ENCAPSULATION: EXPATRIATES INSIDE A COMPLEX WORLD
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ABSTRACT. The objective of this conceptual paper is to synthesise psychodynamics and paradox inherent in complex situations to investigate the cause and effects of identity shifts and self-organisation particularly apposite expatriation. The methodology used will be to find intersections and parallels among psychodynamic theories¹ to demonstrate that inside the paradox of expatriation is other-organisation, which is basically defined as the unorganised becoming organised in ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ways and with formal and planned interventions. We will also see that self-organisation works with other-organisation to keep one safely ‘held’ between feelings of being isolated or engulfed. Whether real or imagined, perceptions of being isolated and engulfed lead to the confusion or pain of becoming encapsulated.

INTRODUCTION
Together, effective expatriates and global business strategy culminate in the necessity to have “qualified global managers who have competencies that differentiate the organizations’ strategic choices” (Harvey & Novicevic, 2001, p. 69). Expatriates are to demonstrate that their internal complexity or all that which comprises their identities, match their external complexity – a psychodynamic² process that incorporates complexity theory’s law of requisite variety (Ashby, 1962). In terms of complexity, “identity is a self-structure – an

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internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history” (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999, p. 557). On the one hand, there is required self-organisation that is comprised of two competing interests: 1) the capacity to commit to one’s beliefs; and 2) engagement in self-exploration and self-expansion. While preserving their own psychic centeredness that includes commitment to assumptions underpinning “vocational, ideological, sexual and interpersonal values” (Kroger, 2003, p. 201), psychodynamic hardship occurs when at the same time, and across borders, expatriates need, also, to maintain the organisation’s identity (see Carr 1993, 1994). On the other hand, identity development is a destructive-reconstructive event (Spielrein, 1912/1994). It seems fitting that such ambiguity exists in highly complex situations, which in relationship to global management transcends the law of requisite variety into the psychodynamically complex paradox of expatriation: the more one attempts to protect oneself from the ambiguities of complexity, the more one is open to perceived attacks from that which comprises such variety.

The objective of this conceptual paper is to synthesise psychodynamics and paradox inherent in complex situations to investigate the cause and effects of identity shifts and self-organisation particularly apposite expatriation. The methodology used will be to find intersections and parallels among psychodynamic theories to demonstrate that inside the paradox of expatriation is other-organisation, which is basically defined as the unorganised becoming organised in ‘good’ or ‘bad’ ways and with formal and planned interventions. We will also see that self-organisation works with other-organisation to keep one safely ‘held’ between feelings of being isolated or engulfed. Whether real or imagined, perceptions of being isolated and engulfed lead to the confusion and pain of identity dissolution.

First, we ask readers to familiarise themselves with the case study offered for reflection. We review psychodynamic theory on identity dissolution that informs us of related ways adults can feel about being isolated and engulfed, at the same time. The remainder of this paper explores the interrelationships among psychodynamic theory and the complexity of expatriation.
THE CASE STUDY

He’s a Seoulman and he is KING....

In the spring of 2001, Peter Chung was climbing the corporate ladder with impressive speed. A 24-year-old Princeton grad who started his career with Merrill Lynch, Chung was stationed in Seoul, South Korea, working for the Carlyle group, a Washington, D.C., investment firm whose somber conservatism makes John Ashcroft look like Richard Simmons. He soon e-mailed a dozen friends about his new lifestyle.

So, I’ve been in Korea for a bout a week and a half now and what can I say, LIFE IS GOOD. I’ve got a spanking brand new 2000 sq. foot 3 bedroom apartment with a 200-sq ft terrace running the entire length of my apartment with a view overlooking Korea’s main river and nightlife.

Why do I need 3 bedrooms? Good question... the main bedroom is for my queen size bed... where CHUNG is going to [expletive] every hot chick in Korea over the next 2 years (5 down, 1,000,000,000 left to go)...the second bedroom is for my harem of chickies, and the third bedroom is for all of you [expletive] when you come out to visit my ass in Korea.

I go out to Korea’s finest clubs, bars and lounges pretty much every other night on the weekdays and every day on the weekends too (I think in about 2 months, after I learn a little bit of the buy-side business I’ll probably go out every night on the weekdays). I know I was a stud in NYC but I pretty much get about, on average 5-8 phone numbers a night and at least 3 hot chicks that say that they want to go home with me every night I go out.

