

**THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF
CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE
ADJUSTMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF
SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE WOMEN**

by

RIANA SCHREUDERS-VAN DEN BERGH

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DECLARATION

I, Riana Schreuders-van den Bergh, declare that *The facilitative role of cultural intelligence in the adjustment and career development of self-initiated expatriate women* is my own unaided work, both in content and execution.

All the resources I used for this study are cited and acknowledged in the reference list, by means of a comprehensive referencing system.

Apart from the normal guidance from my supervisor, I have received no assistance, except as stated in the acknowledgements.

I declare that the contents of this thesis have never before been used in order to obtain any qualification at any other tertiary institute.

I declare that the language in this study has been edited by Mrs Idette Noomé (MA, English) from the Department of English at the University of Pretoria.



RIANA SCHREUDERS-VAN DEN BERGH

09 May 2013

DATE

ABSTRACT

**THE FACILITATIVE ROLE OF CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE
IN THE ADJUSTMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT
OF SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATE WOMEN**

by

RIANA SCHREUDERS VAN DEN BERGH

SUPERVISOR: PROF. YVONNE DU PLESSIS
FACULTY: ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
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The study aimed to extend knowledge of women's self-initiated expatriation. Self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) take responsibility for their own careers, and such expatriation is often advocated as an alternative, boundaryless career option for women. However, little has previously been published about the experiences of SIE women or the role of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) in the cross-cultural adjustment of SIE women.

The research focused on the following questions:

- What linkages can be identified between the individual adjustment factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women?
- What insights can be gained about CQ as a facilitator of the adjustment of SIE women?

An Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) approach was used in the research. Two IQA focus groups were hosted in the Netherlands in April and June 2010. A total of 12 SIE women participated in Focus Group 1, and nine SIE women participated in Focus Group 2. The Systems Influence Diagrams (SIDs) representing the realities of the two groups were compared and were subsequently integrated into a combined new conceptual model represented by a final combined SID. The metaphor of Alice in Wonderland's journey of choice and chance was used to describe the final combined SID, which starts with the decision to expatriate and ends with personal/professional development.

The main outcomes are the following:

Contribution to knowledge – The study expands on the existing adjustment knowledge about SIE women, illustrating the facilitative role of CQ in the adjustment of SIE women. Experiential learning processes related to CQ were highlighted, and a new conceptual model for understanding the role of CQ in career development was proposed. In addition, key dilemmas faced by SIE women during the adjustment process were identified.

Contribution to professional practice – The study provides new insights to international HR departments and policy-makers into the challenges SIE women face, together with possible themes for supporting them through training, coaching, mentoring and adjustments to recruitment practices.

Contribution to paradigms of inquiry – No studies applying the IQA as a process to the exploration of expatriate adjustment have previously been published. This study explored the use of IQA as a methodological approach in this context.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my two grandmothers:
two strong women who both undertook their own journeys
of choice and chance, crossing borders,
and who gave me my Afro-Frisian roots.

Ouma Susanna Maria van den Bergh†



Beppe Froukje Veenstra



Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

Proverbs 4:5-6

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM STATEMENT



Photo 1.1 The start of this journey: Presenting the proposal for this research at the University of Pretoria in December 2009

(Right: Riana van den Bergh; Left: Prof. Yvonne du Plessis)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Intercultural sensitivity is not natural. It is not part of our primate past, nor has it characterized most of human history. Cross cultural contact usually has been accompanied by bloodshed, oppression, or genocide. The continuation of this pattern in today's world of unimagined interdependence is not just immoral or unprofitable – it is self-destructive. Yet in seeking a different way, we inherit no model from history to guide us.

Milton Bennet (1993:21)

This chapter provides a bird's eye view of the research. It introduces the broader research context of self-initiated expatriate (SIE) women and their adjustment in their new environment. This context then serves as a roadmap for understanding the qualitative research structure and flow of this thesis.

The key drivers that gave rise to the research are discussed, and the main gaps in the prior literature that this research aimed to address are identified. The aim of the research, its research questions and objectives are specified. Moreover, an overview of the relevant theoretical rationale that supports the research questions is presented. Key terms/concepts/constructs are defined to provide some insight into how these terms were operationalised in the research. The chapter concludes with an outline of the various chapters that constitute the research report set out in this thesis.

1.2 BACKGROUND

In today's world of hitherto unimaginable interconnectedness, our awareness has widened beyond the concept of seeing the smoke of a neighbouring village to worrying about the ashes of a volcano in a country near the North Pole that can bring the economic activity of a continent to a standstill. As globalisation picks up momentum, there is an increasing need for managers who can navigate

successfully through different value sets and cultural assumptions (Cole & McNulty, 2011:144; Stanek, 2000:232). In seeking a model to guide managers in this increasingly complex world, Earley, Ang and Tan (2006:5), Earley and Peterson (2004:100) and Thomas and Inkson (2003:14) have introduced the construct of Cultural Intelligence (CQ) to explain a key competence displayed by those global managers who are able to move successfully between different cultures, with chameleon-like qualities.

Expatriates who sojourn abroad are continuously in a state of “unsettlement”, where their existing, implicit cultural beliefs are being challenged. Swidler (1986:278) asserts that culture functions differently in settled and unsettled lives and, hence, culture *per se* is a poor predictor of future behaviours, actions and values (Swidler, 1986:282). The construct of CQ therefore aims to move beyond the traditional conceptions of culture by providing a framework within which individuals can continually challenge their existing cultural frame of reference by switching off their “cultural cruise control” (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:51). Thus, CQ theory may provide a useful basis for understanding the way in which self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) adapt to a host country’s culture.

The demand in the international arena is thus for a scarce resource – a rare group of people who are able to adjust easily to different cultural settings and work effectively in diverse, cross-cultural teams (Earley & Peterson, 2004:100). However, the aging workforce and declining population in Europe is placing significant pressure on the availability of talented employees who are willing and able to work. A study by Alphametrics (2005:x) undertaken for the European Commission stresses the implications of changing demographics for policy-makers and employers. According to forecasts, the demand for talented, highly educated employees will continue to increase, and it is expected that by 2018 there will be a general shortage of employees with high-level qualifications (Trinczek, 2010:8). Furthermore, the pool of talented managers who are willing to go abroad is declining, *inter alia*, because of dual-career issues and childcare matters, a lack of support for expatriates abroad, and inappropriate talent management systems at the international level (Collings, Scullion & Morley, 2007:199; ORC International, 2007; Selmer & Leung, 2003:244).

Despite the growing gap between demand and supply, women are still often overlooked for international assignments, although some progress has been made. This results in a “glass border” that hampers women’s career growth and contributes to the continued global underrepresentation of women in the higher echelons of management (Harris, 2002:177; Linehan & Walsh, 1999b:264; Vance & Paik, 2001:97). Women who wish to pursue international careers often have to overcome specific barriers such as tokenism and stereotypes; and they may first have to break through the glass ceiling in their home country before being able to break through the glass border (Hutchings, Lirio & Metcalfe, 2012:1767; Linehan, Scullion & Walsh, 2001:10; Vance & Paik, 2001:99). However, instead of being held back by these barriers, women have found various creative ways in which to fulfil their global aspirations, such as frequent international travel, or accepting domestic positions with international development opportunities (Hutchings *et al.*, 2012:1778).

Altman and Shortland (2008:210) suggest that current discourse on women in international assignments is shifting towards a “more inward-looking phase, with women’s engagement in international assignments for personal gain and self-discovery”. This shift is in line with the current trend in career development towards a more boundaryless or protean career model where an individual is responsible for his/her career development outside of the traditional organisational career (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009:1544). Women thus seem to be taking their careers into their own hands. Consequently, some authors suggest that self-initiated expatriation provides a lucrative alternative career path for women with international aspirations (Myers & Pringle, 2005:429; Vance, 2005:382). Arguments in favour of self-initiated expatriation suggest that it allows women to gain valuable international exposure and build cross-cultural competence at a much younger age than those of their male counterparts who opt for the traditional expatriate career track, placing the women in an advantageous position¹ (Vance, McNulty & Chauderlot, 2011). Others however, are of the opinion that SIEs are not valued in their host countries, and that SIE women are viewed as immigrants and are

¹ Vance *et al.* (2011) suggest that a traditional expatriate track through a multinational company may require up to 10 to 15 years of building internal credibility before an executive may be offered an expatriate assignment.

consequently underemployed (a brain waste) in their host countries (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010:283; Felker, 2011:78; Lee, Toney & Berry, 2009:46; Tharmsaseelan, Inkson & Carr, 2010:233). As a result, this largely invisible group of talented women is often overlooked in hiring decisions and research studies – very little is known about their career choices, adjustment experiences and the factors that influence their success in the international management arena (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Biemann & Andresen, 2010; McKenna & Richardson, 2007; Myers & Pringle, 2005; Vance *et al*, 2011).

Thorn (2009:488) is of the opinion that the number of SIEs will increase in future and that countries and organisations should leverage the benefit of the “cross-pollination” that is locked up in this valuable pool of professionals. SIE women could potentially form an essential resource in sustaining an organisation’s competitive advantage and responding to labour shortages in an aging population (Cole & McNulty, 2011:145).

Furthermore, Selmer and Leung (2003:251-253) found that, the more determined women are to pursue expatriate careers, the more likely they are to be successful and the easier they will adapt. This notion coincides with high CQ behaviour. Thomas and Inkson (2003:166) assert that women have the ability to develop a higher level of CQ than men, based on their interpersonal skills. Women often tend to have an apparently natural ability to establish interpersonal relationships, which then allows them to develop higher levels of CQ and enhances their ability to adjust to different cultures (Caliguri & Lazarova, 2002:769; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:166).

The next section illustrates the importance of the current research by exploring key concepts related to adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and CQ; highlighting the importance of women as an untapped pool of talent to address the need for international, culturally competent managers, and identifying some of the main gaps in the current literature and a rationale for addressing this gap.

1.3 THE RELEVANCE OF EXPLORING ADAPTATION, ADJUSTMENT, ACCULTURATION AND CQ FOR WOMEN

The constructs adjustment, adaptation and acculturation are the terms most commonly used in management research to explain the way in which expatriates and immigrants deal with cultural differences. In their taxonomy of expatriate adjustment, Haslberger and Brewster (2005:1) suggest that these three concepts can be used interchangeably to refer to any “process and result of change induced in individuals by the move into an unfamiliar cultural environment”. Although the constructs of adjustment, adaptation and acculturation do overlap to a certain degree, it is important to recognize the conceptual differences between these constructs and how they influence the expatriate experience. Harrison *et al.* (2004:209) also emphasise the need to clarify the differences between these concepts and how they are related to each other.

Berry (1997:14-15) suggests that *acculturation* is influenced by group-level, situational variables and individual-level, person/psychological variables. Some features which moderate the degree to which adaptation takes place in the long run, exist both prior to acculturation and during acculturation. Gender has a significant influence on acculturation and women may be “more at risk for problems” (Berry, 1997:22) related to the process than men, due to differing societal roles in the home and host culture. However, recent research suggests that, in terms of *work adjustment*, women can be just as effective as their male counterparts and that assumptions about women's ability to acculturate (such as family obligations and prejudice from the host country nationals) are not necessarily barriers to entry for women (Harris, 2002:199; Selmer & Leung, 2003:1127).

Berry (1997:26-27) also emphasises the need to investigate the acculturation of a single acculturating group, as well as to explore the influence of individual-level factors on acculturation. *The current study therefore aims to address this gap in acculturation theory by exploring the individual acculturation experiences of a specific group, namely SIE women.*

The term “*adjustment*” is often equated with a successful expatriate assignment, and is considered to be an overarching concept that encompasses all the components related to dealing with culture, at a personal, work and social level (see, for example, Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991; Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002; Lii & Wong, 2008; Selmer & Leung, 2003; Stahl, 2000; Stroh, Dennis & Cramer, 1994). However, others argue that adjustment is a “more specific and narrow concept” marked by an individual’s personal motivations, behaviours and cognitions when faced with changes in the (cultural) environment (Harrison *et al.*, 2004:210; Ward *et al.*, 2009:86). Cross-cultural adjustment thus refers to an individual’s capabilities to function effectively in a different cultural setting by assimilating to (or becoming more like) the environment by adopting affective, cognitive and behavioural strategies to adjust to the environment. This view is supported by Earley and Mosakowski (2004:100), who compare well-adjusted international managers to chameleons that can change their colours to blend in effortlessly with new cultural environments through the use of CQ.

Acculturation and adjustment leads to *Adaptation* in the long term, where adaptation is a one-way process in which an individual changes his/her behaviour in order to achieve a degree of “fit” with the environment (Berry, 1997:15; Harrison *et al.*, 2004:210). Adaptation is thus a result of the acculturation process whereby a person may become highly adapted to a new environment, or may move away from the new environment entirely, because he/she is unable to adapt (Berry, 1997:20).

When one compares the model of *acculturation* proposed by Berry (1997) with the model of *adjustment* proposed by Black *et al.* (1991), it becomes apparent that there is some overlap in respect of the notion of adaptation to cultural differences. Harrison *et al.*’s (2004:211) argument that adjustment is an intervening variable which acts as a buffer between the stressors that arise from dealing with cross-cultural issues suggests that adjustment is an individual-level variable, closely related to CQ, which forms part of the acculturation process and eventually leads to successful adaptation.

Considering the brief definitions above, it is clear that *adjustment* relates to an individual's own abilities to deal with cultural differences, whereas *acculturation* involves a two-way process which includes the broader environment and external factors. Hence, I use the term *adjustment* in this research, although I acknowledge that at a deeper level there are differences between acculturation and adjustment at a group and individual level as mentioned by previous authors.

There seems to be a need in expatriate research to clarify these constructs and to ascertain what is meant by "expatriate adjustment", which is addressed from the perspective of SIE women in this study.

As a construct, CQ focuses on individual differences and competences (what a person can do to be effective in culturally diverse settings) (Ang *et al.*, 2007:8). It is noteworthy that no previous CQ research has been conducted based on the detailed, personal experiences of individuals from different cultures and backgrounds working in culturally diverse settings. According to Ang *et al.* (2007:3) and Earley *et al.* (2006:4) research on individual capabilities for dealing with intercultural effectiveness is "sparse and unsystematic", thus leaving a large gap in our understanding of individual effectiveness across cultures.

From an extensive review of the literature, and the Emerald, Sage, JSTOR and EBSCOhost databases, it is clear that no qualitative investigation on the experiences of individual *SIE women* focusing on CQ has been published. This study thus endeavours to bridge an important gap in the literature and build on the existing theory, by *exploring CQ as a construct from an individual, gender-based perspective in relation to the adjustment of SIE women*, which has not been done in the past.

This study thus contributes to the academic discourse related to gender theory, expatriation theory and CQ theory. It also strengthens and informs International and Strategic Human Resource Management theory and practice.

1.4 WOMEN AND INTERNATIONAL (EXPATRIATE) ASSIGNMENTS

Nancy Adler's groundbreaking work in the 1980s started the discussion around women as suitable candidates for international assignments. At the time of her initial research, only about 3% of expatriates world-wide were women (Adler, 1987:171). Today, despite the short supply of talented men who are willing to accept international assignments, women remain underrepresented in international management positions (Altman & Shortland, 2001:131; ORC International, 2007; Sinangil & Ones, 2003:462). Although there has been a slight rise in the participation of women in the global workforce, ORC International (2007) emphasises that even today only 11% of expatriates globally are women. Furthermore, despite the fact that, in some countries, women are supposed to have access to equal opportunities in their local workplaces, very few women actually make it to top management positions (Linehan & Walsh, 1999a:264; Menzies, 2012:349; Vance & Paik, 2001:99).

From a purely financial perspective, it would seem logical for organisations to turn to qualified women to help to address the international shortage of managers. However, women are often discouraged from participating in international assignments, claiming stereotypical reasons such as stress, cultural distance and discrimination in the host country, and lower productivity than their male counterparts (Altman & Shortland, 2001:141; Hutchings *et al.*, 2012:1763; Menzies, 2012:349; Sinangil & Ones, 2003:463). Thomas and Inkson (2003:166) compare some of the stereotypical reasons given for the current lack of international women managers to the ancient tribal patterns ascribed to men and women: the men went far afield to hunt, whilst the women had to stay at home and keep the proverbial fires burning. However, these authors point out that this "tribal" mindset is no longer appropriate in the global environment.

People with high CQ can be compared to the Greek god Proteus – "flexible enough to adapt with knowledge and sensitivity to each new cultural situation" (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:15). This combination of knowledge, mindfulness and flexibility is essential for international assignment success and may also be a reason why women generally perform well on international assignments (Myers & Pringle, 2005:426). Due to their structural position in organisations (which is often one of

underrepresentation) (Altman & Shortland, 2001:209; Tharenou, 2010:73), women SIEs can potentially provide the edge companies need to remain competitive in the global village. Research has shown that women generally tend to have a higher sensitivity to change, combined with an apparently innate ability to switch between different roles and cross physical and psychological borders (Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002:769; Sullivan & Baruch, 2009:1553).

More than a decade ago, Adler (1994:25-26) already summarised the benefits of employing women in transnational corporations, as follows:

- The high level of competition for talented international managers necessitates that corporations select the best brains that they can attract and use, regardless of gender.
- In many countries, local norms impose barriers to the hiring of local women. However, transnational firms are not bound by the local culture of a particular country, so talented local women managers can be hired, giving transnational corporations access to a much wider pool of talented applicants. This is especially true if local companies do not hire women managers.
- Many cultures afford a greater flexibility to foreign (expatriate) women, with the result that these women can be highly successful abroad.
- Transnational corporations are typically networks of equals. Women function well in such networks, because they bring collaborative and participative skills to the workplace.
- Women can make unique contributions into their organisations, which helps increase diversity, which is in turn a key ingredient to innovation.

Although many organisations recognise the need for investing in women for international management positions, research in this regard has been lagging behind the international demand.

Most existing research on topics such as cross-cultural adjustment and international assignment success tends to focus mainly on male expatriates and international managers, with a limited number of female participants, and/or the research uses samples consisting of only a limited number of female participants (see, for example, Forster, 1999:79; Harrison, Shaffer & Bhaskar-Shrinivas,

2004:224; Menzies, 2012:349). Furthermore, the small amount of research that does focus on women tends to reside in a multitude of theoretical domains, leading to a “patchwork of knowledge lacking a strong foundation to help shape future research” (Shortland, 2009:366).

Traditionally, an expatriate assignment was seen as a long-term assignment of three to five years sponsored by an organisation as the employer. However, today, organisations need to re-think the way in which they employ expatriates, as individuals are increasingly taking responsibility for their own global mobility (Collings *et al.*, 2007:199; Mahroum, 2002:25-28; Suutari, Tornikoski, Mäkelä, 2012:3455). In view of the changing face of the international environment, a new kind of professional has entered the arena, namely the Independent Internationally Mobile Professional (IIMP) or self-initiated expatriate (SIE) (McKenna & Richardson, 2007:307; Myers & Pringle, 2005:421).

If organisations want to remain competitive and maintain a talented pool of culturally competent managers, it is a strategic imperative that they invest in the development of women for international assignments (Forster, 1999:79; Selmer & Leung, 2003:254). But more than that, there is a need to explore the possibilities of tapping into the talent of SIE women professionals.

1.5 CQ AND EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT

Expatriation “involves the adaptation of an employee to a new country, a new social organisation and a different way of doing things, encapsulated in a new culture” (Pires, Stanton & Ostefeld, 2006:158). Thus, in order to understand and interact successfully with different cultures, an individual is required to use his/her head, hands and heart through the development of his/her CQ (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127). Individuals with a high level of CQ are not only able to adapt and interact with other people from different cultures, they are also able to shape their environments in order to create an environment conducive to new interactions (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127).

Thus, a high level of CQ demands a high level of cognitive and meta-cognitive thinking skills, a repertoire of appropriate behaviours and a high level of internal motivation (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004:141).

Templer, Tay and Chandrasekar (2006) investigated the relationship between the motivational component of CQ on the one hand, and a realistic job preview, a realistic preview of living conditions and intercultural adjustment. They concluded that the motivational component of CQ plays a vital role in facilitating adjustment to new cultural settings. Their study was conducted in Singapore, with a limited sample, of which 79% of the participants were male. Crowne (2008) conducted an exploratory study to investigate which factors might lead to the development of CQ, and found that CQ is improved through education and internships abroad, training, expatriation and global leadership.

To date, research on CQ has leaned strongly on an empirical framework to explore CQ through quantitative enquiry (questionnaires and survey data). However, Berry and Ward (2006:71) caution against current measurements of CQ, explaining that, “because there is no culture-free behaviour, there can be no culture-free CQ”. A similar view is expressed by Ward, Fischer, Lam and Hall (2009:102), who emphasise that measurements are unable to distinguish CQ from similar constructs, such as Emotional Intelligence, at an empirical level, due to the fact that the existing measures are culture-general.

