Danish employees.

One of the main differences in the way HCNs and international employees perceive social activities, is the value they ascribe to them. Danes tend to view these as an extension of work, whereas the international employees are very dependent on this type of social interaction:

> [...] especially for foreign people, when you move to a different country potentially your only social life is your work life [...] Like a Christmas party for a Dane is like, okay, I have to go since it's at work, but for a foreigner it's a very big thing. The value is much higher for a foreign person (Interviewee L).

This supports findings from The Expat Study which found that 76% of expats make friends at work (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010). However, the study does not reveal whether the friends found at work are fellow internationals or Danish.

The individual

When looking at the factors on an individual level, several of these can also be manipulated by the organization in order to facilitate the creation of social networks between Danes and international employees. Sappinen (1993) argued that the most important step in adjusting to a new culture is awareness, understanding and acceptance of cultural differences between the home and host culture. Therefore, it is deemed important to explore avenues to improve and expand culture knowledge, which will be elaborated upon below.

Provide culture training to all employee

The first aspect that the organization is able to manipulate on the individual level is that they can provide culture training to align the international employees' expectations with reality. The importance of receiving culture training was emphasized in The Expat Study as 52% of expats in Denmark found "[...] it important that the workplace offers cross-cultural training [...]" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 29). This may indicate that internationals acknowledge the value of learning about cultural differences, which, furthermore, correlates with the findings from the interviews in this study. Yet, even though the interviewees had many different

nationalities, none of the interviewees mentioned having completed or being offered any forms of cultural training, neither international employees nor Danes. Instead, several of the interviewees had chosen to seek out knowledge about Denmark on their own, before arriving in Copenhagen. These interviewees all acknowledged the importance of being aware of specific Danish traits which in turn had helped them create a social network.

Therefore, it is recommended that organizations offer cross-cultural training which can help international employees become aware of the Danish social norms, culture and Danes in general. This may be beneficial, as the analysis showed that the expectations shared by the interviewees differed greatly, both in terms of whether they had any as well as the content of these expectation. Moreover, the analysis highlighted that only few international employees had any expectations regarding the social aspect of moving to Denmark. Yet, surprisingly, The Expat Study found that "41% of the respondents are more negative about the openness of the Danes after living in Denmark than they were before arriving. Only 11% have changed their opinion to a more positive impression of the Danes" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 70).

The aspect of not being aware of the difficulties of making Danish friends was highlighted by Linda Duncan Wendelboe. She stated that international employees "[...] might not have heard about that there is a problem with Danes not being that welcoming and maybe they are welcoming, they just do it in their own Danish way, which is hard to decode for foreigners coming" (Wendelboe, 2019). The same challenge was acknowledged by Interviewee M:

> When you picture a Dane, you see this blond girl, very pretty with blue eyes, very well formulated with an education. So, people imagine this, you know, little summer house with the red and white square duvet on the top and everybody is eating leverpostej and frikadeller. Yeah, so I think that Danes have a perception of what reality is that is not matching what foreigners are seeing. I think there's a mismatch there (Interviewee M).

Hence, employees who had made efforts to prepare themselves before arriving or had received information about the country and population seemed to cope better with the difficulties of becoming friends with the Danes as they were prepared for the Denmark-specific struggles.

Moreover, several of the interviewees stated that becoming friends with Danes is a slow process which can take several years.

Therefore, aligning expectations should go beyond offering practical support, such as housing and language courses, to additionally explain the nuances and differences in Danish culture. Such aspects could cover information pertaining to politeness, privacy and personal space, which are aspects that several interviewees, who considered themselves as familiar with Danish culture, saw as some of the barriers that made Danes seem cold in the eyes of foreigners. Yet, when knowing about these social rules, that by some may be considered as gross generalizations of Danish behavior, international employees are expected to be able to navigate in social settings easier. Correspondingly, if the international employees understand in advance why Danes behave the way that they do, the perceived barriers may potentially disappear completely.

Several international interviewees mentioned that a recurring trait that they perceived as characteristic of Danes is that they are not particularly open and inviting towards strangers. This finding was mirrored by the Expat Study which found that "only 30% of expats rate Danes as open and inviting people, while a relatively large percentage (43%) finds that Danes are not very open or inviting" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 62). If international employees know about this trait that was perceived again and again by the interviewees, they may not take this behavior to heart in the same degree as they otherwise would. Regardless, organizations should encourage their Danish employees to acknowledge and minimize the prevalence of this characteristic:

> We see that at work Danes are extremely open for inviting foreigners into their teams, and into their work projects, and so on. My advice to Danes would don't be so scared of doing it after hours as well. And you don't have to go through the whole three-course meal dinner if you want to invite somebody over to grab a bite after work. You can just serve spaghetti Bolognese. It works for everybody. Just do what you normally would do and just invite people in. Don't make it so complicated (Wendelboe, 2019).

Therefore, as mentioned in the literature review, Toh & DeNisi (2007) and Caligiuri & Lazarova, (2002) argue that organizations should provide culture training for both HCNs - in this case Danes -

and international employees in order to heighten cultural awareness and eliminate biases and stereotypes. Furthermore, it could also be beneficial for organizations to consider providing training about Danish culture to the Danish employees so they are aware of potential characteristics that they may exhibit that serve as barriers to welcoming people from other cultures.