I love the buy-side. I have bankers calling me every day with opportunities and they pretty much cater to my every whim-you know, golfing events, lavish dinners, a night out clubbing. The guys I work with are also all chill-I live in the same apartment building as my VP and he drives me around in his Porsche to work and when we go out. CHUNG is KING of his domain here in Seoul.
Oh, by the way, someone’s gotta start FedExing me boxes of condoms, I brought out about forty but I think I’ll run out of them by Saturday.

Later, Chung....

Chung’s braggadocio was so egregious that even his supposed pals couldn’t believe it and started forwarding the e-mail with “Amazing Cautionary Tale” in the subject field. Chung was soon famous in financial circles around the world. His bosses at the Carlyle Group, unamused, [forced] him to resign two days later. (Horowitz, Athitakis & Lasswell, 2004)

**HOLDING THE AGGRESSIVE IMAGINER: C. FRED ALFORD**

_Eros_, the instinct for self-preservation, drives the individual’s need to participate in combined efforts to accomplish something that could not otherwise be completed through individual performance alone such as the conference of self-esteem to uphold self-efficacy and maintain self-concept. Immigration to and participation in (i.e. feeling somehow obligated to belong to) a new group conjures layers upon layers of ambiguity. There is a constant need to be a part of a group that is continually tempered with the individual’s fear of identity loss, “which means to accept that within each individual is the desire to be an autonomous individual, the desire to submerge oneself in the group, and a perpetual conflict between these two desires” (Alford, 1994, p. 5). Individual egoism is the perpetual drive to first protect that which comprises self interest, namely that of identity (Alford, 1994; Nitsun, 1996). In diametric opposition to the individual, “the group seeks first of all its own security. The creation of a less threatening environment is the group’s paramount task. Everything else, including the recognition of its individual members, is subordinated to it” (Bion, 1961/2001, cited in Alford, 1994, p. 27). Contiguousness of the individual/group relationship precipitates proleptic fantasies of immigrating to and participating within the group long before reaching physical proximity to any others. Fantasies associated with anxieties from the belief of impending identity annihilation set the stage for the individual’s belief in the group’s “unlimited power and an insurmountable peril” (Freud, 1921/1985, p. 113).
In the absence of good mental health, adequate reflexivity is not generated and especially by the adult turned “aggressive imaginer” (Alford, 1994, p. 45). Aggressive imaginers are those in regressive states when they lack the psychic constitution to effectively relate to new people and in particular, those new group members with whom the aggressive imaginer now needs to work. Adults become aggressive imaginers when they believe, rightly or wrongly, that the leader of the group is unable to protect group members from identity dissolution. In other words, there is a fear that the group leader refuses to lead, which provokes the ego to mismanage the id “as a wish for self-annihilation in the face of unendurable frustration and suffering” (Segal, 1993, cited in Nitsun, 1996, p. 151) to end the longing for the dyadic relationship experienced during infancy (Alford, 1994; Nitsun, 1996).

The aggressive imaginer fantasises that he or she is not being appropriately held as was once remembered during the primal relationship. During disequilibrating events, the purpose of holding is to keep the individual suspended between the poles of complete autonomy or isolation and submergence/engulfment or what is referred to as “groupie” (Alford, 1994, p. 73). The holding pattern is maintained when the ‘mother’ or formal leader is perceived to be somewhere between overly kind and helpful, on the one hand, and brutal and sadistic, on the other. This holding pattern serves to eliminate, respectively, perceived existence at either extreme of dependency or isolation (Alford, 1994). If the holding pattern is not maintained because the mother refuses to mother or the formal leader refuses to lead, the aggressive imaginer instinctively feels an oncoming implosion of despair or burst toward oblivion, which in either case would place the self into unbounded instability (Stacey, 1992/2003, 2003), or deep in the depths of the unknown or chaos. But why does the aggressive imaginer remain in the situation? It is because he or she feels dependent upon aspects of the situation, and or feels obligated or forced to remain but is also fearful of what is or what may happen in the situation. This is the paradox of inclusion – the aggressive imaginer “needs” to be inside and outside of the new unknown group (or other traumatising situations), at the same time.

In the aggressive imaginer’s fantasy, the formal leader’s refusal to lead is paralleled to the splitting of the breast so only its bad components are selectively perceived. The ensuing paradox is that to
keep from dissolution, the aggressive imaginer learns to feel good by casting away good breast reminders and holding in introjected bad breast reminders This makes the perception or picture of the event seem all black or white; all bad or good The following section is a brief review of encapsulation – another psychodynamic defense during identity dissolution – that keeps the adult in regressive states.