Huijser (2006:2) asserts that managers who want to remain competitive in the global arena need to sharpen their CQ in order to achieve better results at the national, organisational, vocational, and project team level. Recent research supports this view, highlighting the systemic nature of the construct: it is “a *system* of interacting knowledge and skills, linked by cultural meta-cognition; that allows people to adapt to, select and shape the cultural aspects of their environments” (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127, my emphasis). People with high CQ are thus not only able to adapt and interact with different cultures, they are also able to shape their environments in order to create the context for *new* interactions (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:131), where value differences are leveraged in a reconciliatory manner (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997:20). Another *caveat* is that Thomas and

Inkson's (2003:166) claims about women's CQ, although they may be based on sound arguments, have not yet been empirically tested.

Thus, if CQ plays a vital role in facilitating adjustment to new cultural settings, and it provides a framework for organisations in respect of the selection, training and development of the workforce (Ang *et al.*, 2007:4, 34), then there is indeed a need to explore the construct further, including investigating it from a gender perspective – something which has not yet been done.

1.6 MY INTEREST IN THE TOPIC AND MY OWN SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATION

As a student in South Africa, I was actively involved in an international student association, AIESEC.² This association aims to bring students from across the world together by facilitating student exchanges in order to increase awareness and respect for cultural differences.

Thanks to my involvement in this organisation, I embarked on an exchange programme to the Philippines for just over two months at the end of my Honours year in 2004. This was one of the scariest and probably most life-changing experiences of my life. For the first time in my life, I was away from a familiar environment, in a strange country with foreign foods, and mostly short people with an unfamiliar accent. At the end of my exchange, I had been through many peaks and dips, but when I left, it felt as if a little part of my heart was left behind in this new world.

Going back home was difficult, I could not understand why people did not want to hear my stories about "when I was in the Philippines". Everyone around me seemed so closed-minded, with such small world views. During this struggle with a kind of reverse culture shock, I met Prof. Yvonne du Plessis. By then, I was beginning my Master's year and was working as an assistant lecturer in the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria in South Africa. She asked me whether I would be interested in joining her research team to

² "AIESEC" was originally the French acronym for *Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales* (English: International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences), but the full name is no longer in use (AIESEC, 2013).

investigate the concept of Managerial CQ. I was immediately interested and completed my Master's degree under Yvonne's specialist guidance.

During this time, I was privileged to conduct a part of my research in the Netherlands through an international lecturers' exchange programme between the University of Pretoria and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. "Don't go falling in love now!" was the last (prophetic?) warning from my wise Head of Department at the time – Prof. Leopoldt Vermeulen. How he knew what would wait for me on the other side is still a mystery to me, but, as fate would have it, I met a Dutchman, fell in love, and after almost two years of maintaining a long-distance relationship between South Africa and the Netherlands, we got married at the end of 2008. As women have been doing for centuries, I packed up my life into two suitcases and started my journey as a newly-wed wife to a new world that was to become my home.

In order to maintain my contacts and relationship with my university in South Africa, I decided to sign up for a PhD programme. I initially intended to develop a CQ Toolbox for the training and preparation of expatriate managers for their assignments, building on the research that Yvonne and her team, including myself, had already done on Managerial CQ. That was the intention before I decided to uproot and relocate to a small, wet country somewhere in Europe, where it is never summer (at least, that has often been my perception).

Living and working in another country (and finding a job in another country where one's qualifications are not recognised, in the midst of a recession, with a new husband and a different culture to get used to) fuelled my interest in the experiences of other expatriate women.

I began to ask other women about the challenges they faced and soon noticed parallels between the different stories. I also realised that the stories told by those of us who had relocated of our own accord were quite different to the stories told by those who came to the Netherlands through international transfers initiated by their organisations. There were stories of struggles and challenges, of growth and joy and discrimination (based on being a foreigner and a woman), feelings of alienation, and much more. During my first year in the Netherlands, I experienced

the highest of highs and the lowest of lows that I have ever experienced in my life. Together with my family, friends and all else that was familiar; I also left behind a bright future with great career prospects as an academic and Industrial/Organisational Psychologist or Human Resource Manager. No one could have prepared me for the culture shock, the loneliness, the feelings of inadequacy and loss of identity that came with this move.

Whilst I was waging my own personal battle, I was also trying to write a proposal for this PhD research, which just did not seem to move anywhere either. I was stuck between a quantitative and qualitative approach, with no idea of how to proceed. At this point, I communicated my frustration to Yvonne, who suggested a new idea. She asked: "Why don't you use your own experiences as a basis for the research?" After I had given her suggestion some thought and started searching the literature, a research proposal was born which eventually gave rise to this research.

In my search for literature, my experiences were supported by previous research: there is a need to explore the challenges SIE women face, and to find out how they can be supported and developed, for instance, by international Human Resource Managers, for international assignment success.

1.7 SUMMARY OF DEFINITIONS AND KEY TERMS

This section provides a summary of the key terms, concepts and constructs and how they were operationalised in this study (see Table 1.1, overleaf).

Table 1.1 Definition of key terms

Key term	Definition
Culture	Culture refers to those patterns of thinking, feeling and acting that distinguish different groups of people from each other – “the collective programming of the mind” (Hofstede, 1991:5). It is revealed in the way in which people solve problems and reconcile dilemmas (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:6).
CQ	CQ refers to a person’s ability to deal effectively with people from a different cultural background and understanding through the processes of cognition, meta-cognition, cultural strategic thinking, mindfulness, motivation and behaviour (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley <i>et al.</i> , 2006; Thomas & Inkson, 2003).
Expatriate	An expatriate is a person living and working in a country other than that of his/her citizenship, for a specific length of time and planning to return to the home country after a period (Harrison <i>et al.</i> , 2004:205).
Self-Initiated Expatriate (SIE)/ Independent Internationally Mobile Professional (IIMP)	This refers to a professional who expatriates without organisational sponsorship for diverse reasons, such as following an expatriate spouse, pursuing better career/life opportunities, pursuing boundaryless career paths, seeking adventure and risk, or joining a partner in another country (McKenna & Richardson, 2007:307,311; Richardson, 2006:469; Tams & Arthur, 2007:89).
Acculturation	Acculturation is a continuous process through which a person acquires some cultural traits from another culture which allow the person to function in the mainstream society and culture of a particular country. This process is coupled with a willingness to learn about another culture and enables a person to build a repertoire of behaviours in another culture without losing his/her original cultural identity (Cordova, 2005:101; Harrison <i>et al.</i> , 2004:210).
Adaptation	This refers to “the dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar, or changed cultural environments, establish (or re-establish) and maintain relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationships with those environments” (Kim, 2001:31). Adaptation is a shorter-term process than acculturation and is a one-way process through which an individual tries to achieve a degree of “fit” with the environment (Harrison <i>et al.</i> , 2004:210).
(Cross-cultural) adjustment	Adjustment is a psychological experience/state that is defined in terms of cognitive, emotional and behavioural indicators related to the subjective well-being of an individual during a process of transition. The experience of stress related to psychological (dis)comfort when the challenges posed by a foreign environment exceed the personal resources of the individual is moderated by

Key term	Definition
	adjustment with regard to aspects such as socio-cultural adjustment, psychological adjustment, work adjustment and general adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:239; Harrison <i>et al.</i> , 2004:210-211; Pires <i>et al.</i> , 2006:158; Selmer, Chiu & Shenkar, 2007:151).
Psychological adjustment	This refers to an individual's subjective well-being or satisfaction in new cultural environments. It is associated with variables such as a person's emotional state, cognitive perceptions and personal trait variables (Selmer <i>et al.</i> , 2007:151).
Work adjustment	This is the process whereby a person's adjustment to a new workplace is facilitated by the similarities between procedures, policies and task requirements between the home country and the host country (Black, 1988:291).
General adjustment	This refers to the overall process of adaptation to living in the foreign country (Black, 1988:291). It includes aspects such as the ability of the expatriate and his/her family to adapt to the different environment (Usunier, 1998:94).
Socio-cultural adjustment	This refers to a person's ability to fit in or effectively interact with the host culture through variables such as cultural learning and the acquisition of social skills in the host culture (Selmer <i>et al.</i> , 2007:151).

1.8 AIM OF THE STUDY

The main *purpose* of this study was to expand on the existing body of knowledge on the self-initiated expatriation of women by exploring their adjustment experiences from an “inward looking” perspective, as proposed by Bieman and Andresen (2010:441). Thus, the *core thesis statement* guiding this study is the following: “The study is an exploration of the experiences and perceptions informing barriers and enablers to the cross-cultural adjustment of SIE women and the possible facilitating role of CQ”.

The use of a reflective research design using Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA), creates a new platform which gives a “voice” to women from different backgrounds and nationalities to share their stories and experiences and to contribute towards International Human Resource Management Theory and Practice.

1.9 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to operationalise the thesis statement and address the main aim of the study, the two main research questions are the following:

- What linkages can be identified between the individual adjustment factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women?
- What insights can be gained in terms of CQ as facilitator of the adjustment of SIE women?

Although research on expatriate adjustment abound, very little is known about the individual-level experiences of SIE women. Through answering the first research question, this study will aim to contribute to our understanding of women's SIE by providing further insight into the adjustment experiences and the factors influencing the success of SIE women in the international management arena (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Biemann & Andresen, 2010; McKenna & Richardson, 2007; Myers & Pringle, 2005; Vance *et al.*, 2011). These insights will be valuable from a research perspective in order to respond to the current "patchwork of knowledge" (Shortland, 2009:366), which is currently strongly male-oriented (see, for example, Forster, 1999:79; Harrison *et al.*, 2004:224; Menzies, 2012:349). Furthermore, the exploration of the experiences of a single acculturating group (Berry, 1997:26-27) will provide important insights into the individual-level factors related to acculturation.

From a CQ perspective, the second main research question aims to integrate two streams of literature which has not yet been done before, namely expatriate adjustment and CQ literature. Through identifying the individual capabilities for understanding effectiveness across cultures (Earley *et al.*, 2006:5), CQ can be explored from a gender-based perspective. Through exploring the specific competencies and traits of women SIEs, existing theory on CQ will be expanded.

1.9.1 Sub-questions:

The following sub-questions were formulated to guide the research process:

- What are the motives/reasons for the relocation of SIE women?
- Is there a difference between work adjustment, personal adjustment and psychological adjustment for SIE women?
- Are the adjustment experiences of SIE women different to those of traditional, company-sponsored expatriates?

1.10 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study in answering the research questions are set out below.

1.10.1 Primary objectives

The primary objectives of the study are

- to explore, define and describe the individual adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women; and
- to describe the possible manner in which CQ contributes to the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of SIE women.

1.10.2 Secondary objectives

The secondary objectives of the study are

- to determine the motives/reasons for relocation of SIE women;
- to explore and describe the difference between work adjustment, personal adjustment and psychological adjustment for SIE women; and
- to determine whether the adjustment experiences of SIE women are different to those of traditional, company-sponsored expatriates.

1.11 DELIMITATIONS

Several delimitations are relevant to this study in terms of the context, theoretical perspective and constructs to be investigated. Firstly, the study focuses on SIE women living and working in a country other than their home country. Participants who have returned to their home countries from assignments (repatriates) were not considered for inclusion in the study.

Although the impact of family, supervisors, managers, subordinates and other stakeholders on assignment success and adjustment are acknowledged, these role players were not included in the sample for this study.

The study was limited to the personal experiences of the sample in respect of their adjustment, adaptation and acculturation to foreign countries, through the use of an Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) research design as advocated by Northcutt

and McCoy (2004). Organisational culture and country-specific information may be mentioned, but did not form the basis of the analysis.

The theoretical basis of the study was limited to the field of International Human Resource Management and Expatriation Management. The study was grounded in a CQ approach to intercultural interactions, and not on the cultural *variation* of intelligence (Ng & Earley, 2006:4).

1.12 IMPORTANCE AND BENEFITS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of doctoral research in the management sciences is to make a theoretical as well as a practical contribution to the scientific and management community. Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007:1281) emphasise that there are multiple definitions for the concept “theory” in academic circles and that there is very little agreement among authors regarding what constitutes an acceptable “theoretical contribution”. Hence, they devised a taxonomy of theoretical contributions of empirical research, consisting of two dimensions: the extent to which an empirical study builds new theory and the extent to which an empirical study tests existing theory.

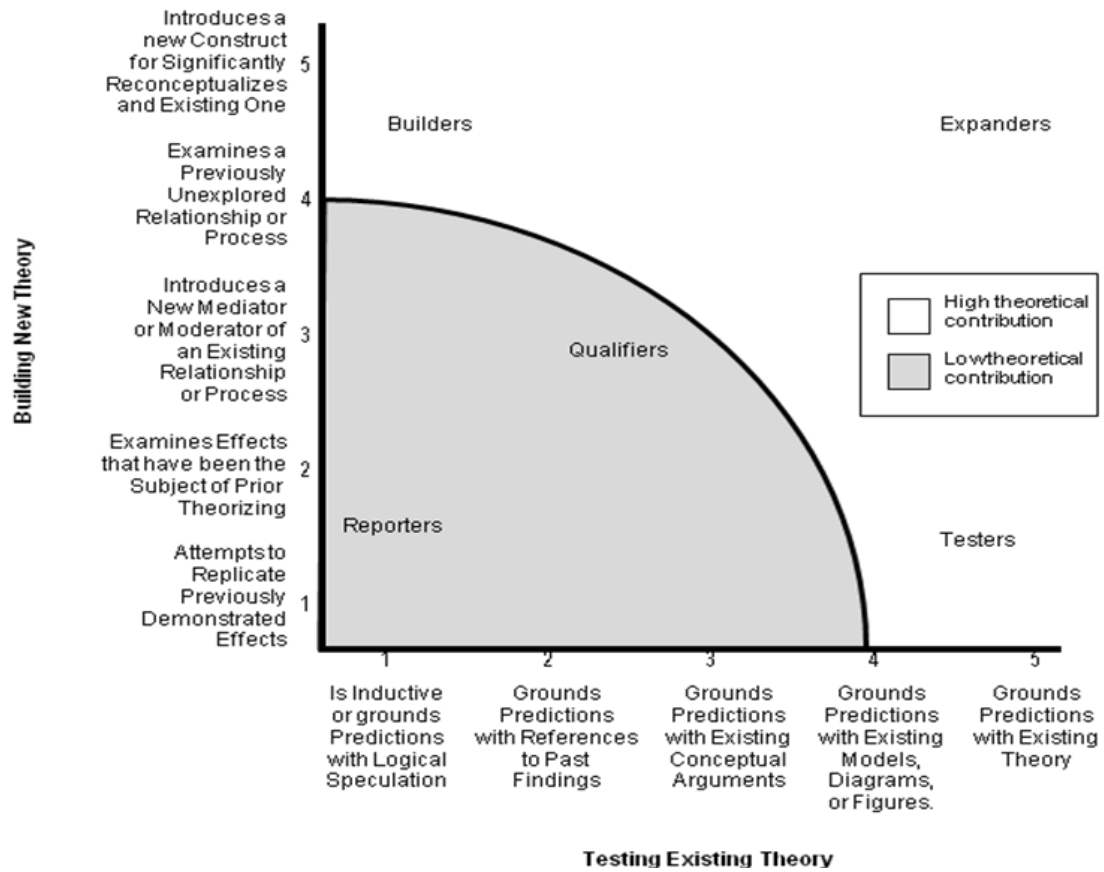
Theory building is defined as “the degree to which an empirical article clarifies or supplements existing theory or introduces relationships and constructs that serve the foundations for a new theory” (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007:1283).

Theory testing, on the other hand, captures the degree to which existing theory is applied in an empirical study as a means of “grounding a specific set of a priori hypotheses” (Colquitt & Zapata-Phelan, 2007:1284).

Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007:1285-1286) explain that research contributions can be categorized into five discrete categories, namely testers, qualifiers, builders, reporters, and expanders. These categories range from high levels of theory building and low levels of theory testing (testers), to high levels of theory testing and building (expanders).

The taxonomy presented by Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007) is presented in Figure 1.1 (overleaf).

Figure 1.1 A taxonomy of theoretical contributions for empirical studies



Source: Colquitt and Zapata-Phelan (2007:1283)

This study falls under the category of “expander” and “builder”. By exploring the meaning ascribed to the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) experiences of SIE women, a first step was taken towards *expanding* existing theory on SIE women. The role of CQ in the adjustment process was explored as a first step towards *building* a comprehensive theory for understanding the experiences of a largely invisible and under-researched group. Thus, through inductive reasoning, this study aims to build new theory by providing a gender-based framework for understanding the processes related to the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of SIE women. More specifically, the following theoretical contributions were made:

- *expanding* on the existing theoretical frameworks of adjustment, adaptation, acculturation (Berry, 1997; Black, 1988; Black *et al.*, 1991; Harrison *et al.*, 2004; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985), self-initiated expatriation theory (McKenna & Richardson, 2007; Myers & Pringle, 2005; Selmer & Leung,

2003; Tharenou, 2009; Vance, 2005) and CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003) by exploring these constructs from a gender-based perspective;

- *exploring* potential avenues for further research based on the findings of the participants' detailed description of their experiences;
- *developing* a conceptual-theoretical framework for understanding and further exploring the complex systems and sub-systems that influence the adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and CQ of SIE women.

From a *methodological perspective*, IQA as a qualitative research design and method was used to collect and analyse data. IQA provides a systems approach to understanding complex phenomena. Through its rigorous research design and protocol, IQA provides a platform for participants to make sense of their own experiences in order to create a systems representation of their experience of a phenomenon (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:16). This research method has never been used in the exploration of the experiences of SIEs before.

From a *practical perspective*, this study aims to provide insights into the perceived barriers and enablers to successful career and personal development for SIE women. Through gaining deeper insight into the various interconnected aspects of the process, organisations will be in a better position to adapt their recruitment, training and support policies for SIE women. *Furthermore, by identifying the needs of these women, organisations and International Human Resource Management Departments will be able to respond better to the career development and training needs of these individuals in order to leverage the benefits of diversity coupled with high levels of CQ.*

1.13 OUTLINE OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature and of the theoretical framework and models that guide current thinking about adjustment, adaptation, acculturation, self-initiated expatriation and CQ. Key gaps in the literature relevant to this study are also identified.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology used in the study, and the rationale for the chosen methodology, including the philosophy, paradigm(s), research design

and methods underlying this study. The first part of the chapter describes the rationale, philosophy, epistemology and ontology underlying this study. Next, the strategy of inquiry and broad research design – a qualitative inquiry using an IQA research design is discussed, followed by a description of IQA as a method of analysis, of qualitative sampling methods and of the qualitative sample used in the research. Furthermore, other qualitative data collection methods that were employed; and issues of quality and rigour in the collection of the qualitative data are addressed. Finally, the ethical principles that governed this investigation are presented.

Chapter 4 provides a rich description of key findings from the IQA focus group transcripts and the resultant Systems Influence Diagrams (SIDs) for the two focus groups.

Chapter 5 delves deeper into the SIDs of the two groups in order to arrive at a combined SID for the two groups. This chapter aims to begin a process of theory development by linking theory from the review of extant knowledge to the final SID in order to create a framework for further validation and testing.

In *Chapter 6*, the literature is revisited to add any additional literature streams that were not yet identified during the initial review of extant knowledge. This chapter also aims to build a simplified theoretical model for understanding the experiences of SIEs from a career perspective, based on the outcomes of the focus group SIDs.

Chapter 7 concludes the research by illustrating the usefulness of the research and reflecting on the degree to which it has contributed to the body of knowledge, especially in International HRM. A brief overview of the results and conclusions drawn from the findings and results is given. The degree to which the research has met its objectives is discussed, followed by an overview of the limitations of the research and their effect on the results. The chapter ends with recommendations for future research.

1.14 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a background to the research and explains the need for the research. It gave some insights into the researcher's own experiences and

motivation. It gave an overview of key theoretical concepts to be explored, as well as an explanation of the key objectives and research questions that guided the research.

The relevance of the topic was discussed, followed by a description of the main aim, objectives and research questions, delimitations and assumptions. Key concepts were also defined and an outline of the chapter structure was provided. In the next chapter, the relevant literature is reviewed in order to identify key gaps in the existing body of knowledge and to provide a theoretical basis for the research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF EXTANT KNOWLEDGE



Photo 2.1 Research can be a lonely process... (also for my poor husband who had to cope with scenes like the ones above for many evenings)



Photo 2.2: Face-to-face meeting with my supervisor, Prof. Yvonne du Plessis during a visit to South Africa

2.1 INTRODUCTION

One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.

(Henry Miller, 1891- 1980)

This chapter provides a theoretical basis for the research. Key constructs relevant to answering the main research questions are explored in order to provide a comprehensive overview of factors and processes related to adjustment and CQ. The chapter moves from the general to the specific in order to first provide clarity of basic constructs relevant to expatriate adjustment research. Through this approach, I was able to achieve conceptual clarity and focus my review of literature to deeper constructs related to women's adjustment specifically. The first section of the chapter presents an overview of key constructs, definitions and theoretical frameworks guiding current thinking on expatriation, self-initiated expatriation, CQ, adjustment, acculturation and adaptation in order to create a theoretical framework for understanding these constructs. After this general discussion, the focus turns to the specific experiences (barriers and enablers) to adjustment, adaptation and the acculturation of expatriate and SIE women. The influence of motivation and motives for expatriation are discussed, and an overview is provided of the need to explore these constructs in terms of the specific career paths and decisions for women. Through the review of extant literature, this chapter will serve to integrate theoretical constructs in order to form a framework of understanding that will underpin the collection and analysis of data.