From a company perspective, it is hence important to be aware that all employees will be different and thus experience the potential challenges to create social networks in Denmark differently: "When international professionals decide to expatriate, be it alone or with their families, the attitude towards integration will vary depending on the person [...] the attitude of the expat plays an important role in making friends and acquaintances in Denmark" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, 2010, p. 67). Therefore, although the organization can attempt to manipulate the factors that influence the creation of social networks for international employees, it is important to remember that there are some factors that are rendered almost impossible for the company to manipulate, such as facilitating romantic relationships between Danes and international employees. As such, similar factors remain outside the scope of this assignment and of what is considered appropriate for organizations to influence, even though several interviewees suggested that organizations should offer matchmaking services: "Yeah, they should definitely do matchmaking. Yeah, I'm serious" (Interviewee Z).

Ultimately, organizations cannot facilitate the creation of social networks between international employees and local Danes on their own. As Linda Duncan Wendelboe puts it: "[...] companies can't do it alone. The expats can't do it alone. The municipalities can certainly not do it alone either. Therefore, we need a mix of these to create a set-up that works" (Wendelboe, 2019).

5.4 Limitations of the research

Although attempts were made throughout to prevent bias from affecting the results of this thesis, researcher bias may have had an effect on the findings of this study as both researchers are Danes and are, hence, expected to view this issue from a Danish perspective. This may also have affected the reliability of the data collection, as different answers may have been generated from the interviewees if the researchers had not been Danes. Moreover, this is a master thesis and is thus written by business university students, which may further limit this study in terms of the literature used:

> The research process for early career researchers can be a complex task which may be compounded by text books (and university courses) which fail to adequately substantiate the difficulties of the process, fail to explore the role of the research paradigm and perpetuate a perceived and unhelpful dichotomy between qualitative and quantitative methodology despite the plethora of research which is now combining the two (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 8).

Additionally, as both researchers have had previous experience working in large, international organizations, they do not fully adhere to the guidelines that typically drive ethnographic studies, where the researchers should aim to have a naïve and childlike approach to the phenomenon being researched.

Limitations were also identified in terms of the specific sample that was selected for the study. The sample range was limited to the Copenhagen area, as the majority of expats, 60%, were found to reside in the capital area (Oxford Research, 2014). This fact was used to justify the scope of the thesis, but of course also limits the findings as these may not be generalizable on a national scale. Many interviewees speculated that moving to regions outside of Copenhagen would create more challenges for the international employee. Yet, the nationwide The Expat Study found that when it comes to socializing with Danes "there were no significant differences due to which region they live in or their country of origin" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 44). Moreover, as a result of the researchers' network, the sample chosen for this thesis is somewhat limited to the private sector, as only one interviewee worked in the Danish public sector. Finally, a limitation of the sampling strategy pertained to the binary categorizations of either being grouped as a Dane or an international employee. This sharp distinction affected several of the interviewees. An example of this was that one of the interviewees had Danish parents, but had been raised abroad. This gave rise to the discussion of when individuals are regarded as being Danish or as being considered an international employee.

Moreover, this research paper solely focuses on the retention of international employees. This does not mean that the attraction of international employees is not an equally important field of research, but once international talents have relocated to Denmark retention is necessary to ensure the

organization's return on investment. Also, if a significant number of international employees leave their assignment in Denmark prematurely, this can in turn potentially harm the Danish image and thus the ability to attract new international talents.

Finally, in ethnographic field work, cultural inferences can be made from three sources; what people say, what people do and which artefacts that people use. Yet, in this thesis the spoken word is the only source of information that is analyzed and made cultural inferences from. Including observational studies or studies of artefacts could thus potentially have strengthened the findings of this study.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Albeit, this research study managed to identify numerous factors that influence the process of creating social networks in Denmark, there is still a lot to uncover within this field of research. The initial encouraging results indicate that there is more to gain from investigating this field in more detail. Future research should, therefore, continue to explore whether variations from this study exist in other regions in Denmark. Furthermore, additional research is recommended to explore these factors via observational studies, to ascertain whether the findings correlate with what the interviewees say that they do. Also, it could be interesting to examine what the countries that scored high on the parameters relating to social adjustment do that works and whether their initiatives can be replicated and applied in other countries.

Additionally, a longitudinal study could be interesting to conduct in order to examine whether any of the recommendations that are presented above would have any significant impacts on the process of creation of social networks. Finally, recent political developments in Denmark were briefly touched upon in the analysis, but as these are outside of the scope of the company these were not researched further. However, a more detailed discourse analysis on the current political discourses could be interesting to examine from an in-group favoritism and out-group differentiation standpoint using SIT.

5.6 Applicability of the research study

After each interview was conducted, every interviewee was asked whether they wanted to receive an e-mail with the key findings from this study. All interviewees accepted this offer and proclaimed

that they were very interested in sharing these findings with their broader networks, both at work and outside work. The research presented in this study can thus possibly be used by the management from companies in Copenhagen from which the sample is derived.