ENCAPSULATION: BUILDING THE PSYCHODYNAMIC RUSSIAN DOLL

According to Tustin (1972) and Hopper (1991), encapsulation is “a defence against annihilation anxiety through which a person attempts to enclose, encase and to seal-off the sensations, affects and representations associated with it” (p. 607). Annihilation anxiety arises from feelings of helplessness, rejection and catastrophic loss the individual has herself or himself created or has allowed to affect her or him, even in the earliest stages of life. In all cases of encapsulation, the individual has experienced some early childhood trauma, a wound from the person who was to keep persecutorial attacks at bay: “Primitive sensations of annihilation anxiety are especially likely to follow a traumatic break in the relationship between an infant and mother…” (Hopper, 1991, p. 609). When the ego and/ or that part of the ego-ideal are impacted in this way, there is a simultaneous need to persecute the adversarial object that causes fear of that same object or its representations:

To a degree, traumatic experience is ubiquitous during the earliest phases of life and, therefore, it is likely that all people will have experienced fear of annihilation or at least intimations of it. It may be assumed that the primal fear of annihilation is the prototype of all subsequent experience of this type of anxiety, and of the extremely primitive fantasies, wishes, impulses and sensations associated with it, and that the working through of such fears will inform the subsequent experience of all other types of anxiety. Of course, people are likely to vary in the intensity of such experience and in their ability to make constructive use of it, depending upon the usual, proverbial mixture of social and constitutional factors (Hopper, 1991, p. 609).
THE PROCESS OF ENCAPSULATION

Encapsulation is a defense against annihilation anxiety that is akin to identity dissolution. The process of encapsulation develops in five phases that can be summarised as follows:

Phase 1: Introjection

When the individual begins to feel as if he or she is falling apart or is fragmented, there is an overwhelming desire to hate all that which is perceived to facilitate identity dissolution remembered during the times of hopelessness and loss in infancy. In a masochistic act related to primary envy of the lost or abandoning object, the individual’s tendency is to fuse and confuse all representations contributing to the fragmentation. One result of fusion and confusion is denial of some or all parts the mixture, which has been formed into a conglomerate of hated objects. Even the start of encapsulation is based in paradox: “‘in the beginning’ [there is] a sense of loss that follows an actual deprivation based upon the prior wish to reject the object and, therefore, that the fear of annihilation is based on the prior desire to annihilate” (Hopper, 1991, p. 608).

Phase 2: The Introjected Object

More detailed characteristics of the introjected object are a) it is an admixture concocted by first, overemphasising the negatives of the real abandoning object as it applies to the experience at hand; b) it includes those aspects of the self that have been lost as a result of the perceived trauma; and c) as a consequence of feeling traumatised, it is the “introjective development of a particular type of internal object within a particular type of internal space” (Hopper, 1991, p. 610). Encapsulation is like feeling a knot in an otherwise smooth piece of wood (Hopper, 1991; see also Spielrein, 1912/1994). One connection between Phases 1 and 2 is the paradox of size – the larger the mixture, the smaller or more encapsulated becomes the individual’s world. Therefore, it is not unusual for the encapsulated individual to seem as though he or she is excited or dramatic when in fact, these outward portrayals are diametrically opposed to that which is felt on the inside: “flatness of affect is one of the distinguishing characteristics...with encapsulations” (Hopper, 1991, p. 608; see also Klein, S., 1980).
Phase 3: Confusional Anxieties

In the absence of corrected perception, Phase 3 produces “further anxieties of fears of engulfment, suffocation, mastication and dissolution” (Hopper, 1991, p. 610). At this point, the individual experiences the situation as being even more bad or black because confusional anxiety is based on the fear of being controlled by and trapped within someone who is being controlled and trapped. In this phase also arises secondary envy, likely because the outer individual has more control than the inner individual being controlled. It is at this point that one can conceive the process is similar to the building of a Russian doll. The difference is that for the encapsulated psyche that builds walls through projection, the decorations or good aspects are painted-in while the exterior, the environment, is plainly bad or undifferentiated.

Phase 4: Secondary Fission and Fragmentation

It is at this point that the encapsulated individual – the inner most psyche – perceives the introjected object as being dangerous. Since there is no hope of escape, the individual regresses further into infantile splitting and establishes yet another barricade between fantasy and reality. At this point is the paradox of protection – the further one retreats, the closer he or she moves toward being engulfed; and therefore, becoming isolated.