2.2 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXPATRIATES

Traditionally, an expatriate assignment was defined as a short-term assignment (six months to one year) or a long-term assignment (three to five years), where the transfer is sponsored by the company of the professional to complete a specific task or achieve a specific goal (Harrison *et al.*, 1997:203; Lee, 2007:403). Depending on the nature of the assignment and the relationship that the expatriate

has with the parent company, expatriates can be divided into the following categories:

- *Parent country nationals (PCNs)* are employees who are citizens of the country in which the headquarters of a multi-national company is situated (Harrison *et al.*, 1997:203; Harvey, Speier & Novocevic, 2001:899).
- *Third country nationals (TCNs)* are employees with a nationality and country of origin different from the country to which they are transferred. The country of transfer is different to the country in which the parent company is situated (Harrison *et al.*, 1997:203; Harvey & Buckley, 1997:34).
- *Host country nationals (HCNs)* are employees of a multinational company who work at a foreign subsidiary of the company in their own home country. They are citizens of the country where they are working and are colleagues to expatriates posted in their company (Harrison *et al.*, 1997:204).
- *Inpatriates* are host country nationals and third country nationals who have been transferred to the parent company. They often make frequent trips to developing markets and play a key role in achieving the implementation of the organisation's globalisation strategy (Harrison *et al.*, 1997:204; Harvey *et al.*, 2001:899). According to Harvey, *et al* (2001:163), inpatriates are an important resource available to organisations to address the shortage of managers who are willing to accept international expatriate assignments.

Various scholars who have explored the relationship between expatriation and “boundaryless” careers recognise that the value of international assignments is far greater for individual-level development than for organisational human capital development (Collings *et al.*, 2007:204; Dickman & Harris, 2005:399; Stahl, Miller and Tung, 2002:217; Tams & Arthur, 2007:87). Vance (2005:374) argues that individuals often have no choice other than to take control of their own careers and the development of their own international competencies, because organisations fail to provide career paths that will help them use their unique skills and abilities.

Traditionally, international career management research has focused mainly on expatriates, who pursue international careers due to organisational push factors, where the initiative for expatriation is taken by the organisation (Selmer & Leung, 2003:244; Thorn, 2009:443). However, Harrison *et al.* (2004:204-205) urge the inclusion of another category of expatriates in international Human Resources

studies, namely self-initiated expatriates. There is abundant research on international sojourners and other types of expatriates, but Inkson, Pringle, Arthur and Barry (1997:352) have highlighted the lack of insight into the experiences of people who transfer to other countries independently in order to obtain international experience. Since Inkson *et al.*'s (1997) initial proposition, various terms has been used to describe such professionals, for example, overseas experience (Inkson *et al.*, 1997), self-initiated foreign workers (Harrison *et al.*, 2004), self-initiated expatriates (Richardson & Mc Kenna, 2006); independent, internationally mobile professionals (McKenna & Richardson, 2007). The interest in self-initiated expatriation among women has also increased due to intra-company limitations to international careers (see, for example, Myers & Pringle, 2005:523; Tharenou, 2009:75; Vance, 2005:423).

Al Ariss (2010:340) points out that management literature has been inconsistent in its use of the terms “migrant” and “self-initiated expatriate”. Migration literature tends to focus on the movement of skilled labour from developing countries to developed countries, thus resulting in a “brain drain” in the developing country (Lee *et al.*, 2009:36).

Al Ariss (2010:341) classifies migrants as employees moving from developing to developed countries, with little or no choice in moving, living in the host country on a long-term basis and feeling disadvantaged in the host country. By contrast, Mahroum (2000:25) uses an entirely different grouping when referring to migrant workers, such as managers and executives, engineers and technicians, academics and scientists, entrepreneurs and students. The movement of skilled labour is thus not restricted to developing countries. Various developed (high income) countries have lost up to 10% of their highly skilled labour to migration (Haupt & Janeba, 2009:1). As international borders become more permeable, the movement of skilled labour is no longer a one-way process, and the “brain drain” can in fact result in equal gains for sending and receiving countries (Beine, Docquier & Rapoport, 2008:632; Haupt & Janeba, 2009:1; Iredale, 2005:160).

This increased mobility requires a new definition of the internationally mobile workforce that combines migration literature (which focuses on the macro-level consequences of labour movements) and SIE literature (which focuses on the

management of skilled migrants in organisational settings) (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010:277).

For the *purposes of the current study*, a broad definition for expatriation is adopted, in which the term “self-initiated expatriate” (SIE) is an umbrella term to describe people who expatriate out of their own initiative, who live and work in the host country for an extensive time. It is important to note that SIEs can be distinguished from traditional expatriates in that the *initiative* for the move comes from the individual and not from the company, as is the case for company-transferred expatriates (Thorn, 2009:441).

McKenna and Richardson (2007:307) emphasise the increasing level of complexity in defining international professionals. For the purpose of clarity, Table 2.1 (overleaf) provides an overview of the various motives for moving and classifications of self-initiated expatriates.

There are various reasons for companies to investigate the possibilities of employing SIEs, including the fact that the rewards package of an SIE can be adjusted to local standards, thus reducing the costs of bringing expertise from the parent company. Furthermore, SIE’s tend to be more flexible and protean in their career development strategies, and they are often already adjusted to the host culture, thus reducing the need for pre-expatriation training and moderating the effects of family-related issues (McKenna & Richardson, 2007:311-316).

Table 2.1 Classifications of self-initiated expatriates and motives for expatriation

Metaphorical classification: (Mahroum, 2000:25-28)	Accidental tourists (Mahroum, 2000:25)	Economy class passengers	Explorers	Passengers	Pilgrims		
McKenna and Richardson (2007:311)		Mercenaries	Explorers/tightrope walkers	Seekers	Missionaries	Architects	Refugees
Initiative for the move	Company/employee ("coffee machine system/secondment") (Thorn, 2009:443)	Self-initiated	Self-initiated	Self-initiated	Self-initiated	Self-initiated	Self-initiated
Classification of occupation (Mahroum, 2002:25-)	Managers and executives	Engineers, Technicians	Entrepreneurs	Students, professionals, other occupations	Academics and scientists	Professionals (McKenna & Richardson, 2007:311)	All occupational categories
Motive/motivation for expatriation (Thorn, 2009:444-445)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career • Economic (costs and benefits of living and working abroad) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic • Quality of life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and travel opportunities (adventure of living abroad) • Political environment • Risk and challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural and travel opportunities • Career 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career • Relationships (partner, family, network, friends) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career • Economic • Political environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career • Economic • Cultural and travel • Quality of life • Relationships • Political environment

Source: Adapted from Mahroum (2000:25-28), McKenna and Richardson (2007:311) and Thorn (2009:444)

2.3 DEFINITIONS AND DIMENSIONAL MODELS OF CULTURE

In order to be successful, an expatriate has to understand and interact with different cultures and is required to use his/her head, hands and heart through the development of his/her CQ (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127). Individuals who have a high level of CQ are not only able to adapt and interact with different cultures, they are also able to shape their environments in order to create an environment for *new* interactions (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:131), where value differences are leveraged in a reconciliatory manner (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:20).

Considering the profound impact that culture has on human behaviour, it is important to clarify the concept of culture before continuing to explore the processes experienced by individuals who cross cultural boundaries. This section aims to answer the questions of why it is important to understand culture in expatriation research. This necessitates a brief description of what culture is and how it differs from other learned behaviours.

Managing and moving about in the global arena can be compared to navigating an ocean full of icebergs where people's cultural values and basic assumptions are likely collide. Wallace (1970:52) argues that culture "is the one unique attribute of human beings that separates our species from other living creatures". It is a dynamic construct in which all human existence is embedded (Wallace, 1970:52). Wallace (1970:55-59) emphasises the evolutionary nature of culture, arguing that there is an association between culture change and cognitive capacity, genetic change and the evolution of the brain.

Half a century ago, Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952:436) already documented over 160 definitions of the word "culture". Scholars continue to debate the essence of the word. In a narrow sense, culture refers to refinement or civilisation through aspects such as education, art and literature. In a broad sense, however, it can be defined as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1991:5). Scruton (2007:3) distinguishes between "high culture" and "common culture". These ideas parallel Hofstede's hypothesis in which "common culture" encompasses the customs, beliefs and practices of a specific group of people that

create a form of common identification with the group (Scruton, 2007:2). Culture is thus a carrier of the values and value orientations that influence individual and group behaviours.

Schein (1985, cited in Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:21-24) uses the analogy of an onion to describe culture as an encompassing construct that consists of various different layers, ranging from explicit products to implicit basic assumptions. The outer “layer” of culture, or explicit culture, consists of the observable reality, in the form of language, food, art, and so forth. Explicit culture is a reflection of the deeper norms and values of a group or individual and includes the ideals of the group, norms, and written or unwritten codes of conduct. At the core of culture lie the implicit assumptions that an individual or group has about existence, where responses have become a result of routine responses to the environment (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:21-24).

Swidler (1986:273) warns that culture should not be seen as a carrier of “ultimate values” which direct behaviour: “Culture is not a unified system that pushes action into a consistent direction” (Swidler, 1986:277). Instead, culture provides a repertoire from which individuals can develop their behavioural strategies of action. These concepts form the basis of Scruton’s notions of “high culture” and are comparable to the more recent theories of CQ that are discussed later in this chapter. “High culture” is becoming increasingly important in the world of mobile individuals. The search for (social) identity and belonging is influenced by individual choices that shape the way in which modern people make sense of the world (Scruton, 2007:2). The ability to adopt different values and cultural frames is essential for the survival of individuals who cross cultures and have to manage multiple cultures simultaneously (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:14).

The works of Hofstede and Trompenaars have guided thinking about national cultures for many years, framing many concepts related to dealing with culture. Thomas and Inkson (2004:33), for example, used Hofstede’s dimensional scores as a starting point for understanding different national cultures as a basis for developing CQ.

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2002) caution against the use of models as a source of polarisation – instead, they suggest that culture is a fluid concept that

cannot be bound to a linear, dichotomous scale. Dimensional models of culture are useful to provide insight into an individual's preferred orientation, but do not imply that a person may not also hold the opposite value orientation in certain situations. Dealing with foreign cultures thus entails resolving dilemmas resulting from seemingly opposing perspectives regarding relationships, time and the environment (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:8). Culture can therefore also be seen as a set of skills that enables a person to deal successfully with the environment (Swidler, 1986:275).

For *the purposes of this study*, a broad definition of culture was adopted, seeing culture as encompassing a repertoire of skills, behaviours, norms and values that influence and are influenced by the environment within which an individual functions.

In the next section, an overview is provided of relevant literature streams related to CQ theory to date.

2.4 CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE

CQ is a relatively new concept in the field of intercultural management and has become an area of increasing interest for researchers in recent years, as scholars are trying to define and refine the theoretical construct and its measurement, and to ascertain the practical value of the construct (Ascalon, Schleicher & Born, 2008; Crowne, 2008; Du Plessis, O'Neil & Van den Bergh, 2007; Earley & Mosakowski, 2004; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2006; Ng & Earley, 2006; Templer *et al.*, 2006; Triandis, 2006; Van den Bergh, 2008; Ward *et al.*, 2009).

Ng and Earley (2006:4) indicate that there are two streams of research related to culture and intelligence, namely the "cultural variation of intelligence approach" and the "CQ approach". The focus of the current research was on the CQ approach, where CQ reflects a person's ability to deal effectively with people with whom he/she does not share a common cultural background or understanding (Earley & Peterson, 2004:105; Earley *et al.*, 2006:5; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:14).

CQ builds on multiple intelligence theory. It is rooted in earlier concepts of intelligence such as Social and Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and integrates the two constructs of culture and intelligence (Ng & Earley, 2006:4): “Cultural Intelligence is related to Emotional Intelligence, but it picks up where emotional intelligence leaves off by taking the impact of culture in interactions into account” (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004:139).

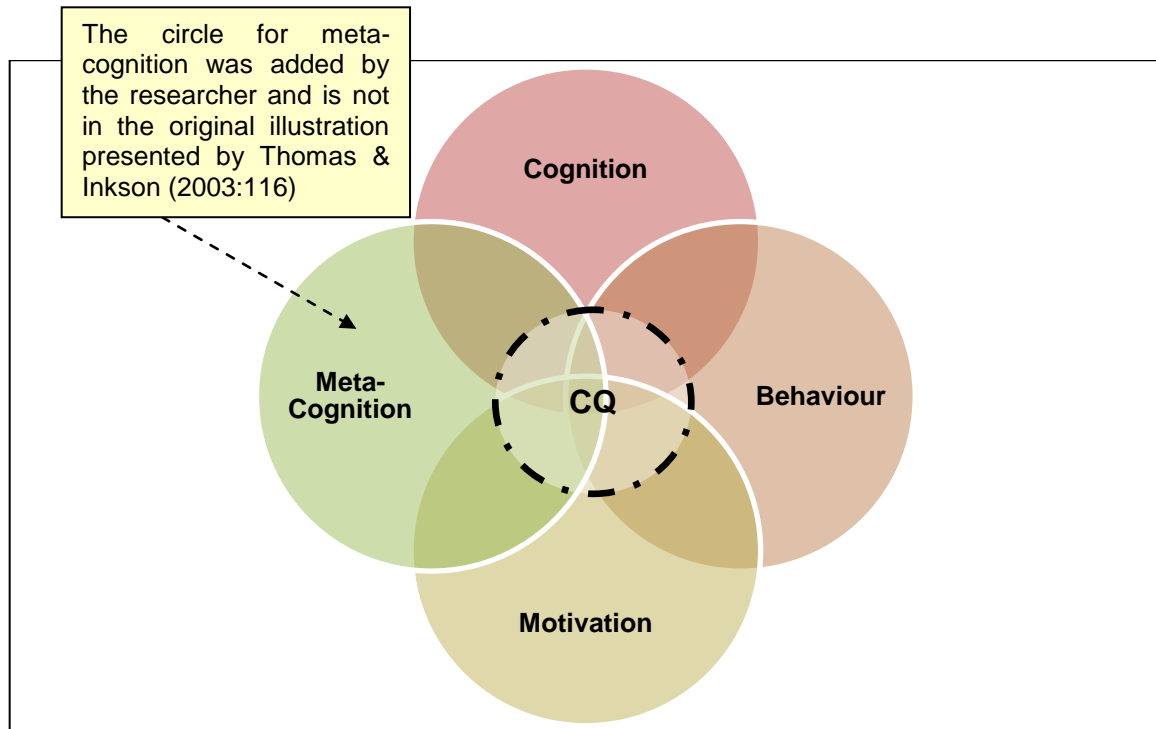
CQ is an individual level variance that can be defined as a person’s ability to adapt effectively to new cultural settings and interact successfully with people from other cultures by understanding and interpreting the finer nuances of a culture (Earley *et al.*, 2006:5; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:8). Furthermore, Earley and Peterson (2004:105) assert that managers with high CQ are able to seamlessly “gather, interpret and act upon...radically different cues” to function successfully in different cultural settings.

In order to understand the role of CQ in the adjustment of SIEs, Thomas *et al.*’s (2008:124) definition is in the exploration of the construct. They define CQ as “the abilities necessary for adaptation to, as well as selection and shaping of an environmental context”.

Ng, Van Dyne and Ang (2009:514) argue that CQ provides a “set of learning capabilities that enhances the extent to which individuals translate their international work experiences into learning outcomes through the experiential learning process of experiencing, reflecting, observing and experimenting”. Their approach thus shifts away from the traditional performance-adjustment focus of expatriate assignments to a more developmental perspective of individual learning and development in the international context (Ng *et al.*, 2009:512).

It has been argued that CQ consists of four components that influence each other at various levels to ensure success in dealing with different cultures, namely cognition, meta-cognition, motivation and behaviour (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley *et al.*, 2006; Earley & Peterson, 2004; Thomas & Inkson, 2003). These components of CQ are not isolated from one another. They influence one another and work together to form the larger construct of CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:201). The relationship between these components is illustrated in Figure 2.1 (overleaf).

Figure 2.1 Components of CQ



Source: Adapted from Earley *et al.* (2006:23,201) and Thomas and Inkson (2003:16)

CQ is the result of the successful integration of the four components in order to allow successful adaptation across countries and cultures (Earley *et al.*, 2006:201). Recent developments in the field of CQ highlight the systemic nature of the construct, defining CQ as “a *system* of interacting knowledge and skills, linked by cultural meta-cognition, which allows people to adapt to, select and shape the cultural aspects of their environments” (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127). People with high CQ are thus not only able to adapt to and interact with different cultures, but are also able to shape their environments in order to create an environment for *new* interactions (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:131; Shapiro, Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2009:82), where value differences are leveraged in a reconciliatory manner (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:20).

The next section presents an overview of the different components of CQ.

2.4.1 Cognition and meta-cognition

Ang *et al.* (2007:337) differentiate between the cognitive and meta-cognitive components of CQ. *Cognition*, in CQ theory, refers to intellectual knowledge and the knowledge structures that a person possesses – thus the cultural knowledge of

the norms and practices that a person acquires through educational and personal experiences (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:129).

A distinction can be made between declarative and procedural knowledge as components of cognition (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:129). *Declarative knowledge* (content knowledge) refers to knowledge of different systems and sub-cultures within a culture, and also knowledge of basic frameworks of cultural values, such as that of Hofstede or Trompenaars (Ang *et al.*, 2007:338; Thomas *et al.*, 2008:129). Culture-specific knowledge such as language, etiquette and social norms also form an important part of declarative knowledge that helps a person to make sense of different cultures (Ang *et al.*, 2007:5; Kim, Kirkman & Chen, 2006). Declarative knowledge enables a person to recognise the existence of cultural differences, defines the nature of those differences and allows for mapping and categorising in order to reduce the complexity of the environment (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:128).

Procedural knowledge “includes knowledge of the effect of culture on one’s own nature or the nature of another as a cognitive processor, knowledge that involves cross cultural encounter or problem-solving, its demands, and how those demands can be met under varying conditions” (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:129). Thus, whilst declarative knowledge provides information about another culture, procedural knowledge requires a reflective component that helps a person to translate his/her knowledge into “rules of thumb” guiding appropriate responses and behaviours (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:25).

Meta-cognitive CQ refers to the control a person has over cognition, thus “the processes individuals use to acquire and understand knowledge” (Ang *et al.*, 2007:337) relating to culture. *Meta-cognition* (*thinking about thinking*) thus relates to the ability to think, learn and strategise in order to identify appropriate responses to different cultural situations (Earley & Peterson, 2004:105; Kim *et al.*, 2006). People with a high level of meta-cognitive CQ are consciously aware of the cultural preferences of others, both before and during interactions, using activities such as planning, monitoring, and revising mental models of cultural norms (Ang *et al.* 2007:338). Through reflective observation, analysis and developing abstract conceptualisations, meta-cognition allows an individual to create new mental categories, and to re-categorise others in order to “adapt to, select, and shape

cultural aspects of the environment” (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127). As a person’s knowledge of the host culture increases, the person’s ability to strategise and devise culturally appropriate responses develops (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:78).

Thus, meta-cognition requires an individual to plan interactions strategically in order to allow successful adjustment. A distinction can be made between problem-focused and symptom-focused coping strategies (Selmer & Leung, 2007:590). In adjusting to different cultures, women tend to resort more to problem-focused coping strategies (a more constructive approach to dealing with stressful situations) than to symptom-focused strategies (a passive approach to dealing with the symptoms of stress) (Selmer & Leung, 2007:597). At a meta-cognitive level, women may also be more aware of their own ability to adjust to different cultures, especially those cultures with more masculine values. This heightened awareness enables them to read societal cues and consequently support the general success of an assignment, despite possible feelings of psychological discomfort (Caliguiri & Tung, 1999:777).

2.4.2 Motivation

The *motivational* component of CQ refers to a person’s perceived level of self-efficacy and ability to endure in the face of possible failure and uncertainty (Earley & Ang, 2003:138). A person with a high level of motivational CQ thus has the ability to remain motivated by continually challenging his/her own belief system in order to engage in culturally different behaviour. Earley and Peterson (2004:105) attribute efficacy, confidence, persistence, value congruence and affect for the new culture to the motivational component of CQ. The ability to adapt one’s belief-system seamlessly also plays a pivotal role in one’s attitude, and ultimately the motivation to push on (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2001:15). A high level of CQ thus requires a person to remain motivated to adapt potentially incongruent value systems fluidly in order to deal successfully with difference. Women often find themselves in the position of having to integrate seamlessly different life spaces (work, relationships, personal development) where different value systems are required of them (Myers & Pringle, 2005:424) – an integration of “experiences intertwined with relationships” (Myers & Pringle, 2005:430).

Self-efficacy and a strong growth motive also form an essential part of motivational CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:31). People with a strong self-growth motive are more likely to be open and to explore other cultures actively in order to learn more about that which is unfamiliar. According to Earley *et al.* (2006:67), the need for self-enhancement and affirmation of one's identity is reinforced by relationships with others, and consequently such relationships are a source of motivation for learning about new groups and an increased openness to experience.