Furthermore, this thesis can encourage Danes to be more aware of how they impact the retention of international employees. This also entails that companies can use the results from this study to ease to the facilitation of social networks among foreigners and Danes, which in turn could have a positive impact on retention in Denmark. Moreover, this thesis adds to existing literature on expatriate adjustment, the role of social networks and which barriers exist to creating these. Also, the findings from this study prove that HCL is a significant driver for unlocking friendships with Danes. Regardless of the size of the group that leaves their assignment in Denmark prematurely: "[...] the characteristics of and assessments from this group are highly relevant. The reason why they leave is an important piece of knowledge to gain if Denmark wishes to be even better in retaining expats" (Oxford Research, 2014, p. 6). This research study thus seeks to uncover the factors that influence international employees' decision to leave, but also confirms that retention of international employees is still a huge issue in Denmark.

Lastly, Kvale (2007) argues that findings from interviews can ensure analytic generalization, which "[...] involves a reasoned judgement about the extent to which the findings from one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation" (p. 127).

5.7 Summary

The objective of this section was to discuss the findings from the analysis in relation to the research questions presented in the introduction. Findings from the InterNations' report and from previous literature were confirmed, as creating social networks between HCNs and international employees was found to be challenging. Contrarily, the international employees' ability to create social networks with other internationals seemed to have few barriers, whereas their ability to create social networks and interact with Danes proved to be particularly challenging. The findings from the analysis also confirmed that the organization are perceived to play a vital role in the facilitation of social networks between Danish and international employees, as organizations may have a lot to gain from such investments. This is also in alignment with the literature that suggests that it is in the

interest of the organization to facilitate relationships between expatriates and HCNs as it can help international employees adjust to their new host country and ensure retention.

The second part of the discussion focused on which of the identified factors from the analysis that the organization can manipulate, either directly or indirectly to facilitate social networks between international employees and Danes. This lead to the following suggestions: increase contact with IHC, strengthen collaboration with public services, offer Danish language courses, create awareness of language within the organization, appoint Danish buddies, optimize the onboarding process, offer social activities, provide culture training to international employees to align expectations and provide culture training to Danish employees to create awareness of the barriers that they may consciously or subconsciously contribute to.

Moreover, limitations of the research study were discussed. These included researcher bias, the literature chosen, the companies that the sample was drawn from as well as the scope of this thesis, which solely focuses on the creation of social networks based on what the interviewees said.

Furthermore, recommendations for future research were presented. This included exploring regions in Denmark other than Copenhagen, conducting observational studies, find best-practice examples from countries that successfully facilitate social networks between HCNs and international employees and research their applicability to other countries as well as conducting discourse analyzes to explore how the political developments in Denmark affect the adjustment process of international employees.

Finally, the applicability of this thesis was outlined. This study can thus encourage Danes to become more aware about the role that they play in relation to the retention of international employees in Denmark. The recommendations presented in this study can thus be adopted by organizations that employ international employees, as these are deemed to affect how social networks with HCNs are created.

CONCLUSION

06 CONCLUSION

In this thesis, the factors influencing international employees' ability to create a social network in Denmark were explored. Moreover, the role that organizations play and the factors which they can manipulate to facilitate the creation of social networks were discussed.

In relation to the first research question, it was found that a plethora of factors had an influence on international employee's ability to create a social network in Denmark. These factors were grouped within three themes; societal, organizational and individual.

In relation to the second research question, organizations were found to play a pivotal role in the facilitation of social networks between international employees and HCN. Moreover, the findings concluded that organizations are able to manipulate several factors within the three identified themes to varying degrees.

The Expat Study argued that "social networks play a pivotal role, in retaining and integrating international employees [...]" (Oxford Research & The Copenhagen Post, p. 17). This was further supported in this study, where multiple interviewees emphasized the significance of creating social networks in Denmark as one of the key drivers to thriving during their stay.

This research study thus concludes that this is a highly complex challenge that Denmark currently faces. Accordingly, this thesis acknowledges all factors identified from the analysis as important, although not all factors were deemed relevant for the scope of this study. Therefore, to ensure that Danish companies are able to retain the international talents that are currently not available within Denmark's borders, the focus on expatriate adjustment should shift from solely being perceived as the responsibility of expats to also include the role of HCNs. Moreover, both the primary and secondary sources analyzed in this thesis suggest that organizations have an imperative role to play in creating incentives for HCNs to socialize with international employees. Additionally, the empirical data collection provided evidence that the experiences and perceptions held were very much reliant on the individual. Therefore, whether the employees are Danish or international, the different stages of their life, cultural backgrounds and personalities, these are factors that organizations must recognize as outside of their scope. In turn, this advocates for support that is tailored to the individual rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

This thesis, hereby, fills a gap in previous literature, as specific recommendations for organizations operating in Denmark were lacking prior to this research study. Furthermore, this study crystalizes the importance of the HCNs role in the process of expatriate adjustment as the findings yielded from the analysis confirm that they play a vital role. Accordingly, the results from this research study provide new insights on how organizations can improve the retention of international employees in Denmark.

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