Phase 5: Non-dialectical Oscillation

Under normal circumstances (i.e., with or without help), the individual would realise that he or she is in danger before becoming convinced that the situation is entirely black. There would be the integration of thesis (i.e. black) with antithesis (i.e. white) to create a better and different (i.e., synthesis) perception. Non-dialectical oscillation means no such synthesis will occur because there is no room for antithesis in this “state of structural stasis: although a process is evident, growth and development within the encapsulation are foreclosed” (Hopper, 1991, p. 610). Notwithstanding, oscillation does occur in that the individual attempts to find and use creative but repetitive ways of maintaining contact with the external object while withdrawing and finding ways of becoming rejected by it. Marcia (2002) explained foreclosure as a reattachment to ‘old’ values and
believes in ‘new’ situations that call for challenges to those same aspects.

**RELEASING THE RUSSIAN DOLL:**
**THE DISSOLUTION OF IDENTITY DISSOLUTION**

In psychodynamic space, the depressive position has been construed to be good and paranoid-schizoid position, bad, which in itself is a false depressive position. One might come to believe that the correct depressive position has been reached because there are some “all good” and some “all bad” objects in their experience. Or, it might be that there is too much good or too much bad in any object. These are constituents of a false depressive position that can become stonewalled by the bad parts of the paranoid-schizoid position. Once the ideal depressive position has been reached, no further splits between good and bad occur and adults may become habituated to their values, attitudes and beliefs to the extent that they never change regardless of that which goes on around them:

The depressive mode is one of integration, resolution, and containment, and if unopposed, leads to certainty, stagnation, closure, arrogance, and deadness. (Ogden, 1989, p. 30; see also Bion, 1961/2001)

If the good depressive position has as its contrary a bad paranoid-schizoid position, then the corollary is that the bad depressive position’s opposite extreme is the good schizoid position. According to Alford (1994) and Ogden (1989), the paranoid-schizoid position is good because in normal development we build reflexivity and wisdom to pass through this phase so through memory and fantasy, it is a constant enabler that is always available to us and so can never be truly transcended in adulthood:

The paranoid-schizoid mode provides the necessary splitting of linkages and opening up of the closures of the depressive position, thus re-establishing the possibility of fresh linkages and fresh thoughts. The integrative thrust of the depressive mode in turn provides the necessary antithesis for the paranoid-schizoid mode in limiting the chaos generated by the fragmentation of thought, the discontinuity of experience, and the splitting of self and object. (Ogden, 1989, p. 30)
ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Much of the literature on the management of expatriates speaks to the rules, conventions, and types of behavioural control mechanisms that expatriates’ managers can apply to get the best from their international employees (Black & Gregerson, 1999; Hofstede, 1980; Mezias & Scandura, 2005; Paul, 2001; Trompenaars, 1993). However, there is much less information explicating the instrumentality and the origins of these organisational behaviours. We believe that it is through the means of psychodynamic study that we can begin to unravel the paradox of expatriation and its influences on the individual and on groups:

A psychodynamic approach also recognizes that through the world of work, people pursue many different conscious and unconscious aims that have a complexity and a dynamic quality that much of the ‘motivational’ theories that are taught in management schools fail to recognize. This embrace of psychodynamics is less about a search for “facts” but for an understanding of underlying motivations and the meaning of human behaviour and experiences. (Carr & Lapp, 2006, p. 6)

Expatriate preparation contains high degrees of stereotypical centralisation and formalisation that can undermine collaborative processes required to support creativity and innovation required to work in unknown, complex environments (Soderberg & Holden, 2002). Reversion to “practises of preparation” is akin to innovation downsizing. Albert and Whetton (1985/2004) hypothesised that organisations were more likely to achieve new identities during growth periods, but less likely to accomplish identity divestiture during retrenchments: “Organizations tend to become committed to what they have been and seldom substitute new identifying characteristics for old ones” (p. 101). Due to overly stressed other-organisation in the home company, real international experience and adaptation are not always positively correlated in the host country. It is our contention that they do not work because the home organisation has first fostered high degrees of “patriate” dependencies that initiate psychodynamic defenses. In this sense, the parent company holds their own too closely and too strongly for too long a time and so the expatriate is more often than not, engulfed in a flood of preparatory processes that drown self-reflexivity and self-
reliance. On the other hand, the expatriate does not want to lose the assignment, so these memories of engulfment are repressed in the unconscious and false pretences of an internal locus of control prevail.