Most women who opt for expatriation or self-initiated expatriation do so for personal growth reasons, more than purely for reasons of career development (Cabrera, 2009:187; Mäkelä, Suutari & Mayerhofer, 2011:268; Myers & Pringle, 2005:247; Richardson & Mallon, 2005:416). This implies that the intrinsic motivation for expatriation plays a crucial role in successful adjustment and adaptation to the host culture (Haines, Saba & Choquette, 2008:456).

Ng *et al.* (2009:511) emphasise the developmental role of CQ as an experiential learning capability for developing global leaders. The underrepresentation of women in the international management arena seems to place women in a particularly good position for developing their CQ, particularly from a motivational perspective: the more determined women are to pursue expatriate careers, the more likely they are to be successful and the more easily they will adapt (Selmer & Leung, 2003:244-255). In this light, Thomas and Inkson (2003:166) are of the opinion that women have the ability to develop a higher level of CQ than men, based on their interpersonal skills. Thus, it can be assumed that women are more likely to seek out and integrate with different social groups across cultures.

2.4.3 Behaviour

Earley and Peterson (2004:109) contend that the *behavioural* component of CQ entails that a person possesses an appropriate set of responses or a behavioural repertoire that can be implemented in different intercultural interactions. A person should thus not only be able to strategise, learn and have the motivation to act, but should also possess a knowledge base of appropriate behaviour, or be able to acquire appropriate behaviours (social mimicry) within a specific context (Earley & Peterson, 2004:109). Managers with high CQ are role-based actors who do not necessarily *become* their roles, but are able to *retain* their own cultural identities

whilst effectively, convincingly and consistently playing a role in the other culture (Earley *et al.*, 2006:35). Acquiring an appropriate behavioural repertoire is also related to Social Learning Theory, as a key to overcome the “Culture Shock” phase of intercultural adjustment as developed by Black and Mendenhall (1991:239). A person with high behavioural CQ can be compared to a “master of dramaturgy” who is comfortable with mimicry, controlling unacceptable behaviours and role play (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:80).

Shapiro *et al.* (2009:878) consider the effective enactment of procedural knowledge to reflect the transition between an etic and an emic world view. An etic world view is shaped within one’s home culture and refers to the procedural knowledge that is obtained through heuristic experience in the home country. Many individuals who sojourn in other countries experience tension in the host country when they rely on etic procedural knowledge to explain new experiences in the host country. By contrast, an emic world view refers to cultural knowledge that is obtained in the host culture and which is subsequently used to resolve problems in the host culture. The tension between the etic and emic perspectives is particularly prominent in the early stages of intercultural adjustment (Shapiro *et al.*, 2008:75).

Earley *et al.* (2006:74-75) relate motivational CQ to group membership and background. For example, if change is part of one’s daily life, one is more likely to be motivated to understand new cultural situations (here one might think of countries in a state of transition versus countries that are fairly stable and homogenous). As a result of the knowledge and heightened sense of mindfulness that continuous change brings, a person with a high CQ is able to perceive subtle changes in the environment, and consequently adapt and expand his/her behavioural repertoire (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:58-59).

Due to their structural position in organisations, which is often one of underrepresentation, many women are also used to being treated as outsiders or even aliens in their local workplaces (Altman & Shortland, 2001:142). As a result, they need to play various roles (see Kanter, 1993, cited in Altman & Shortland, 2001:142), and are used to being different, to having to try harder, to playing dual (or multiple) roles and being highly visible (Altman & Shortland, 2001:143). The inherent isolation and tokenism of being the only woman amongst a group of men

requires a woman to be attuned to her environment and to adapt her behaviours continuously to be acknowledged (Linehan *et al.*, 2001:12). This apparently negative environment can foster women's propensity to increase their CQ and hence places them in an advantageous position when they have to cross (physical and cultural) borders (Altman & Shortland, 2001:143).

The next section provides insight into the processes through which CQ can be developed.

2.5 DEVELOPING CQ

Crowne (2008:391) attempted to answer the following very important question: "What leads to CQ?" Some research exploring, refining and measuring the construct has been conducted, but thus far there has been limited enquiry into the factors that lead to a high level of CQ.

Exposure to different cultures through interaction, travelling, studying and reading, are only a few of the ways through which an individual can develop CQ (Crowne, 2008:393; Van den Bergh, 2008:99). Crowne (2008:393) points out that some forms of exposure to culture seem to be more significant than others, and contends that extended exposure to a culture by visiting a culture or residing in a culture leads to a deeper understanding of a culture's norms. According to Crowne (2008:394), cultural exposure is multidimensional, and various aspects may influence the degree of exposure a person has to a culture.

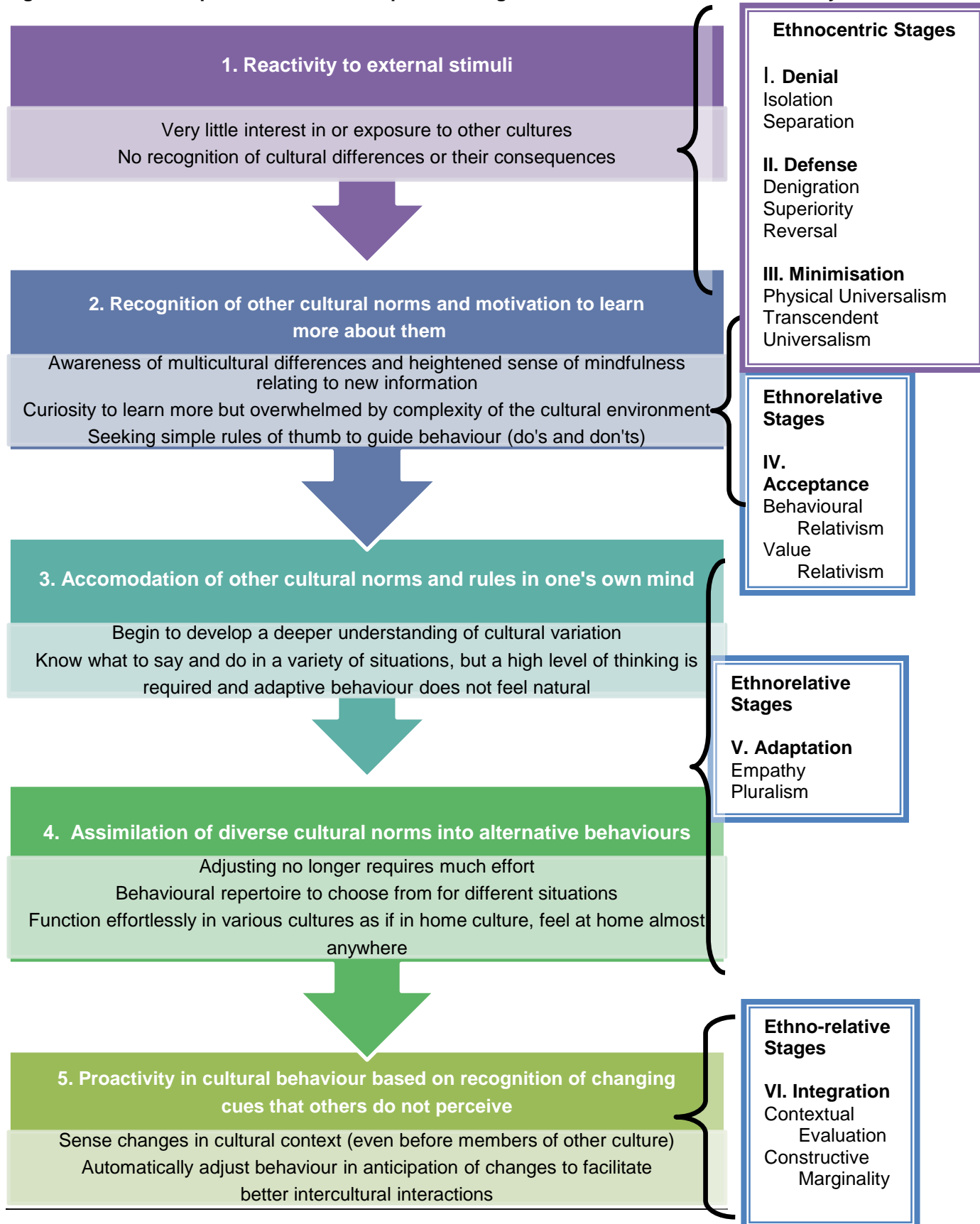
Longitudinal developmental experiences that support the development of CQ include self-directed expatriation for career reasons, international mentors, teaching abroad, working in multicultural remote teams, and foreign military service (Ng & Earley, 2006:15; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:71).

Furthermore, CQ is acquired through continuous feedback on the outcome of behaviours and getting a "sense of how one is doing" (Swidler, 1986:275). Prolonged engagement with a different culture exposes a person to that culture at a deeper level, thus expanding the person's behavioural repertoire (Earley & Mozakowski, 2004:105), which consequently provides a broader set of alternatives to choose from when taking action (Swidler, 1986:275).

Thomas and Inkson (2003:66) suggest that the development of CQ occurs in five stages, which are facilitated by the experiences mentioned above. These stages correspond with Bennet's (1993) Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Figure 2.2, overleaf).

The development of CQ is an evolutionary process which begins with what Thomas and Inkson (2003:66) call "reactivity" to the external environment. People in this phase tend to hold on to their own cultural norms and assumptions, whilst either remaining oblivious to cultural differences, or following a policy of treating everyone the same way. During this phase of development, individuals have little interest in other cultures, and/or have never been exposed to other cultures before, which lead to a denial of cultural differences (Bennet, 1993:26). Expatriates who find themselves in this first developmental phase may rely on strategies such as selective perception, social categorization, and stereotyping to make sense of their experiences (Bennet, 1993:27; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:47). Shapiro *et al.* refer to expatriates in this initial stage of building sensitivity as "Romantic Sojourners" who interact with the local culture at a surface level. This stage corresponds closely to the "honeymoon phase" of adjustment described by Liu and Lee (2008:181), as discussed in more detail in Section 2.6.3.1.

Figure 2.2 A comparison of the developmental stages of CQ and Intercultural Sensitivity



Source: Adapted from Thomas and Inkson (2003:66-67) and Bennet (1993:26-27).

During the second phase, a person begins to recognise other cultural norms and becomes curious to learn more about them. Due to the complexity of the cultural environment, individuals may choose to search for simple do's and don'ts to help them make sense of the world (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:66-67). This phase corresponds with the first ethnorelative stage of the DMIS (acceptance of cultural differences and respect for those differences). In this phase, developmental models such as those of Hofstede or Trompenaars provide people with sophisticated stereotypes and mental frameworks within which to categorise and make sense of their intercultural encounters at a cognitive level (declarative knowledge). A person uses his/her existing cultural frame of reference (etic knowledge) as a base for comparison with new information in the new culture (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:75).

During the third developmental phase of CQ, a person no longer relies on the notion of absolute truths to guide behaviours, and instead begins to develop a deeper understanding of different cultural norms and behaviours through a process of accommodation (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:67). This means that a person's existing value systems become more fluid and malleable to enable him/her to respond to different situations. The person's emic structures become more complex and through the process of "environmental scanning", new knowledge structures and categories of meaning are created (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:77-78). As a person's CQ increases, his/her evolution towards cultural ethno-relativism increases and respect for his/her own values, as well as for the values of others, increases. New behaviours are adopted and individuals begin to know what to say and how to act in different situations (Bennet, 1993:38). Individuals may not yet feel entirely comfortable with the differences they face during this phase, so Earley *et al.* (2006:29) emphasise the importance of motivation to "persevere in the face of difficulty and possible failure".

The ability to learn from negative experiences is a key moderator in helping a person to adapt to other cultures (Earley *et al.*, 2006:30). This ability to learn from negative experiences is useful because there are many uncertain variables in dealing with different cultures. The interaction is often complicated by an overload of information that has to be comprehended (Triandis, 2006:20). The ability to learn to suspend judgement until enough information becomes available to allow a sound judgement to be made is another important attribute in developing CQ.

Suspension of bias enables a person with CQ to collect information about the people they may be dealing with first methodically, before making incorrect judgements (Triandis, 2006:21). Triandis (2006:21) emphasises the importance of *situations* in culturally intelligent behaviour, explaining that a person with high CQ looks for “current behaviour in different situations to identify the other person on the allocentric-idiocentric continuum”.³ By suspending judgement and integrating information related to the situation, the correct judgement can be made.

Thomas and Inkson (2003:67) describe the fourth phase of CQ development as the “[a]ssimilation of diverse cultural norms into alternative behaviours”. People who have reached this level of development have acquired an expansive behavioural repertoire to choose from in different situations. These people can be compared to chameleons (Earley & Petersen, 2004:100) or to the ancient Greek god Proteus, as they are “flexible enough to adapt with knowledge and sensitivity to each new cultural situation” (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:15). In terms of Bennet’s (1993:23) model, these individuals begin to build up an intuitive sense for different situations and appropriate reactions in order to respond in context-appropriate ways.

The fifth stage of development suggested by Thomas and Inkson (2003:67) reflects the highest level of CQ. This stage corresponds with the “Constructive Marginality” phase of Bennet’s (1993:24) model. However, there does seem to be a level of disagreement between these two models with regard to the relative benefit of reaching such a high level of cultural sensitivity/CQ/ethnorelativity. Thomas and Inkson (2003:67) paint a picture of a highly adaptable person with a fluid identity – a person who is so attuned to cultural differences that he/she is able to intuitively sense changes in cultural contexts even before members of the other culture sense them. In anticipation of these changes, this person is then able automatically to adjust his/her behaviour in order to maintain a successful interaction.

By contrast, Bennet (1993:25) refers to a “marginalized individual” who, through his/her marginalization, is able to reconstruct his/her identity and respond to different situations across cultures. The virtue of individuals at this level of

³ Triandis (2006:21) explains that within cultures, people can be allocentric or idiocentric. This means that some people in individualistic cultures may be similar to people in collectivist cultures (allocentric); whereas some people in collectivist cultures may be similar to people in individualist cultures (idiocentric).

adjustment is that *they have no cultural identities*. They function outside of any one cultural frame of reference and are able to raise any assumption to meta-level (a level of self-reference) (Bennet, 1993:24). This same virtue, however, may also become a pathological pattern for individuals who have reached an extreme level of ethnocentrism. Such marginalised individuals may possess multiple frames of reference which may clash with one another, and may result in a kind of “internal culture shock” (Bennet, 1993:22). This internal culture shock may in effect lead to regression along the developmental stages of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS) continuum, back to ethnocentric behaviours.

Shapiro *et al.* (2009:82) provide a more moderate view of an individual who has developed a high level of CQ, referring to a person in this phase of development as a “partner” in the host culture. Partners are able to view people from other cultures as individuals who are *guided* by cultural patterns, but not necessarily *defined* by them. They are able to reflect deeply on different cultures and values, and consequently expand on their own cultural frame of reference in order to co-create a new, shared culture based on trust (Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:83).

Earley *et al.* (2006:25) use the analogy of a molecule to explain the relative degree of fluidity of a person’s identity and the degree to which an individual is able to adapt and be open to other cultures. Thus, people with strong ethnic/cultural identities may find it difficult to adjust to different cultures because they are not able to separate the “molecules” of their various identities when they are faced by culturally different situations. In order to develop a high level of CQ, expatriates and managers should become aware of their identities, be flexible to adjust, and integrate new features into their identities. This process of self-examination is a continuous process throughout the developmental cycle of CQ.

Because the identity development of women is strongly based on social networks and the strength of the ties they have with these networks (Volpe & Murphy, 2001:61), and women tend to invest more in their personal development and consequently gain more varied experience in different fields (Cabrera, 2009:187; Myers & Pringle, 2005:430; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61), they are in an advantaged position in terms of redefining themselves and developing a high level of CQ.

While Thomas, Inkson and Bennet continue to emphasise the importance of self-reflection in CQ, Earley *et al.* (2006:35) are of the opinion that the behavioural level of CQ does not require a “deep level of self-analysis” or control over one’s emotional psyche. They compare a manager with high CQ to an actor who is able to play his role convincingly and consistently in the other culture. Hence, Earley *et al.* suggest that managers use the PRISM model (see below for what the acronym stands for) for developing CQ (Figure 2.3, overleaf). This model, underpinned by three Rs (Rules, Reasons and Repertoires), provides managers with a practical tool to help improve their CQ throughout the different phases presented by the developmental stages discussed in the preceding paragraphs of this section.

The PRISM model for developing CQ constitutes a circular approach to the continuous development of CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:37). It involves

- ***Preparing your mind*** (how you acquire knowledge and how you think);
- ***Reviewing and learning*** (how you think about your thinking; how you plan, monitor and review; how you learn);
- ***Identifying your strengths and weaknesses*** (knowing your strengths and weaknesses by having your CQ profiled);
- ***Setting goals and targets*** (knowing what you want to achieve and exerting energy and drive to achieve your goals and targets); and
- ***Mobilising your resources*** (displaying appropriate behaviours and actions for adapting to different cultures).

Figure 2.3 PRISM framework for developing CQ



Source: Earley *et al.* (2006:38)

There seems to be some inconsistency in the current academic discourse around the role of identity, culture and experience in developing CQ and its role in people’s adjustment to different cultures.

Although an organisational exploration of CQ as a construct is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to take note of recent attempts to operationalise CQ from an organisational perspective (see Moon, 2010:456-493). Whereas individual CQ is a facilitator of cultural adjustment and effective performance in culturally diverse environments (Moon, 2010:458), organisational CQ refers to an “organization’s ability to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse environments, and it may help firms adjust effectively in different cultural settings and to gain and sustain their competitive advantages” (Moon, 2010:458). Organisations that wish to be at the cutting-edge of developments in the global village need to hire managers with a high level of CQ, and need to be able to respond to cultural differences at a structural and organisational level.

CQ facilitates personal adjustment (feelings of contentment and well-being, being comfortable with interaction with different cultures and low or no levels of stress in interaction with different cultures) (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:125).

To enhance understanding of the facilitating role of CQ in adjustment, the next section provides an overview of key concepts and theories guiding adjustment, acculturation and adaptation across cultures.

2.6 OPERATIONALISING THE CONSTRUCTS OF ADJUSTMENT, ADAPTATION AND ACCULTURATION

The importance of cultural adaptation is often mentioned as a key driver for successful expatriate assignments, job satisfaction and career success in the host country (Jordan & Cartwright, 1998:92; Webb & Wright, 1996:38), but very little is known about the adjustment, adaptation and acculturation of SIE women, and the impact of these factors on their decision-making and career strategies.

As was mentioned in Section 1.6, there seems to be some conceptual confusion in differentiating between and defining adjustment, acculturation and adaptation, as the three concepts are often used interchangeably (see Black & Mendenhall, 1991:239; Jassawalla, Truglia & Garvey, 2004:389; Stroh *et al.*, 1994:177). This section provides a more detailed overview of the three concepts in an attempt to distinguish between them in order to clarify some applications in the discussion of self-initiated expatriation by women in particular.

2.6.1 Adaptation and Cross-cultural adaptation

2.6.1.1 Adaptation

Adaptation is commonly associated with the evolutionary adjustment of organisms over a period in response to the environmental conditions in which they live (Haviland, Prins, Walrath & McBride, 2008:36; Richerson & Boyd, 2005:107). For humans, this is possible because we are able to adapt through our unique ability to combine brain power with physical skills in order to change our environments (Haviland *et al.*, 2008:36). Culture is thus an element of an adaptive process which enables human beings to secure the survival of the species and which also expands the level of complexity in which we live (Haviland *et al.*, 2008:36). Richerson and Boyd (2005:107) are of the opinion that the complex products of and behaviours in human societies are the result of cumulative cultural evolution: different generations learn and build on the adaptive behaviours of their predecessors in order to achieve a higher level of adaptation to the environment.

The evolutionary nature of culture is thus evident as an adaptive process through which people deal with the challenges posed by their environment in order to survive. Haviland *et al.* (2008:36) argue along similar lines as Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, (2002:6) emphasising the point that different groups of people deal with the environment in different ways, based on the way in which they perceive it. The adaptation process is context-specific – the solutions that work for one group of people in a particular environment or context may not be effective for another group of people in another context. Thus it may be argued that adaptation does not only help us to solve problems, it may also cause problems (Haviland *et al.*, 2008:36): when we travel to live and work abroad, the responses that we have developed for dealing with the environment and the world around us may no longer be appropriate (Berry, 2005:699; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 2002:26).

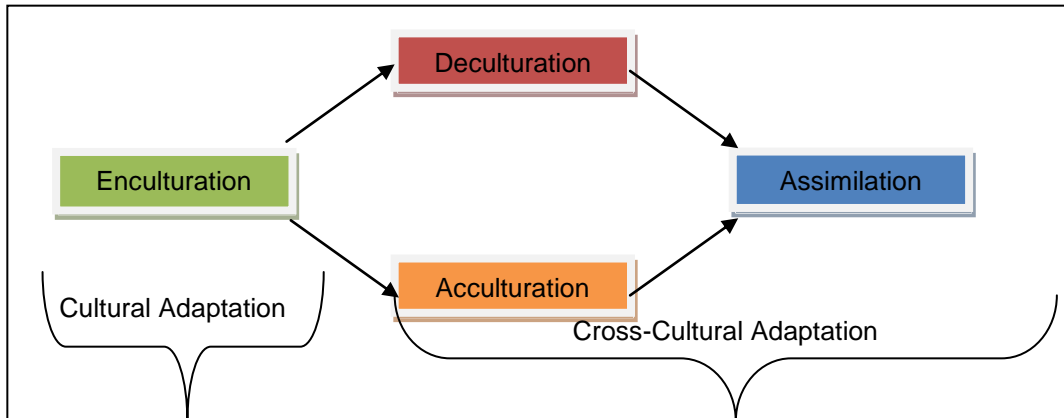
Adaptation is not an accidental process. A person is able to adapt and integrate, or disengage from a culture as a result of the initial goals set for the assignment (Cai & Rodriguez, 1996:n.p.).

2.6.1.2 Cultural and cross-cultural adaptation

In order to avoid potential confusion, it should be understood that the terms *cultural adaptation* and *cross-cultural adaptation* are used interchangeably in this section, with the understanding that, in the context of this study, the word *adaptation* always refers to *cross-cultural adaptation*, where a person has to adapt to various cultures and different environments.

Cultural adaptation takes place in the host country where an individual is socialised into a particular set of social rules and norms through the process of *enculturation* (Haslberger & Brewster, 2005). *Cross-cultural adaptation* takes place when a person has to learn a new set of norms and has to expand on his/her existing cultural repertoire; a degree of unlearning (*deculturation*) has to take place in order for old habits to be replaced by with new ones through the process of *acculturation* (Haslberger, 2005:86). Figure 2.4 (overleaf) illustrates the relationships between enculturation, deculturation, acculturation and assimilation in the process of the adaptation process. According to this model, an assimilated individual is one who has successfully incorporated values of both the native and host culture in order to deal with the challenges posed by the new environment (Kim, 2001:53).

Figure 2.4 Relationships between terms associated with cross-cultural adaptation



Source: Kim (2001:53)

Grove and Torbiörn (1985:216) define adaptation as “the process of reconstructing one’s mental frame of reference”. Thus, a person can incorporate aspects of the host culture into his/her existing cultural frame via a process of changing and re-evaluating existing mental frames (Haslberger & Brewster, 2005:4). Dealing with multiple cultures requires a re-evaluation of existing beliefs, notions and strategies, as well as the ability to re-invent oneself in order to respond appropriately to a particular situation. Thus, successful adaptation requires the development of a “dual identification”, where one’s existing beliefs about one’s identity are revised (Sanchez, Spector & Cooper, 2000:105).

Haslberger (2005:86) extended Grove and Torbiörn’s (1985:216) definition of adaptation, by including a cultural component as a goal of adaptation into the definition of cross-cultural adaptation, which they describe as “a complex process in which a person becomes capable of functioning effectively in a culture other than the one he or she was originally socialised in”. Cross-cultural adaptation is a longitudinal process that occurs as a result of the conflict and acculturative stress resulting from interactions with other cultures (Berry, 2005:700; Cai & Rodriguez, 1996; Padilla & Perez, 2003:701).

Continuous exposure to different cultures enables a person to expand his/her behavioural repertoire and improve his/her CQ in order to integrate different cultural identities and potentially conflicting value systems seamlessly (Earley *et al.*, 2006:5; Earley & Peterson, 2004:105; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:14; Thomas *et al.*, 2008:124). In the context of expatriation, adaptation is a one-sided process

through which a person integrates values from the host culture into the behavioural repertoire in order to adapt successfully to the host environment. An expatriate has to change behaviours, value systems and ways of life in order to “fit in” with the host culture environment (Berry, 1997:15, 2005:709; Harrison *et al.*, 2004:210). Cross-cultural adaptation for expatriates thus involves addressing their “psychological well-being and how individuals manage socioculturally” (Sam & Berry, 2010:472). Successful adaptation results in adjustments in behaviour in order to facilitate acceptance and understanding (Cai & Rodriguez, 1996), and the adoption of new social and work roles in order to avoid intercultural conflicts and achieve successful integration (Yavas, 2001:67).

There seems to be linkages between Swidler’s (1986:275) framework for understanding the multiple facets of adaptation and the constructs of CQ. Swidler argues arguing that a person can only adapt successfully if he/she:

- has a clear image of the world in which he/she is trying to act – this is in line with the construct of cognition as used by Ang *et al.* (2007:5);
- is able to “read” different situations successfully and accurately to get a sense of the success of interactions, from others’ responses and the person’s own feelings – this corresponds with the notions of cognition, meta-cognition and motivation, as used by Ang *et al.* (2007:338), Earley and Peterson (2004:105), and Kim *et al.* (2006); and
- has the ability to choose between alternative lines of action – this is in line with the notion of a behavioural repertoire used by Earley and Peterson (2004:09).

Thus, CQ seems to play a facilitative role in the adaptation process through allowing for successful integration of flexibility, adaptability and reasoning skills (Earley *et al.*, 2006:27-28).

2.6.2 Acculturation

When a person interacts with another culture, the person’s most basic assumptions and beliefs about the world may be challenged (Berry, 2005:700; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:40). These experiences may shake the person’s cultural identity and self-concept, leading to anxiety and temporary feelings of uprootedness (Kim, 2001:50; Yavaz, 2001:67). These inner conflicts may lead to greater susceptibility

to the environment and hence compel a person to learn a new cultural system through the process of acculturation (Kim, 2001:50).

Harrison *et al.* (2004:210) describe *acculturation* as a “broad and overarching concept that is applicable to a range of social and cultural contexts”. Traditionally, social scientists regarded acculturation as a process by which immigrants to a new country integrate and accommodate the values of the dominant culture of a country (Padilla & Perez, 2003:36). As the mobility of individuals and groups increases, it can be argued that acculturation is no longer only relevant to migrant groups, but also to expatriates at an individual level (Berry, 2005:700). According to Berry (2005:700), acculturation is a two-way process in which “everyone is involved, and everyone is doing it”. The import, export and trading of human capital through expatriation assignments has become a core resource in the industrial and national development of the host countries (Inkson *et al.*, 1997:355).

Padilla and Perez (2003:35) define acculturation as “the internal processes of change that immigrants experience when they come into direct contact with members of the host culture”. It is a dynamic, continuous process which may result in changes to the original culture patterns of one or both groups (Redfield, Linton & Herskovits, 1936:149, cited in Berry, 1997:7). Factors that moderate the degree to which adaptation takes place in the long run and can also be related to behavioural and attitudinal acculturation exist both prior to and during acculturation at the individual and group levels (Berry, 1997:7). Two levels of acculturation can thus be distinguished:

- *group level acculturation*, which results in a culture change in one or both groups interacting with each other; and
- *individual level acculturation (psychological acculturation)*, which refers to the internal adjustments and changes experienced by an individual who is in contact with other cultures.

2.6.2.1 Group level acculturation (culture change)

At a group level, factors such as the political and economic context of a person’s country of origin, as well as of the society where he/she settles, and cultural distance play a role in the degree to which a group as a whole acculturates to the mainstream society of a country (Berry, 1997:15; Varma, Toh & Budhwar,

2006:115). Taylor and Napier (2001:361) warn that perceptions held by an expatriate about his/her host country may also be a barrier to acceptance of the host country, especially when such stereotypical perceptions are proven to be untrue in practice.

Group level acculturation is a long-term process which may take many years to complete, and may lead to adaptations in both groups. It may result in changes such as learning each others' language, sharing food preferences, adopting different forms of dress, and others (Berry, 2005:699).

2.6.2.2 Individual level acculturation (psychological acculturation)

At an individual level, attitudes and behaviours, strategies and resources, personality traits and relational skills influence a person's ability to acculturate successfully in the long run (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:40-43; Padilla & Perez, 2003:36-37). Acculturation at an individual level may consequently be influenced by group level factors such as the availability of social support systems, host country national categorisation, and the attitudes of the host society towards the acculturating group (Berry, 1997:15; Haslberger, 2005:100).

Societal attitudes toward foreigners may have an especially significant influence on the acculturation of women who opt for international careers, as the roles of women in the host society may influence the opportunities available to them (Taylor & Napier, 2001:349; Varma *et al.*, 2006:113). Sources of social support from host country nationals may also be influenced by the categorisation by host country nationals of women, based on their gender and nationality (Caliguiri, Joshi & Lazarova, 1999:168,172; Varma *et al.*, 2006:118).

For many women, the boundaries between the self and the family/significant others are blurred (Richardson, 2006:469-486), which implies that their individual identity is shaped by their social context (social identity) (Hartl, 2004:43; Padilla & Perez, 2003:50). For women, separation from their family and significant others as a result of migration or expatriation may be a major source of anxiety, because key social shapers of their identities are removed (Richardson, 2006:480; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:71). A physical separation may also lead to feelings of alienation from

significant others in the home country (Huckerby & Toulson, 2001) and isolation from social networks in the host country (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:43).

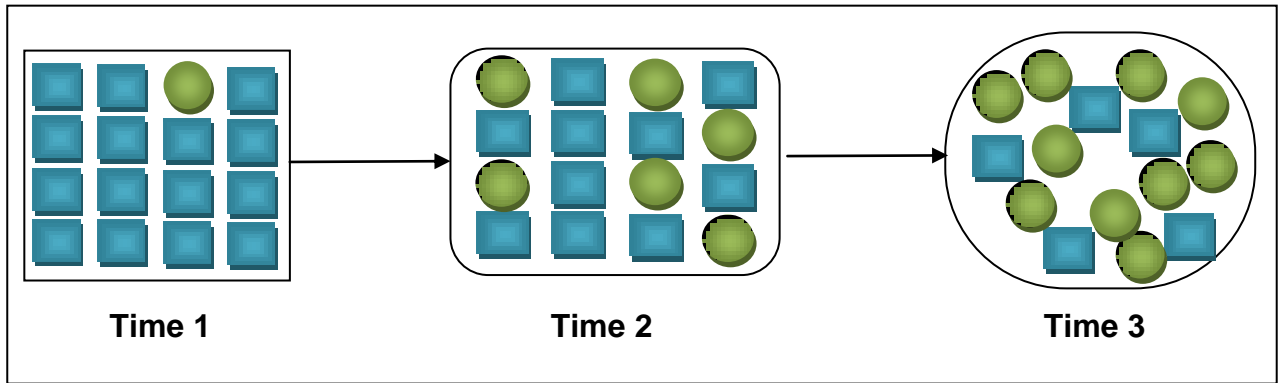
The self, individual experience, and identity are inherently social, and are closely connected to relationships with significant others (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002:161), which in return strongly influences the acculturation process (Yavas, 2001:67). Padilla and Perez (2003:50) emphasise the need for redefinition and reconstruction of personal and social identities in the acculturation process.

2.6.2.3 Acculturation and deculturation over time

In 1928, Robert Park presented one of the first acculturation models, a three-stage model consisting of contact, accommodation and assimilation (Padilla & Perez, 2003:36). This model served as a basis for thinking about acculturation. Park initially believed that the process of acculturation is irreversible and unavoidable, but anthropologists such as Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003:37) who expanded on this model have argued that acculturation does not imply automatic assimilation into a culture. The process of change from one orientation to another can be selective, implying that individuals can choose which elements of their own culture they wish to surrender, and which elements of the new culture they wish to incorporate (Padilla & Perez, 2003:37).

Acculturation occurs over time as a person is exposed to another culture and more and more aspects of the host culture are integrated into his/her existing frame of reference (Kim, 2001:53-54; Padilla & Perez, 2003:50). However, not all individuals are equally able to integrate different values into their repertoires successfully. This explains why CQ may be a facilitator in the long-term success of an expatriate (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:127). The process of acculturation over time is illustrated in Figure 2.5 (overleaf). Kim (2001:53-54) asserts that complete adaptation to the environment may be a life-long challenge for both natives and newcomers to a culture. According to this theory, people may find themselves on a continuum ranging from *minimum* acculturation and deculturation (Time 1) to *maximum* acculturation and deculturation (Time 3).

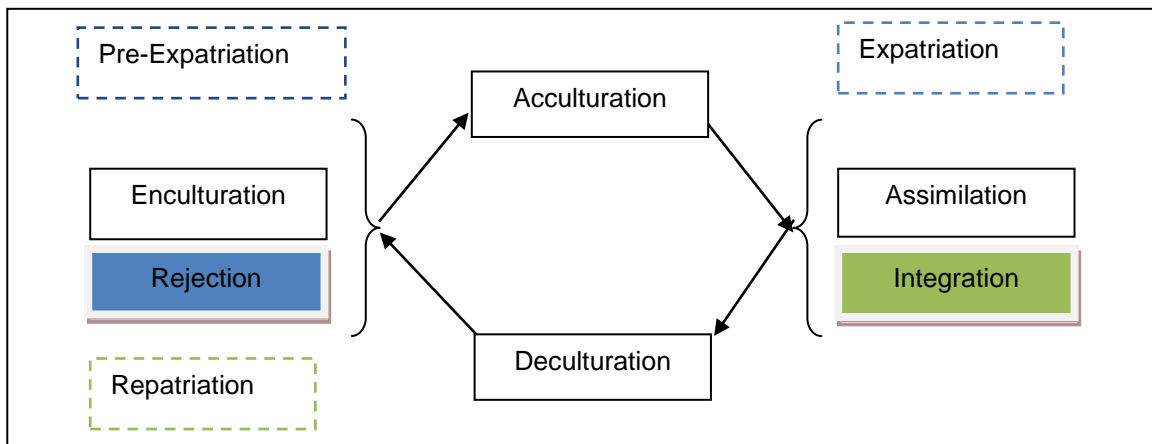
Figure 2.5 Deculturation and acculturation over time



Source: Kim (2001:54)

Berry (1980, cited in Padilla & Perez, 2003:37) explains acculturation as a two-way process that consists of four phases, namely assimilation, integration, rejection and deculturation. When one combines his ideas with Kim's (2001:53) model, an individual's adaptation process can be summarised as set out in Figure 2.6 (below).

Figure 2.6 A two-way process of adaptation before and after an expatriate assignment



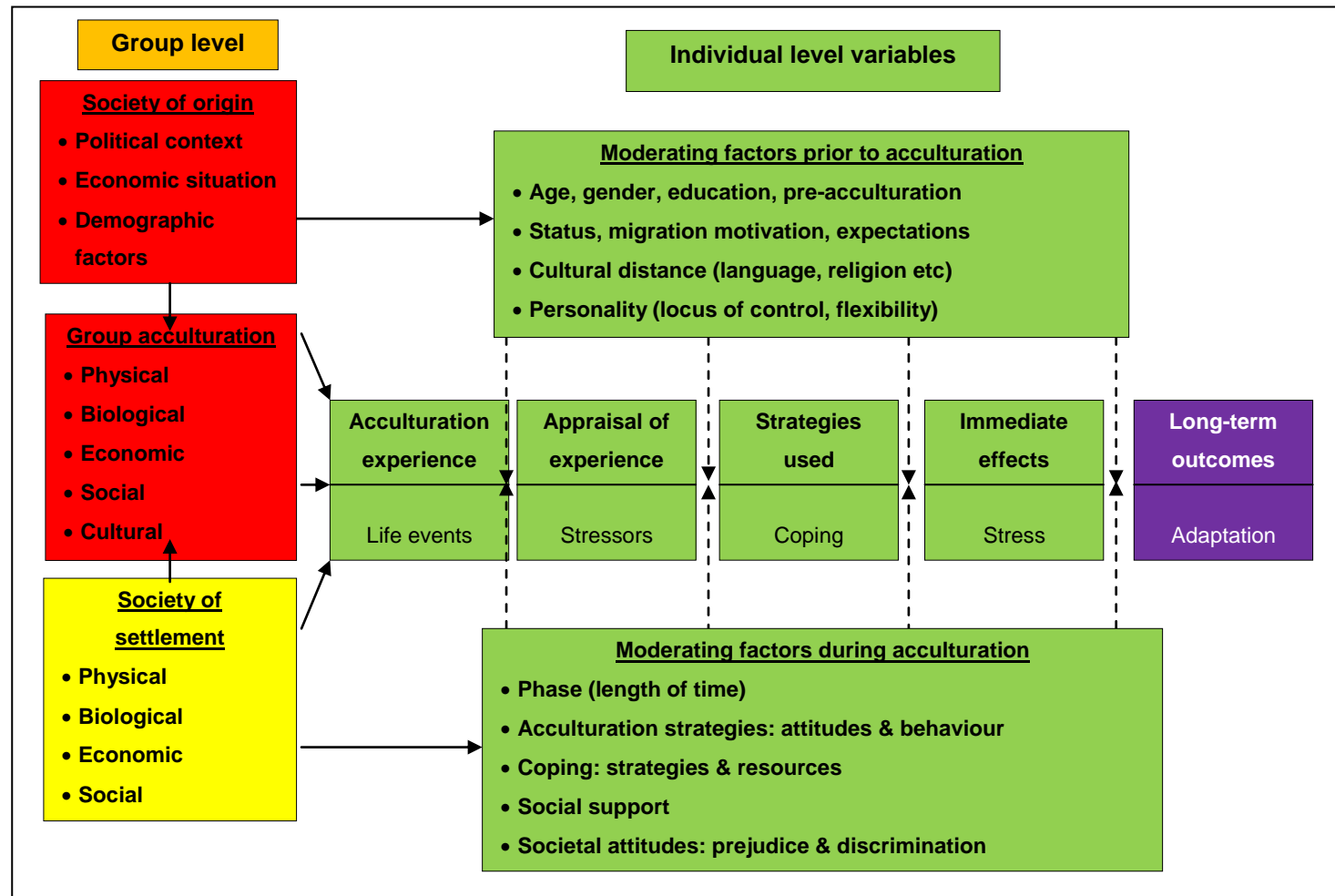
Source: Adapted from Kim (2001:53)

Expatriates on international assignments may go through the processes of assimilation and integration, and may then have to go through the processes of rejection and deculturation again upon returning to their home countries. When an expatriate embarks on an international assignment, acculturation will take place through the acquisition of cultural traits in the host country, and changes in the individual's behavioural repertoire that allow him/her to function in the mainstream society and culture in the host country (Berry, 1997:6, 2005:66; Taylor & Finley,

2009:683). Through direct contact with other cultures, certain changes begin to occur in the individual's own thinking, feeling and behaviour, as existing values and underlying assumptions are challenged and re-evaluated (Earley *et al.*, 2006:29; Padilla & Perez, 2003:50; Sanchez *et al.*, 2000:100) .

Berry (1997:15) proposes a framework for acculturation research that encompasses the group and individual level variables that influence the long-term outcomes of adaptation (see Figure 2.7, overleaf). This framework is used as a guideline in structuring the theoretical discussion below of acculturation and adjustment as constructs that support adaptation.

Figure 2.7 A framework for acculturation research



Source: Adapted from Berry (1997:15)

The expatriate decision and professional identity of an individual are embedded in the history and social experiences that shape a person's life (Richardson, 2006:470; Selvajah, 2003:9; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:71). The knowledge, experience, and previous expatriate experience that a person acquires prior to relocating to another country plays an important role in the overall success with which a person is able to deal with the challenges he/she faces in another country (Selvajah, 2003:9).

Considering that many women professionals find it difficult to differentiate between different life spaces in their home countries (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:63), it may be argued that those women who embark on an international assignment may find it even more difficult to address the blurred boundaries between their life spaces (Hutchings *et al.*, 1012:1775; Mäkelä *et al.*, 2011:263; Richardson, 2006:469-486). According to Padilla and Perez (2003:43), social identity and self-categorisation help individuals to feel unique, whilst simultaneously fulfilling their need to belong. This need to belong is especially significant for women, whose identities are strongly embedded in various social networks which influence their career and life decisions (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61). *Social identity* thus plays an important role in the ability of women to successfully acculturate, and establishing deep and meaningful relationships in the host country is essential for the psychological well-being of women expatriates in the host country (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:41). This process may be assisted by people in the host country – Osland (2000:231) refers to locals who support the acculturation process as “magical friends” who act as “cultural mentors” by translating the culture for expatriates and helping them understand the rules of conduct in the host culture.

Understanding and being able to speak the local *language* is also essential in helping expatriates to establish contact with host country nationals and prevents isolation from the local community (Andreason, 2008:284; Selmer, 2006:1217; Yavas, 2001:67). Well-aculturated expatriates are usually those who speak the local language fluently (Osland, 2000:231). Fluency in the local language also provides insight into the local culture and helps an expatriate to understand cultural values and practices (Earley *et al.*, 2006:86; Friedman, Dyke & Murphy, 2009:254; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:41). Language ability may also influence the attitudes held towards foreigners, especially in respect of locals' categorisation of

expatriates into in- or out-groups and the degree to which locals are able to identify with foreigners (Olsen & Martins, 2009:219). Language may thus lead to polarisation or accommodation between groups and individuals (Lauring, 2008:356). Other variables such as information available about the host country prior to expatriation, background and prior experiences are important factors that influence a person's adaptability to the new environment, and are likely to reduce or aggravate the influence of culture shock (Selvarajah, 2003:10).