Another solution to adjustment would be to let expatriates alone so they can learn to hold their own, on their own. Self-organisation is other-organisation’s contrary:

It occurs when political interactions and dialogues between members of a group produce coherent behavior, despite the absence of formal hierarchy within that group or authority imposed from outside it.... Most managers are not used to the idea that a system, that is, a set of interactions, can control itself. (Stacey, 1992/2003, p.6)

Stacey was referring to employees’ managers, but we amend this list to include all management and employee participants alike. Self-organisation has been likened to the dynamic that begins with a “homogeneous species that has apparently adapted to its environment. When that species is subjected to an environmental stimulus or assault, several subspecies evolve in response” (Guastello, 1998; see also Kauffman, 1993). In the new country and culture, the expatriate would use memories to stabilise the experience of present-day flux (Letiche, 2000). With self-organisation and by at least the start of the second international assignment, the expatriate should be able to use past international experience as an adaptation accelerant in new and different environments. Certainly self-organisation would cut training and development costs and if the expatriate and her or his group were successful, would prove that she or he can handle additional, complex responsibilities. Yet, in her study on international experience and expatriate adjustment, Selmer (2002) found that a) only experience from the very same place had a strong, positive affect on adjustment; b) unrelated cultural experience did not facilitate expatriates’ psychological or sociocultural adjustments; c) for newcomers (i.e. non-entrenched expatriates), related cultural experience accelerated only some rather than all required adjustment aspects; and d) psychological adjustment was not impacted significantly by previous, related international experience. The presence of any of these four compromising positions during spatial and temporal change disrupts the holding pattern or causes identity fragmentation (Glass, 1994) threatening to
place the individual in unbounded instability (Stacey, 1992/2003, 2003) embodied by engulfment, or isolation:

The danger of psychosis posed by the fragmenting and evacuative processes of the paranoid-schizoid mode are contained in two ways: (1) “From above” by the finding capacity of ... the depressive mode; and (2) “From below” by the sensory continuity, rhythmicity, and boundedness of the autistic-contiguous mode (Ogden, 1989, p. 45).

Expatriates who strongly identify with the movements of their organisation’s identity, feel isolated when they are not held closely enough by the parent company.

Instead of learning to adapt, expatriates use home company remedies in host country situations and concentrate on finding ways to force environmental adaptation. During periods of engulfment and isolation anxiety, otherwise known as “culture shock” we believe repressed memories residing in the unconscious surface to affect controlling behaviours instilled by the parent organization and the host country (Carr & Lapp, 2005a; Lapp & Carr, 2005). For instance, using Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions, in the table below we can see that the United States of American and South Korea are diametrically opposed to one another.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Dimension</th>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Power Distance</th>
<th>Uncertainty Avoidance</th>
<th>Masculinity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Large</td>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>m^c=56</td>
<td>m^b=44</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>m^c=56</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>m^b=44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: ^a = approximate mean out of 100; ^b = approximate mean out of 110; ^c = approximate mean out of 112

In regard to individualism versus collectivism, the USA scored well above the mean and South Korea, well below: The USA values individual contributions more than her or his worth to society, in comparison to South Korea. South Korea has a larger power distance or higher adhesion to authoritarianism and dependency on superiors. The United States has a higher tolerance for uncertainty and is less risk adverse and this country has a culture dominated by males whereas South Korea’s is nurtured by females. More recently, Hofstede and Bond (1988) added the dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation or the degree to which a country is likely to hold values pertaining to creating future benefit at the cost of present-day desires (e.g. rather than risking future benefit to maintain or increase present-day desires): “South Korea is high on long-term orientation, whereas the United States is a more short-term oriented country” (Schermernhorn, Hunt & Osborn, 2003, p. 46). One can easily see that without the proper cultural preparation, a United States’ expatriate could have great difficulty adjusting independently (i.e. solely through self-organisation) to the South Korean business environment.

If real world experience is not likely to facilitate adjustment, it is much more unlikely that two-dimensional, ink on paper models will. But what is left? Our contention is that the right way to manage expatriates is to keep from managing them; to refrain from controlling them by holding them at extreme poles of engulfment or isolation. In line with complexity inherent in global management, our paper uses paradox to explain the paradox of expatriates. The conclusion of our paradox of the expatriate is that encapsulation of other-organisation is mitigated by partial identity dissolution (Carr & Lapp, 2005b; Spielrein, 1912/1994) of both the organisation and its expatriates. To push out of encapsulation, expatriates need to be held in a manner that allows for movement and rest between extremes of engulfment and isolation. It is these bounded migrations that facilitate growth out of other-organisation and an adopted external locus of control. Bounded instability is one means by which we learn about the complexity of expatriation in a complex world.
NOTES
1. To review foundational psychodynamic theory, the reader is encouraged to review the paper in this issue entitled “Compromising Positions” elsewhere in this volume.

2. In comparison to psychoanalysis that is more a treatment-oriented approach to psychic defense mechanisms, we use the term “psychodynamics” to imply a process of awareness of psychic defenses that inform our behaviours.

REFERENCES