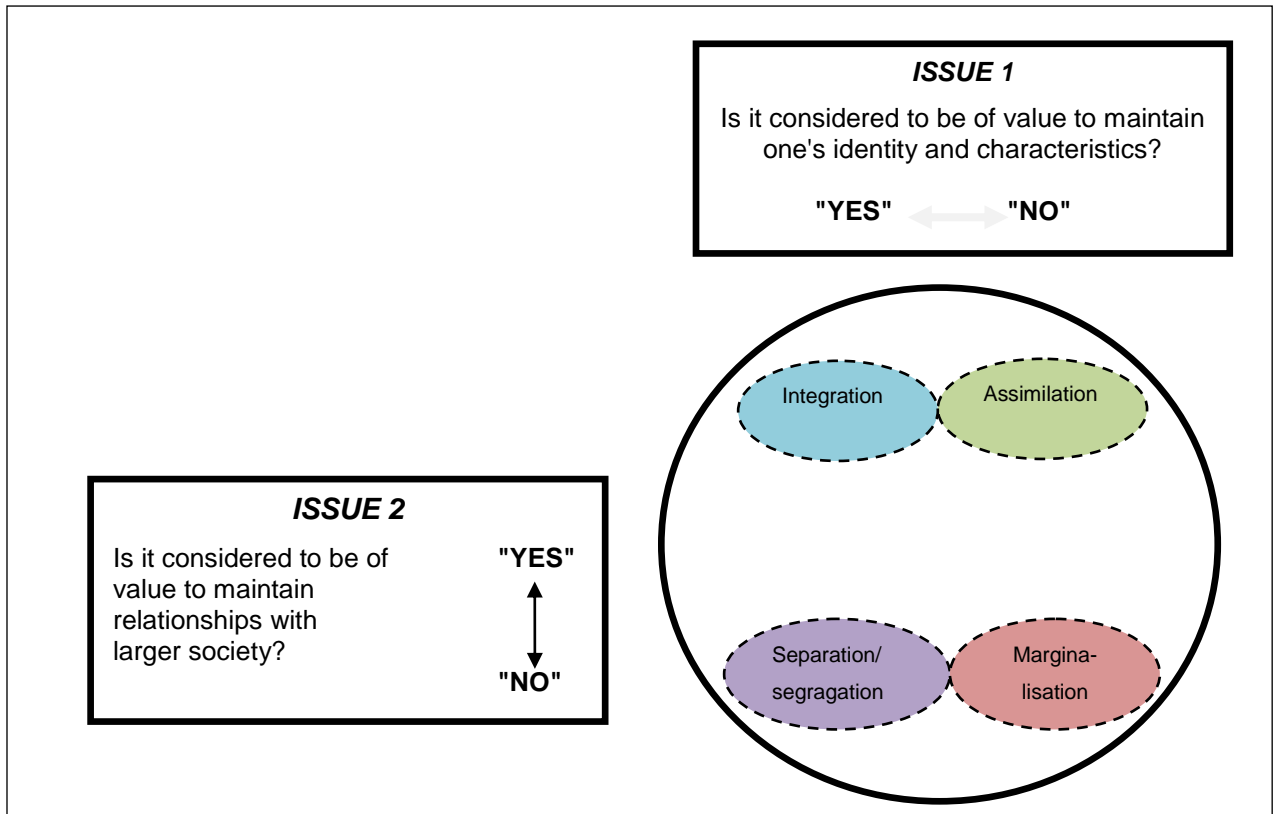
2.6.2.4 Acculturation strategies

Acculturation can occur to varying degrees, depending on a person's willingness to learn about other cultures and ability to build a repertoire of appropriate responses and behaviours to allow functioning in another culture without losing his/her original cultural identity (Cordova, 2005:101; Harrison *et al.*, 2004:210). The processes of learning about other cultures, suspending judgement, and strategising about how to cope with the challenges posed by the environment described by Mendenhall and Oddou (1985:42-43) correspond with the underlying constructs of CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:27).

People employ different strategies when acculturating, ranging from total assimilation with a dominant culture to total segregation and marginalisation. The acculturation strategies available to an individual are *integration, assimilation, separation/segregation and marginalization* (Berry, 1997:9-10).

Although it is often assumed that individuals and groups have choices in how they acculturate, it is important to keep in mind that this choice is sometimes made on their behalf by society (Varma *et al.*, 2006:118) – due to categorisation by host country nationals, an expatriate may have little or no individual freedom or voice in the process (Berry, 1997:10). When the mainstream culture enforces segregation and assimilation upon an acculturating group, a *melting pot* may well turn into a *pressure cooker* in which non-dominant groups become marginalised (Berry, 1997:10), as depicted in Figure 2.8 (overleaf).

Figure 2.8 Acculturation Strategies



Source: Berry (1997:10).

Integration is the strategy pursued by individuals who try to retain certain aspects of their own culture and values, whilst also actively seeking to participate in, and integrate with, the mainstream society and its social norms and structures (Berry, 1997:9). According to Berry (2006:719), the following pre-conditions should exist for an individual to pursue this strategy: the society accepts and values cultural diversity; there are low levels of prejudice, stereotyping and discrimination between groups; positive attitudes among different cultural groups; and a sense of identification with the larger society by all groups.

Integration as an acculturation strategy is thus not only influenced by the individual's choice, but also by the attitude of the host society towards foreigners. Individuals who are successfully able to preserve certain parts of their own cultural identities, whilst being flexible enough to integrate other frames of references into their repertoire can be considered to be at the highest level of ethnorelativism (Integration) and CQ development (Bennet, 1993:43; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:67).

Selvarajah (2003:9) emphasises the impact of pre-departure training and previous expatriate experience as moderating factors to reduce culture shock during the

early adjustment phases. Expatriates who come from multi-cultural environments where integration of many cultures is supported are most likely to find it easier to adjust to other cultural environments. Those who expatriate from mono-cultural environments are likely to suffer severe culture shock (Selvajarah, 2003:10). Furthermore, “[p]eople who have a strongly intertwined set of identities to which they are strongly committed may experience problems adjusting to new cultures” (Earley *et al.*, 2006:26). Varma *et al.* (2006:114) further assert that apart from cultural distance, the categorisation of expatriates in terms of gender by host country nationals also influences the expatriate’s level of success in a foreign culture. Women are often categorised into in-groups or out-groups depending on aspects like: the status/gender of the supervisor deciding which employees are accepted for expatriate assignments and the traits associated with the expatriate’s culture.⁴ These categories provide host country nationals with guidance and determine the level of supportive behaviours an expatriate can expect from host country nationals in order to aid the adjustment process (Varma *et al.*, 2006:115).

Separation/Segregation occurs when individuals hold on to their own cultural values, whilst simultaneously avoiding interaction with other cultures (Berry, 1993:30). This strategy may be forced upon a person by the host country, or be the result of a choice to remain separate from other cultures. These individuals thus “turn inward towards their heritage culture” and exclude themselves from other cultural groups (Berry, 2005:705). This form of separation and erection of physical and social boundaries to avoid interaction with other groups takes on the form of Denial according to Bennet’s (1993:28) model. Separation is one step further along the continuum of intercultural sensitivity - On the surface it may appear as if different cultural groups co-exist without any major conflicts (“as long as they leave us alone, everything will be fine”). Unfortunately, in reality the stereotypes that groups begin to foster of each other may become so strongly reinforced over time that it may lead to the de-humanisation of other groups (Berry, 1997:7). Bennet (1993:30) warns against this type of negative and denigrating stereotyping as they lead to Defensive responses to cultural differences. Think for example about a country like the Netherlands where a melting pot society was welcomed and

⁴ For example: Expatriate women in India have a distinct advantage over their male counterparts because the more communitarian and caring characteristics associated with women correspond with Indian cultural values (Varma *et al.*, 2006:118).

supported and over a period of a decade, the public discourse has shifted from integration to assimilation and separation (See Peters & Vellenga, 2007 for a full analysis of how societal attitudes change due to stereotypes). Although expatriates and international sojourners are different to migrants, a certain level of acculturation is important to ensure assignment success. Expatriates who withdraw from the host country's culture and only socialise with other expatriates create social barriers of separation which could potentially lead to a lack of productivity at work and a degradation of the expatriate's home life (Black & Gregersen, 1992:64).

Assimilation takes place when a person does not find it important to maintain his/her cultural identity and hence immerses him/herself in the new culture and finding ways to fully integrate in the dominant culture (Berry, 1997:9). Individuals who choose to "give up" their own cultural values and identity may well be compared to individuals in the ethnocentric phase of "Defense-Reversal" in Bennet's (1993:31) model. Although these individuals may appear to be very culturally sensitive on the surface (through adopting the host culture as their own), they are in truth only "changing the center of ethnocentrism" (Bennet, 1993:31). When expatriates follow this path of acculturation, they form a strong identification with, and attachment to, the new culture, language, values and business practices (Black & Gregersen, 1992:64).

Marginalization occurs when acculturating individuals or groups are not able to, or do not find it important, maintain their cultural identities. These individuals also do not find it important to seek interaction with people from other cultures (Berry, 1997:9; 2005:705). Berry (2005:705) warns that researchers should not confuse the concepts of "integration" and "marginalisation" as the adaptation outcomes for these two strategies are vastly different. Marginalised individuals do not have very strong allegiances to any particular cultural grouping. Bennet (1993:24) warns that individuals who have achieved a certain level of ethnorelativism may become "paralysed" and unable to commit to any set of values. The result may be that individuals can shift their cultural contexts easily, but over-relativising can lead to withdrawal and regression to ethnocentric stages of intercultural awareness.

For the *purposes of this study*, acculturation will be defined by the following constructs:

Table 2.2 Defining components of acculturation

Component of Acculturation	Definition
Acculturation strategies	Strategies and responses employed by or available to the acculturating individual in the adjustment process (ranging from complete withdrawal from the host culture to total assimilation to the host culture (Berry, 1993:10; Black & Gregersen, 1992:62).
Societal attitudes	The attitudes of mainstream society in the host country towards foreigners – openness or resistance to foreigners, the way in which expatriates are perceived by locals in the host country and the influence of gender roles in the host country on the opportunities available to men and women in the host country (Berry, 1997:15; Caliguiri <i>et.al.</i> , 1999:168;172; Taylor & Napier, 2011:349).
Social Support	Deep and meaningful relationships with locals and other expatriates in the host country; regular contact and support with extended family and significant others in the host country (Huckerby & Toulson, 2001:n.p.; Osland, 2000:231; Richardson, 2006:470).
Language	The Ability to speak and understand the local language in order to effectively integrate into the host society (Berry, 2005:700; Cai & Rodriguez, 1996; Friedman <i>et al.</i> , 2009:254; Osland, 2000:231; Olsen & Martins, 2009:219).
Strategies & Resources	Relocation support from parent company, previous expatriate experience, feeling at home in the new country as soon as possible (Butcher, 2010:24; Richardson, 2006:470; Selvarajah, 2003:10).
Psychological Acculturation	Overall satisfaction and emotional well-being in the host country, based on the individual's ability to re-evaluate his/her cultural identity in order to successfully cope with the novelty of the host culture (Cordova, 2005:101; Harrison <i>et al.</i> , 2004:210; Sam & Berry, 2010:478).

Acculturation is thus a two-way, long-term process through which individuals and groups re-organise their cultural identities in order to accommodate values of the mainstream culture to a lesser or greater extent: “the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures” (Sam & Berry, 2010:472).

The next section will provide a conceptualisation of “Adjustment”.

2.6.3 Adjustment

There are two ways in which the term “adjustment” can be interpreted. First, it can be looked at from a monolithic cultural perspective which assumes that adjustment

is the result of cumulative cultural evolution in humans (Wallace, 1970:55). Second, one can look at cross-cultural adjustment, which refers to a process of changing one's basic assumptions, behaviours and cognitions about culture that were obtained through social learning in order to adopt a new cultural programme that will ensure fit with a new environment (Friedman *et al.*, 2009:254; Yavas, 2001:61).

Adjustment is often equated with expatriate assignment success, and is considered to be an overarching concept that encompasses all the components related to dealing with culture at a personal, work and social level, as discussed in studies by Black *et al.* (1991:304), Caliguiri and Lazarova (2002:763), Lii and Wong (2008:298-299), Selmer and Leung (2003:1118) and Stroh *et al.* (1994:177-181). Others however consider adjustment to be related to the individual's capabilities to function effectively in a different cultural setting by assimilating to (or becoming more like) the environment by adopting affective, cognitive and behavioural strategies to adjust to the environment (Al-Waqfi, 2012:6; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:43; Ward *et al.*, 2009:86; Yavas, 2001:61; Zakaria, 2000:503).

A well-adjusted individual is able to maintain a positive psychological state, actively or passively, in order to achieve a degree of comfort and familiarity in the new environment and to fit into the new environment (Al-Waqfi, 2012:7; Yavas, 2001:61). A high level of CQ is thus essential for successful adjustment across different cultures.⁵

Adjustment is a multi-faceted construct (Al-Waqfi, 2012:7). Various models have been developed over the years in an attempt to predict and explain the processes related to intercultural adjustment and consequently to reduce the rate of expatriate failure. The section aims to provide an overview of some of the most influential models that guide our thinking about expatriate adjustment.

2.6.3.1 The U-Curve theory of adjustment

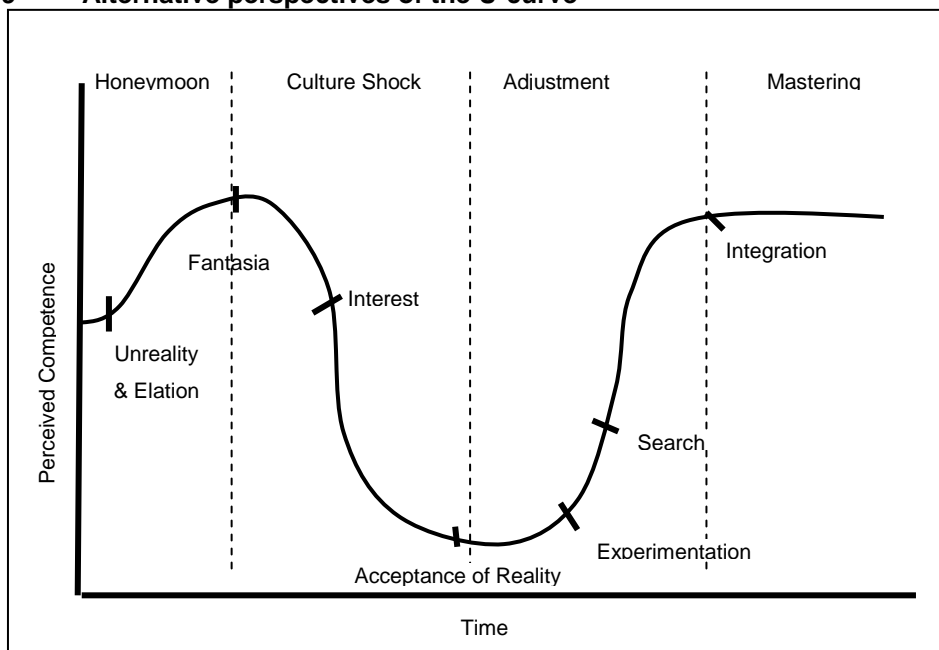
The U-curve theory of adjustment was first presented by Lysgaard (1955) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963). According to this model, the process of

⁵ Refer to the discussion in Section 2.6. See also Earley and Peterson (2004:100) for an extrapolation of the cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural components of CQ which correspond with the definition of adjustment by Ward *et al.* (2009:86).

adjustment follows a U-shaped curve starting with a honeymoon period, followed by culture shock, attempted adjustment and then mastery (Liu & Lee, 2008:181; Pires *et al.*, 2006:159; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:168). Various similar models have been developed over the years, proposing comparable and/or divergent patterns of adjustment – Richards (1996:556) provides a complete overview of other models such as the W-Curve. Recent auto-ethnographic research by Friedman *et al.* (2009:267) suggests that culture shock may not be a once-off event, and that various instances of culture shock (of varying intensity) may occur over time. Individual sense-making and cultural acceptance may thus play a significant role in the adjustment process (Friedman *et al.*, 2009:267; Sims & Schraeder, 2004:74).

The U-curve model of adjustment is used as a starting point in the current research to guide the discussion around adjustment. Various processes during each phase of adjustment and further thinking around the topic are explored for each phase presented on the curve. The U-curve model is presented in Figure 2.9 (below).

Figure 2.9 Alternative perspectives of the U-curve



Source: Pires *et al.* (2006:159)

The *honeymoon* phase occurs during the first weeks of an assignment or prior to departure. Individuals are fascinated by a new and different culture, and experience a sense of infatuation caused by the newness of the environment (Liu & Lee, 2008:181; Pires *et al.*, 2006:160). Black *et al.* (1991:298) assert that there are three constructs which influence the adjustment process, namely, change,

contrast and surprise. *Change* in this context refers to the *external* changes a person experiences between the old and the new settings. The proposition is that the larger the discrepancy between the old and new setting, the greater a person's difficulty in adjusting. *Contrast* refers to the *internal* perspectives that individuals hold and how they interpret their new settings. *Surprise* relates to the expectations that a person holds of the new environment and the difference between expectations and reality (Black *et al.*, 1991:298). Sims and Schraeder (2004:75-76) suggest that the "honeymoon period" is essential in helping expatriates to prepare for their assignments. Any training or awareness activities that are provided during this phase help to reduce the uncertainties related to the assignment and new culture, thus moderating the impact of culture shock which may arise from change, contrast or surprise (Selvajarah, 2003:10).

It is widely accepted that a certain level of discomfort will be experienced when individuals have to function in societies where they are not familiar with the "right" way of doing things. Berry (2005:707) refers to this level of discomfort as acculturative stress. Acculturation is thus the result of intercultural adjustment, which consists of the processes of culture-shedding, culture learning and cultural conflict (Berry, 2005:707). Culture shedding and culture learning may occur selectively, accidentally or deliberately, as an individual seeks to achieve a greater level of "fit" with the environment (Berry, 2005:707; Yavas, 2001:61).

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2002:22) use the analogy of an onion to describe culture. This model is based on the work of Schein (1992:16): at the outer layer of the culture onion, changes may occur fairly easily and with little effect. However, when the challenges to one's value system and cultural programming are in conflict, one may experience *acculturative stress* (Berry, 2005:708) or what is more commonly known as *culture shock* (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:226; Oberg, 1960, cited in Richards, 1996:554). Berry (2005:708) distinguishes between these two terms, arguing that "shock" automatically implies a negative experience, whereas "stress" can have a positive (eustress) or a negative (distress) connotation.

For the purposes of this study, Richards's (1996:556) conceptualisation of adjustment as an inadvertent result of change through a number of stages that are

accompanied by culture shock are incorporated with the definition of culture shock. Thus, for the sake of clarity, in this study, “culture shock” is used synonymously with acculturative stress, which is seen as a component of the adjustment process and as encompassing both the positive and negative aspects of acculturative stress (Berry, 2005:700).

Culture shock sets in when a newcomer has to start coping with the new environment on a daily basis. It can be described as a wave of emotion as a result of the uncertainties related to a new country, possibly a new language and the loss of familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse (Pires *et al.*, 2006:158; Sims & Schraeder, 2004:74). Frustration, excessive concern about minor issues, feelings of depression and helplessness are signs of culture shock (Liu & Lee, 2008:181; Pires *et al.*, 2006:160; Richards, 1996:557).

According to Pires *et al.* (2006:157), the traditional advice to expatriates to immerse themselves in the local culture (assimilation) and build relationships with similar-other expatriate professionals does not address the key cause of expatriate failure, namely ethnic identity. Ethnic identity refers to an individual’s natural identification with another group though identification with aspects such as a long shared history, cultural traditions, customs and language (Pires *et al.*, 2006:157). An expatriate on a foreign assignment may feel a loss of ethnic identity which cannot be fully met over a short period through immersion in a foreign culture or association with expatriates from diverse cultures (Pires *et al.*, 2006:158). This loss of ethnic identity may also lead to culture shock.

Richards (1996:557) relates the feelings of identity loss and misplacement to the role of an expatriate as a *stranger* or *outsider* in the host country. Yavas (2001:67) holds a similar view: the initial lack of knowledge, behavioural repertoire and understanding of cultural cues may instil fearful and even paranoid reactions in expatriates during the culture shock phase. Pires *et al.* (2006:160) recognise the feelings of being “alone in a foreign land” and suggest that it is not enough to know how to behave and to have enough information about the host country. The old “meanings” assigned to the world are no longer relevant, a person is not yet familiar with the “new” meanings of things in the new culture, with the result that he/she is physically present in the new country, but “socially remote” from the host

culture (Richards, 1996:566; Zakaria, 2000:503). Lack of knowledge or ability to behave in the right way may place an expatriate in a marginalised position because the local host may be doubtful of the newcomer's loyalty to the group. As a result, the perceived (or real) exclusion from the group may result in feelings of paranoia (Richards, 1996:559).

When expatriates experience culture shock, they feel a need to preserve their cultural identities and may regress to doing things in the same way as they did "back home", which has a reverse effect on successful adjustment to the new culture and maintenance of own cultural identity (Yavas, 2001:67). According to Zaharna (1989:517), expatriates in the early phases of adjustment are faced with a difficult dilemma: on the one hand, the lack of shared meanings in the new environment *increases* a person's need to confirm self-identities; but on the other hand, resistance to developing shared meanings for behaviours *decreases* one's ability to maintain one's self-identity, which leads to a sense of "self-shock". Thus, successful adjustment is aided by a high CQ and the ability to establish new social support networks in the host country with locals who can reinforce self-identity (Earley *et al.*, 2006:33).

During the *adjustment and mastery stages*, the newcomer becomes more comfortable in the new environment. Increasing satisfaction arises from better knowledge of how to function effectively within the host culture, and expectations become more realistic (Liu & Lee, 2008:181; Pires *et al.*, 2006:160). Richards (1996:568) explains that once an expatriate has adjusted by learning the new social norms and cultural patterns in the host culture, he/she is no longer a "stranger" in the new country.

It is important to recognize that there is a difference between adjustment and assimilation to the host culture (Pires *et al.*, 2006:159). Unlike assimilation, where a person "gives up" his/her own culture, adjustment means that a person acquires effective, culturally correct behaviour. There is a perceived reduction in the gap between the two cultures, but the individual does not necessarily give up his/her own culture or values in the process (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:43). However, Pires *et al.* (2006:162) distinguish between the motivation to change deliberately to the new culture among voluntary migrants (such as self-initiated expatriates) and

among involuntary expatriates. Expatriate employees have an expected tenure, and although their move may be partly voluntary, the organisation sending them to the host country makes the final decision about expatriation, thus making the move involuntary to some extent. A person's motivation to adjust to the new culture (expatriates) and motivation to change to the new culture (SIEs) influences the degree of assimilation to the new culture (Padilla & Perez, 2003:50; Yavas, 2001:67; Zakaria, 2000:496).

The U-curve of adjustment describes the phases through which an individual progresses when adjusting to a new culture, but it does not provide a theoretical explanation of causes of transition between different phases (Pires *et al.*, 2006:160; Richards, 1996:556), nor does it provide insight into the specific behaviours and salient factors influencing successful adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:231; Sims & Schraeder, 2004:75).

Given the multiple international experiences that international managers may have in a lifetime, there is a need to revisit the pattern of adjustment as reflected in the U-curve. A recent exploratory analysis of the U-curve identified a number of significant thresholds in a person's long-term adjustment at six, 18 and 36 months spent working in the host country, reported in a progressive linear adjustment graph (Wechtler & Wurtz, 2011). Further exploration of the U-curve is beyond the scope of this study, but it should be kept in mind that the overall adjustment curve for experienced expatriates may not be as strongly influenced by the culture shock phase as suggested in Figure 2.9 (above).

The next section expands on the U-curve theory, based on the Social Learning Theory proposed by Black and Mendenhall (1991).

2.6.3.2 Social Learning Theory

Black and Mendenhall (1991:225-246) revisited the U-curve hypothesis, developing a complementary adjustment theory which they called the Social Learning Theory (SLT). These authors criticise the U-curve of adjustment for being a description of the phases that a person moves through during the adjustment process, rather than a theoretical framework that explains how and why individuals move from one stage to the next (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:232). Social Learning

Theory was first presented by Albert Bandura in 1977 as a response to the debate of whether people learn through cognitive or behavioural processes (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:233).

Social Learning Theory asserts that the honeymoon phase of cross-cultural adjustment occurs because individuals tend to focus on those elements of the new culture that are similar to their home culture. Familiarity is thus superimposed on familiar cues. Through a process of selective perception, attention is paid only to those culture differences that are “visible and striking” (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:236).

Culture shock is ascribed to the high ratio of feedback to the number of inappropriate behaviours exhibited, compared to the number of new and appropriate behaviours that have been learned. An individual thus knows that he/she is exhibiting inappropriate behaviours, but does not necessarily know *what* the right behaviours are to exhibit, or *how* to exhibit these behaviours, leading to symptoms of culture shock, such as frustration and anger (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:238).

Cultural distance refers to the level of cultural dissimilarity between the host and home cultures (Selmer *et al.*, 2007:150). Black and Mendenhall (1991:238) posit that the greater the degree of cultural distance between the home and the host culture, the longer and more severe the culture shock phase will be. However, Selmer *et al.* (2007:156) question this assumption, proposing that some combinations of cultural differences may be supportive of adjustment and performance due to their complementarity. According to Selmer *et al.*, expatriates who are transferred over the same cultural distance may require more or less cross-cultural training, depending on the combination of differences between the two cultures. Often, cultures where little friction is anticipated require training that focuses on the creation of motivation for individuals to fine-tune their current thinking and behaviour to recognise the more essential nuances and dissimilarities between the two cultures. Cultures where a high level of friction is anticipated require training that emphasises factual information (Selmer *et al.*, 2007:156).

According to Black and Mendenhall (1991:239), it takes time to learn situation-specific behaviours. The availability of a local national who is willing to model

behaviour during the culture shock phase can aid expatriates in learning new behaviours (Osland, 2000:231). The more practice a person has in reproducing new behaviours, the faster he/she can become proficient in these behaviours, thus shortening the culture shock phase (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:239) and increasing motivational CQ in terms of self-efficacy to engage in new behaviours.

Through increased positive reinforcement, an individual has a greater propensity to retain new behaviours and feel more “adept and adjusted” in the host culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:240). A person is able to perform the necessary behaviour and function within the new culture effectively and with no anxiety. Further learning is incremental, implying that, at a certain point, the amount of time the person has spent in the culture can no longer be strongly associated with the degree of adjustment to the culture (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:240).

Black and Mendenhall (1991:240) propose that the greater the differences between the host and home culture, the lower the individual’s motivation to continue learning and modelling behaviour, thus prolonging the person’s adjustment process. Furthermore, they propose that the greater the level of attention the person pays to appropriate behaviours, the sooner positive reinforcement will be received and the faster the person will adjust to the host culture.

2.6.3.3 Factors related to successful expatriate adjustment and levels of adjustment

Liu and Lee (2008:182) propose a four-dimensional model to successful expatriate adjustment and acculturation. This model consists of four dimensions, namely self-orientation, other-orientation, perceptual skills and cultural toughness. These dimensions are defined in Table 2.3 (below).

Table 2.3 A four-dimensional model of successful expatriate adjustment and acculturation

Self-orientation	Activities and personal attributes which strengthen self-esteem and confidence: Expatriates who can deal with stress and have high levels of self-efficacy, coupled with the ability to find substitutes for their native interests and activities in the new culture are able to adjust more effectively to the foreign environment (Liu & Lee, 2008:182). A high level of self-efficacy is also crucial for motivational CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003:138).
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Other-orientation	Ability to develop relationships with host country nationals: Expatriates who can develop mentorship ties with host nationals adjust more quickly at work (Liu & Lee, 2008:182; Osland, 2000:231).
Perceptual skills	Confidence and willingness to use the host country's language, being non-evaluative and non-judgemental: Highly perceptive expatriates are more willing to update their beliefs to fit in with the foreign culture and hence adjust more quickly (Liu & Lee, 2008:182). This ability to learn, practise efficient behaviours and adjust one's thinking about one's own culture are related to the cognitive, meta-cognitive and behavioural aspects of CQ (Earley & Mosakowski, 2004:141; Thomas <i>et al.</i> , 2008:127).
Cultural toughness	Response to the living standards of the foreign country: The larger the discrepancy between the living standards in the home and the foreign country, the more difficult the adjustment process (Liu & Lee, 2008:183). Cultural toughness can also be related to the motivation to persevere in spite of animosity, a key aspect of motivational CQ. (See also the construct of cultural distance asymmetry developed by Selmer <i>et al.</i> , 2007:150).

Source: Liu and Lee (2008:182).

Table 2.3 above highlights the relationship between the constructs of self-orientation; other-orientation; perceptual skills and CQ. The model by Liu and Lee (2008) also builds forth on the work of earlier authors such as Black (1988), Selmer *et al.* (2007), and Usunier (1998).

Black (1988:291) distinguishes between work, interaction and general adjustment. *General adjustment* refers to overall adaptation of the expatriate and the family to living in the foreign country (Black, 1988:291). Usunier (1998:94) emphasises the importance of the interrelatedness of work and family lives, arguing that one cannot disregard the possibility of an individual's being highly successful at work, while totally failing in terms of personal and family adjustment. *Work adjustment* refers to the content of a person's work, which may aid the adjustment process due to similarities between procedures, policies and task requirements between the home country and the host country (Black, 1988:291). Unfamiliar procedures or unclear task requirements may lead women to feel a lack of control in their new workplaces, which may consequently affect their subjective adjustment experiences (Selmer & Leung, 2007:589). According to Hartl (2004:48), the family forms an integral part of the overall adjustment of women expatriates in particular because it provides a source of personal security, emotional support and stability.

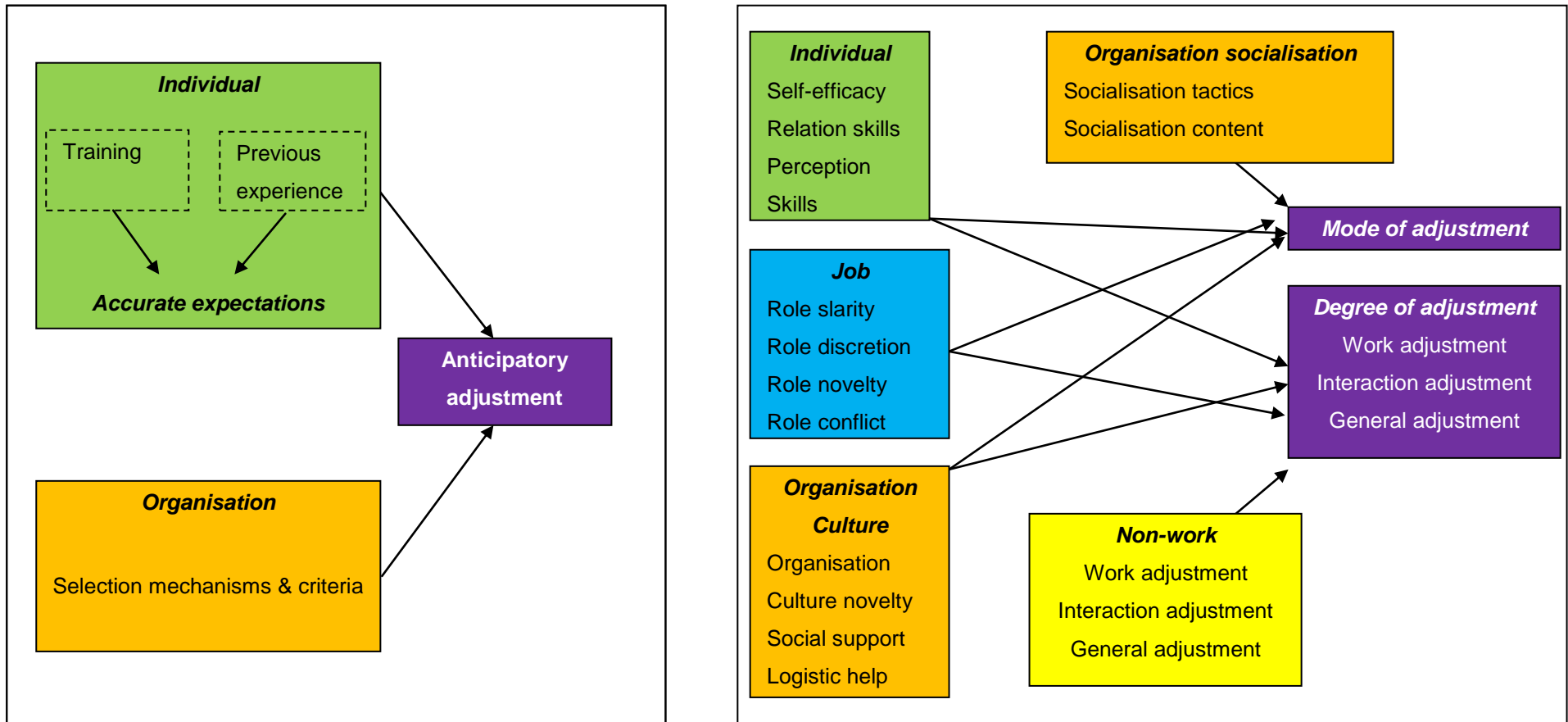
Combining family with work, however, is strenuous and “complex, requiring conscious planning and sophisticated organisation” (Hartl, 2004:48).

Interaction adjustment refers to the level of comfort that a person feels in interacting with the new culture, both in work and non-work situations, at a cognitive, behavioural and emotional level (Hartl, 2004:48; Liu & Lee, 2008:185). Interaction adjustment is comparable to socio-cultural adjustment: person’s ability to fit in or interact effectively with the host culture through variables such as cultural learning and the acquisition of social skills in the host culture (Selmer *et al.*, 2007:151). According to Caliguiri and Lazarova (2002:769), women have a natural ability to establish relationships and social networks in their host cultures, which is an important skill to support their socio-cultural adjustment in the host culture. Hartl (2004:48) holds a similar view, emphasising the role of the expatriate community as a reference group which helps expatriates to make sense of their lives and plays a role in developing an identity as an expatriate. Interaction with the family and significant others in both the home and host countries also contribute to the adjustment of women expatriates (Huckerby & Toulson, 2001:n.p.). Social interaction and support provide a buffer to the stress women experience during the adjustment process (Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002:763).

Psychological adjustment refers to an individual’s subjective well-being or satisfaction in the new cultural environment, which has been associated with variables such as a person’s emotional state, cognitive perceptions and personal trait variables (Selmer *et al.*, 2007:151). This construct is comparable with the “self-orientation” construct of Liu and Lee (2008:182).

Figure 2.10 (overleaf) illustrates a framework for international adjustment by Black *et al.* (1991:303) which expands on this initial distinction between different adjustment types. Adjustment occurs in two distinctive phases, pre-departure (anticipatory adjustment) and during the assignment (mode and degree of adjustment). Upon return to the home country, a third phase of adjustment (repatriation) takes place. Repatriation is beyond the scope of this study and is therefore not discussed in this section. During each of these phases, various factors at the individual, job, organisational and non-work levels influence an expatriate’s ability to adjust.

Figure 2.10 A framework of international adjustment

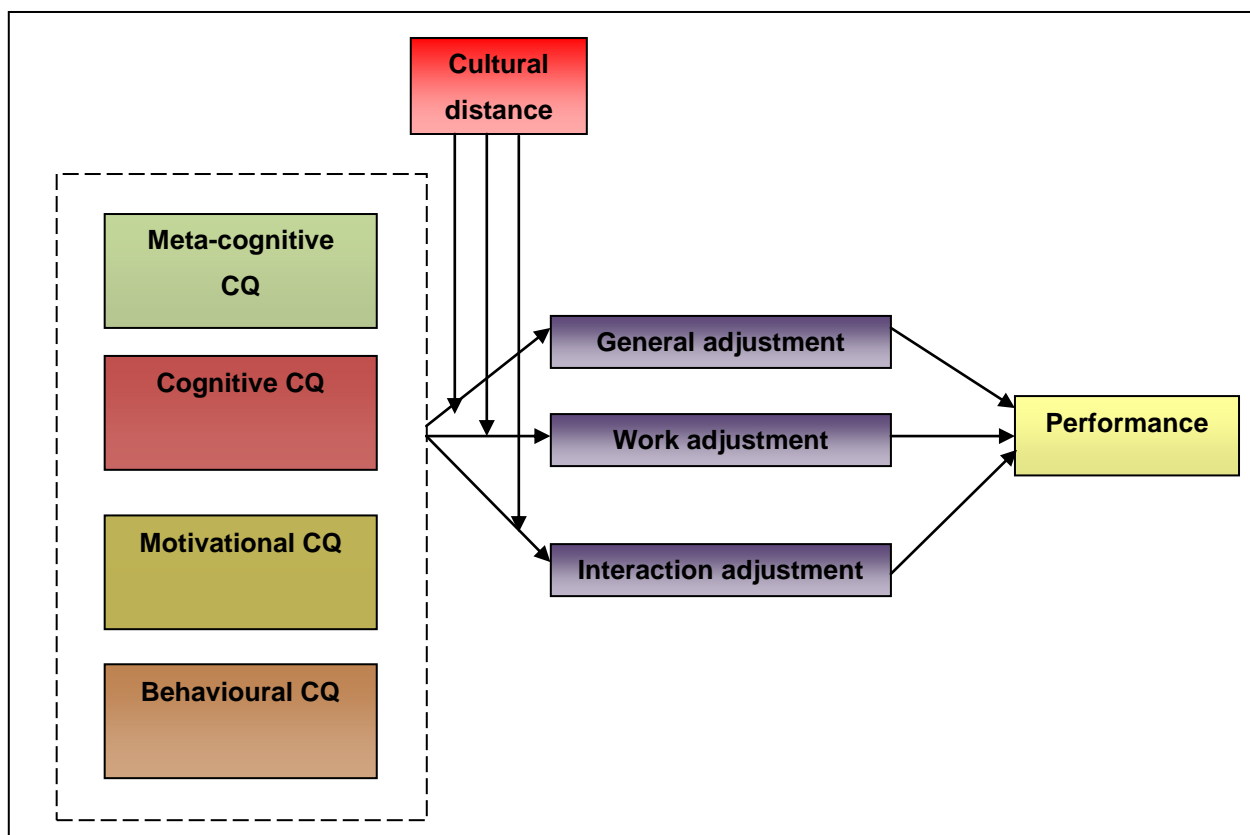


Source: Adapted from Black *et al.* (1991:303)

Huckerby and Toulson (2001:n.p.) and Selvajarah (2003:9) distinguish similar patterns in the adjustment process, emphasising the importance of previous expatriate assignments and initial experiences during the first few weeks of arrival for a person’s overall adjustment in the long term.

Kim *et al.* (2006) proposed a number of hypotheses to stimulate research on the relationship between CQ and expatriate adjustment and performance. The relationship between CQ and assignment effectiveness is illustrated in Figure 2.11 (below).

Figure 2.11 CQ in international assignment effectiveness



Source: Kim *et al.* (2006:n.p.)

This tentative theoretical model summarises the link between CQ, general, work and interaction adjustment and performance. Performance can be equated with adjustment to a new culture in various spheres of life in order to overcome the challenges of acculturative stress and to become a productive and accepted member of the host country’s society.

Adjustment is thus an individual-level variable that reflects a person's ability to navigate the emotional, psychological and social processes related to dealing with other cultures successfully. Adjustment takes place at different levels and to varying degrees at different phases of a person's life.

The next section explores literature related specifically to women's international assignments.

2.7 WOMEN AND INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Most research on expatriate adjustment focuses on psychological, organisational and contextual variables related to the expatriate assignment, and little or no attention is paid to the impact of demographic variables on adjustment (Olsen & Martins, 2009:312). According to Olsen and Martins (2009:312), the lack of understanding of demographic influences on adjustment may lead to "poor decision making based on weak assumptions" at corporate level, which may consequently "deprive certain individuals of the opportunity to pursue global career goals".

Expatriate research to date has focused mainly on predominantly male samples, and very little is known about the specific adjustment, adaptation and acculturation experiences of women in this arena (Forster, 1999:79; Harrison *et al.*, 2004:224; Menzies, 2012:349). Furthermore, CQ research has thus far failed to validate empirically gender-based assumptions such as that women's interpersonal skills enable them to develop higher levels of CQ than men (Thomas & Inkson, 2003), and research has failed to account for gender differences in its exploration of the construct, as can be seen in studies by Ang *et al.* (2007), Ascalon *et al.* (2008), Du Plessis *et al.* (2007), Van den Bergh (2008), Van Dyne and Ang (cited in Earley *et al.*, 2006:217-227) and Ward *et al.* (2009).

The *purpose of this study* is to explore this gap in the research in order to contribute to the knowledge base on women expatriates, especially related SIE women, and on the facilitative role of CQ in their adjustment. Therefore the sections below aim to provide insights into the barriers to and enablers of women's cross-cultural adjustment and international career success.

2.7.1 Traditional expatriation paths: barriers to women's advancement, stereotypes and success factors

In the last two decades, researchers have tried to convince the management community of the benefits of affording women managers more international opportunities (Adler, 1984; Jelinek & Adler, 1988; Shortland, 2009; Sinangil & Ones, 2003). Much of the research on expatriate women has focused on breaking down some of the existing stereotypes surrounding the competence and ability of women in the international arena, dispelling myths such as “*women do not want to accept international assignments*” (Adler, 1984, Adler's emphasis), highlighting the barriers and challenges to entry that women face, proving the productivity, adaptability and overall success of women as international managers, and comparing men and women in respect of their intercultural adjustment and assignment success (Adler, 1984, 1994; Altman & Shortland, 2001; Caligiuri & Tung, 1999; Connerley, Mecham & Strauss, 2008; Jelinek & Adler, 1988; Linehan & Walsh, 1999, 2001; Shortland, 2009; Tzeng, 2006; Westwood & Leung, 1994). These studies generally address the problem that “women who are seeking international careers still have major cultural obstacles to overcome in certain areas of the world if they are ever to achieve equality with their male counterparts in future” (Forster, 1999:89).

Stereotypes around the suitability of women for international assignments are rife. Olsen and Martins's (2009:312) argument about poor decision-making practices on the basis of demographic variables is particularly true for women, who are still underrepresented in many local and international organisations, particularly at the senior levels (Insch, Mc Intyre & Napier, 2008:19; Selmer & Leung, 2003:244). International assignments are often seen as “pipe-line” positions to which female managers have very little access (Insch *et al.*, 2008:19-20). Women are often overlooked for such assignments, resulting in a “glass border” that hampers their career growth and contributes to the ever-growing talent shortage and underrepresentation of women in the higher echelons of management (Harris, 2002:175; Linehan & Walsh, 2009:265; Vance & Paik, 2001:98).

2.7.2 Cultural distance and the gaijin syndrome

A reason that is often put forward by organisations for *not* sending women abroad is that, given the local culture in the host country, women will not be accepted as managers. Organisations are often reluctant to send women on international assignments to countries where there is a large cultural distance, fearing that such assignments will not be successful (Vance & Paik, 2001:99).

In view of such arguments, it is interesting that Adler (1987:188) found that expatriate women in Asia were treated differently to their local counterparts in a way that operates in the women's favour: they were seen first as "gaijin" (foreigners) and then as women. These women were ascribed a higher status because locals had the perception that only the best person for the job would be sent on a foreign assignment. Adler refers to this phenomenon as the "gaijin syndrome" – firstly, foreigners are seen as foreigners, thus women are first seen as foreigners and then as women, with the result that local colleagues are likely to assume that a parent company will not send a woman unless she is very good. Secondly, women expatriates are not expected to act like locals. These findings are supported by a more recent study by Taylor and Napier (2001:360) in Turkey.

A potential explanation for this phenomenon may be found in Social Identity Theory (SIT), with regard to the formation of host country nationals' perceptions of expatriates (host country national categorization) (Varma *et al.*, 2006:118). Women expatriates may experience greater ease of adaptation to the host country as a result of certain gender traits that set them apart from their male counterparts in a particular culture (Varma *et al.*, 2006:118). Olsen and Martins (2009:320) propose that the high level of visibility that women experience may lead to a higher level of support from host country nationals in environments that are predominantly male-dominated.

2.7.3 Old boys' networks and gender stereotyping

By contrast, research in the developed economies of Europe and America paints a different picture of the opportunities available to women. Linehan and Walsh (2001:93) point out that the "old boys" network in Europe is still very strong, which excludes women from valuable networking opportunities because business is done

informally on the soccer field or golf course. Gender and stereotyping is a major obstacle to the career success of women expatriates, because their capabilities are not recognised in the same way as those of their male counterparts (Linehan & Walsh, 1999:523; Mathur-Helm, 2002:19; Selmer & Leung, 2002:348-358). In countries where women are not traditionally valued as professionals, culture and nationality play a secondary role to gender (Cordano, Scherer & Owen, 2001:56). Vance and Paik (2001:98) go as far as to say that the biggest obstacle for American women in international assignments is not what they encounter in the host country, but in their “own backyards”.

Vance and Paik (2001:100) summarise the most common reasons for giving preference to men over women for international assignments as the following:

- cultural restrictions, local prejudices and attitudes towards the role of women in society;
- the fact that the majority of international business leaders are male;
- the belief that men are more qualified for international assignments than women; and
- the claim that women are less able to adapt to the challenging requirements of foreign assignments because they are more vulnerable than men.

Gender stereotyping also leads to the outward derailment of the international career success of women, because powerful positions are almost exclusively filled by men, reflecting the stereotypically male characteristics of success (Selmer & Leung, 2002:350). Again, SIT seems to provide a plausible explanation for the behaviour of predominantly male in-groups toward female out-groups already in the host country (Olsen & Martins, 2009:312).

Vanderbroeck (2010:764) argues that organisations and women themselves have created a number of traps that form barriers to women’s advancement in organisations. Many men and women believe that women have to play a “man’s game” if they want advance in their careers (Mathur-Helm, 2002:25). However, the ability to leverage diversity, and also gender diversity, could potentially be a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Iles & Hayers, 1997:95); thus, instead of treating men and women as the same, or expecting women to become “one of the boys”, a paradigm shift is required. Traditional conceptions of good leadership

and managerial qualities should be revisited to leverage the strengths that are unique to women (Vanderbroeck, 2010:767).

2.7.4 Overcoming obstacles

Apart from traditional barriers to career mobility and growth for women, such as discriminatory staffing policies and an unwillingness to send women abroad (Adler, 1984:32; Tharenou, 2010:75) and the “perceived unwillingness” of women to undertake international assignments (Adler, 1984:83; Altman & Shortland, 2008:202), traditional expatriate career paths require many years of experience with the risk of not being offered an expatriate assignment in the mid- to late career (Vance *et al.*, 2011:3).

Self initiated expatriation is providing an alternative career path for professional women who wish to advance their international careers (Myers & Pringle, 2005:523; Tharenou, 2010:75; Vance, 2005:423). Tharenou (2010:75) suggests that unlike their company-sponsored sisters, who are highly underrepresented internationally, about half of SIEs in the world are women. SIE provides women with the opportunity to develop the skills and competencies needed for success in an international, boundaryless career environment at a much younger age than their male counterparts who opt for the traditional expatriate track via a Multi National Company (MNC) (Vance, 2005:275; Vance *et al.*, 2011:10). Being a female in an international environment brings with it the advantage of visibility, accessibility and memorability which provides easier access to the time and attention of foreign clients (Adler, 1987:182). However, this largely invisible group of expatriate women is often overlooked in hiring decisions and very little is known about their career choices and their adjustment experiences to different cultures (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010:279; Biemann & Andresen, 2010:441; McKenna & Richardson, 2007:307; Myers & Pringle, 2005:329; Vance *et al.*, 2011).

2.8 CONCLUSION OF REVIEW OF EXTANT KNOWLEDGE

Adjusting to different cultures and accepting intercultural differences is a complex process that requires sensitivity, openness and a willingness to question one’s own frame of reference, beliefs and preconceived ideas. In order to respond to the shortage of international managers who are competent to deal with cultural

complexity in the workplace, investing in the development of culturally intelligent managers should be a key priority of International Human Resource Management.

Various authors have argued that there are no gender differences in terms of expatriate job performance, and that women are able to adjust and perform as well as, if not better than, their male counterparts. Nevertheless, despite the fact that women are supposed to have access to equal opportunities in the workplace, very few women really make it to top management positions, due to their lack of international experience or their protean career paths. *Insch et al. (2008:20)* emphasise that this lack of international experience is creating a second glass ceiling for women with management aspirations. Various reasons exist why women are not chosen for international assignments, mostly based on stereotypes and assumptions such as their family responsibilities, perceived ineffectiveness and fear of harassment of women whilst on foreign assignments. Women have made some progress in becoming more internationally representative and overcoming these barriers, but most of the literature focusing on dealing with cross-cultural adjustment has focused mainly on male managers, or used very few female participants.

To date, no research has been published on the qualitative adjustment experiences of women on international assignments with CQ as a facilitator of the adjustment process. Hence, it is difficult to predict whether the existing adjustment models, developed using largely male samples, are appropriate for explaining and preparing women, and specifically SIEs, for international assignments. Furthermore, the existing adjustment models do not allow for the possibility of multiple levels of adjustment to occur at the same time during the adjustment process and the career path development of women in international assignments are largely underresearched.

This review of extant knowledge provided insights into key gaps in current literature and served to clarify key constructs and processes related to adjustment that are relevant to addressing the core research problem and later analysis of data. The conceptual clarification of SIEs demarcates the target population of the study and adjustment frameworks. The literature on careers provides a deeper understanding of the development of CQ as moderator for the experiential learning process and

consequent identity reconstruction during SIE women's adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and consequent career development.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY, PARADIGM, DESIGN AND METHODS



Photo 3.1 As if juggling a PhD with a consulting job is not enough, Marco and I decided to buy, renovate and move into our first house around the same time I started writing this chapter.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Any genuine philosophy leads to action and from action back again to wonder, to the enduring fact of mystery.

(Henry Miller, 1891-1980)

The previous chapter provided an overview of the literature that forms the theoretical basis of this study and emphasised the need for further exploration of the role of CQ in the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of women SIEs and their career development. This chapter describes the researcher's philosophical approach to the research process, the epistemology and ontology underlying the research, as well as ethical issues relating to the research.

This study resides in the social sciences and was guided by an Interactive Qualitative Analysis research design, underpinned by a pragmatic ontology and feministic, constructivist epistemology where the researcher was a reflexive participant in the research process. A multiple methods approach was employed in the data collection inclusive of the use of IQA focus groups, and detailed reflections by me as the researcher. Purposive sampling was employed to select focus group participants who complied with the requirements for the research.

Existing research on expatriate adjustment and CQ tends to utilise survey research designs with a more quantitative research approach (Eg. Lii & Wong, 2008; Thomas, *et al*, 2008). Other qualitative approaches tend to utilise interviews and focus groups where researchers code data after the data was collected (Eg. Taylor & Napier, 2001). Due to my own closeness to the phenomenon, a survey research design may provide a more objective approach to this study. However, such a design may not be useful for developing new theories or refining theories about a construct of which little is known (Shah & Corley, 2006:1822). The IQA research design provides a novel approach to exploring a construct from the participants' perspective, leaving room for the researcher to be a reflective participant without

the risk of uncritically imposing my own views or existing research onto the experiences of participants.

This chapter will provide an overview of my own philosophical journey towards arriving at the research design and the methods that were employed in the study. The chapter is divided into four sections: the first section provides a broad philosophical account of the researcher's world view and core paradigms; the second section gives an overview of the qualitative data collection methods employed in this study; the third section provides an overview of the quantitative data collection methods and sampling that were employed in this study; and the fourth section provides an overview of the steps taken to ensure quality data in both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. The chapter ends with a summary and conclusions.

3.2 RATIONALE AND PHILOSOPHY: WHAT IS RESEARCH?

If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?

(Albert Einstein, 1879 – 1955)

A student who embarks on the journey of research joins one of the “oldest and most esteemed human conversations” (Booth, Colomb & Williams, 2008:11). In the early stages of a student's research career, this conversation may seem fairly one-sided, with the student as listener. As a researcher's knowledge and experience increase, he/she becomes an increasingly active participant and contributor to the conversation, with the aim of hopefully making a difference in the world, such as the case with a PhD thesis.

According to Brew (2001a:271), “[r]esearchers know what research is” and most researchers do not pay much further attention to exploring what they really mean by the word. However, in order to make a contribution to the research field that is worthy of PhD status, there are a number of red flags that should be considered during the research process:

- Research is not about merely gathering information and facts (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:1; Walliman, 2001:6), and nor is it the transfer of facts from one location to another (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:2; Walliman, 2001:7) – a researcher is expected to interpret the information that is gathered (Walliman, 2001:7).
- Research falls within the framework of modern scientific inquiry and should be underpinned by the assumptions of a scientific method (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007:10; Gauch, 2003:2; Walliman, 2001:12-13). Thus, there are certain general principles which are shared by the research community to a lesser or greater extent and which distinguish scientific research from everyday research for commercial purposes.

The key principles of scientific research ((Walliman, 2001:12,13; Cohen *et al.*, 2007:11; Gower, 1997:24; McNiff & Whitehead, 2000:128-129) that guided this study are summarized in Table 3.1 (overleaf).

Table 3.1 Scientific principles underlying this study

Scientific Principle	Definition and application to this study
Order	<p>One of the key principles underlying scientific inquiry is that of <i>order</i> (Walliman, 2001:12). Scientists seek to explain and predict real world phenomena by identifying causal influences based on regularities in the universe (Cohen <i>et al.</i>, 2007:11). These causal influences can vary in strength and degree of usefulness, depending on the scientific discipline and the nature of the variables, and external influences on such relationships. The predictions we make thus vary in terms of the level of their probability (Walliman, 2001:12).</p> <p>The purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of human beings. This means that a multitude of factors and variables could influence the causal relationships and probability of generalisations. The purpose of this study was not to provide predictions of human behaviour, but to identify recurrent themes and patterns as a basis for further theory development.</p>
Empiricism	<p><i>Empiricism</i> is the belief that certain kinds of knowledge can only be derived from experience and that the reliability of a theory or hypothesis depends on the nature of the empirical evidence that support it (Cohen <i>et al.</i>, 2007:11, Walliman, 2001:12).</p> <p>Empirical data for this study were gathered from a variety of sources in order to gather rich and thick descriptions of the phenomenon.</p>
Parsimony	<p>This term refers to the use of economy in developing models and theories to provide us with a simplified way of understanding the world (McNiff & Whitehead, 2000:128; Walliman, 2001:13).</p> <p>The concept of parsimony was taken into account in reducing the complexity of models and theories that emerged from the data analysis.</p>
Generality	<p><i>Generality</i> plays a role in both deductive and inductive reasoning (Cohen <i>et al.</i>, 2007:11). This principle assumes that the relationships observed among phenomena can be generalized to the world at large. Walliman (2001:13) explains that, whilst generalisation may prove unproblematic and straightforward in some sciences, such as physics, many variables may influence the strength of generalisations in other sciences, such as sociology.</p> <p>Due to the qualitative and explorative nature of this study, the principle of generality was not applied .</p>

Research is by its very nature a systematic, cyclical process (Anderson, 2004:7; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:5-6; McNiff & Whitehead, 2000:128; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007:5; Walliman, 2001:10), as can also be seen in this study. This cyclical process as a roadmap for understanding the process underlying this study is illustrated in Table 3.2 (overleaf).

Table 3.2 The research cycle as a roadmap for the current research

Step in the research cycle	Application to this study
a. an unanswered question in the mind of the researcher	<p>What are the individual adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women?</p> <p>How does CQ facilitate the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of SIE women?</p>
b. Problem statement	<p>“An exploration of the experiences and perceptions informing barriers and enablers to cross-cultural adjustment of self-initiated expatriate women and the possible facilitating role of cultural intelligence (CQ)” (see Section 1.7).</p>
c. Main objectives of the research	<p>Primary Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to explore, define and describe the individual adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women; and • to describe the possible manner in which CQ contributes to the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of SIE women. <p>Secondary Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to determine the motives/reasons for relocation of SIE women; • to explore and describe the difference between work adjustment, personal adjustment and psychological adjustment for SIE women; and • to determine whether the adjustment experiences of SIE women are different to those of traditional, company-sponsored expatriates.
d. Information-gathering (review of extant knowledge)	<p>An extensive review of the literature (see Chapter 2).</p>
e. Guiding questions	<p>Main research questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What linkages can be identified between the individual adjustment factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women? • What insights can be gained in terms of CQ as facilitator of the adjustment of SIE women? <p>Sub-questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the motives/reasons for the relocation of SIE women? • Is there a difference between work adjustment, personal adjustment and psychological adjustment for SIE women? • Are the adjustment experiences of SIE women different to those of traditional, company-sponsored expatriates?
f. Data collection	<p>Data was collected through Interactive Qualitative Analysis</p>

Step in the research cycle	Application to this study
	(IQA) focus groups and reflective essays by the researcher.
g. Data analysis and interpretation	Qualitative data were subjected to rigorous analysis using the IQA process developed by Northcutt and McCoy (2004) and thematic coding supported by the qualitative analysis software package QSR Nvivo 9.
h. Conclusions and findings	Chapter 7 provides a discussion and conclusion of findings.
i. Repetition of the cycle	The entire research process consisted of a continuous cycle of refinement of the review of extant knowledge and research questions in order to respond to a gap identified in the literature.

Source: Adapted from Leedy and Ormrod (2005:6-7)

The next section provides a detailed description of the researcher's epistemology and ontology as applicable to this study.

3.3 EPISTEMOLOGY AND ONTOLOGY

*We don't see things as they are, we see them
as we are.*

(Anais Nin, 1903-1977)

Whether we are aware of it or not, people see the world through different lenses, and our general worldview influences how we make sense of the world around us. Even researchers cannot separate their human experience from the scientific process. Our research philosophy reflects the basic beliefs, philosophies and assumptions underlying our research and how it is conducted (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:47). A researcher's own assumptions and beliefs determine whether the researcher chooses a purely quantitative approach using valid and reliable measures, a purely qualitative approach that allows for freedom and interpretation of human experience, or a combination of these aspects along the research continuum. Herewith I am going to provide an overview of my basic beliefs and assumptions as a researcher and clarify why I chose to conduct research that

subscribes to a multi-method qualitative research design underpinned by a feminist phenomenological world view.

Guba and Lincoln (1994:108) summarize the basic beliefs and assumptions that define a particular research paradigm with three fundamental questions:

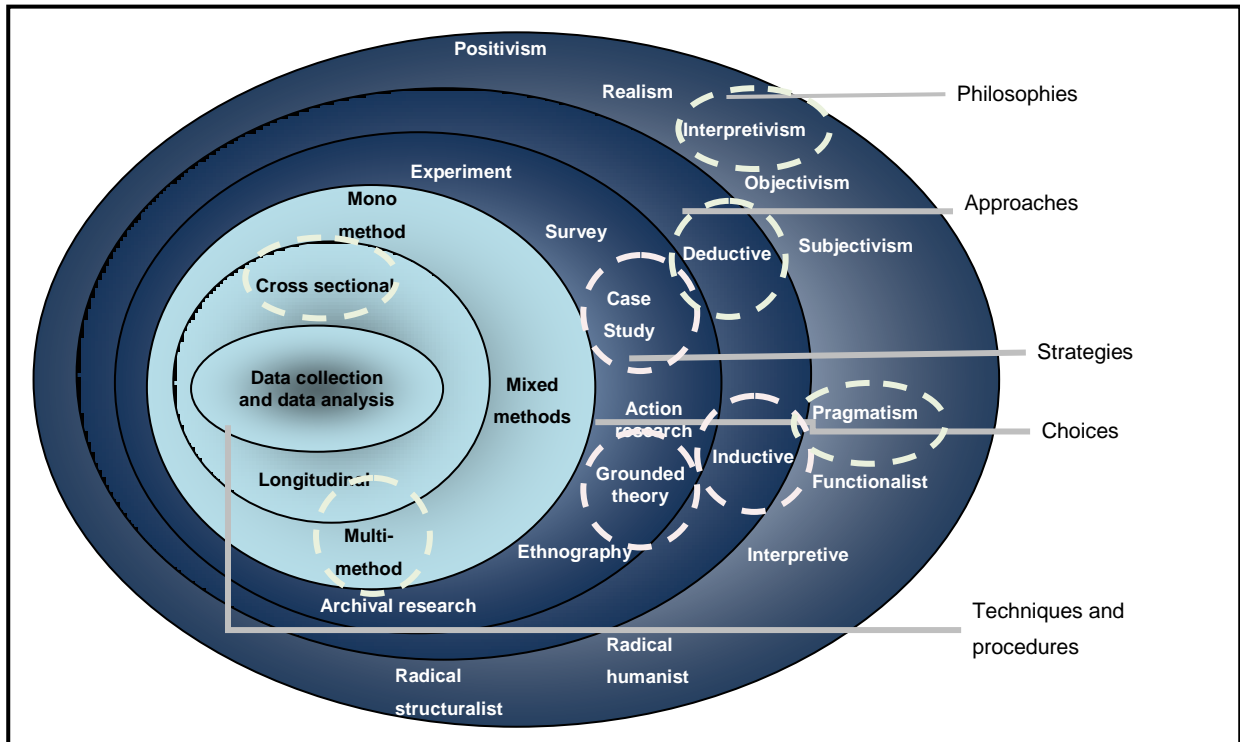
- the *ontological*⁶ question – what forms the nature of reality?
- the *epistemological*⁷ question – what is the basic belief about knowledge? (what can be known?)
- the *methodological* question – how can the researcher go about finding out whatever he/she believes can be known?

The “research onion” (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:102) illustrated in Figure 3.1 (overleaf) represents the interrelatedness of the research process as embedded in the researcher’s philosophy and basic assumptions.

⁶ An *epistemology* provides a basis for what is considered to be acceptable and valid knowledge in a particular field of study (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:102).

⁷ An *ontology* refers to a researcher’s view of the world, whether it is to be considered objective and external to the researcher, or socially constructed and internal to the researcher (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:49; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:103).

Figure 3.1 The research onion



Source: Saunders *et al.* (2007:102)

The two outer layers of the onion represent the researcher’s philosophical approach and the underlying logic within which the research is embedded. The inner layers represent the research strategy, the choice of research method and the eventual techniques and procedures chosen for the data collection and analysis. As can be seen from this illustration, the research methodology and choice of data collection and analysis are influenced and determined by the three outer layers. The dotted circles illustrate the key aspects of this study onion that are relevant to this study, namely multi-methods within the qualitative research approach, referring to specifically data collection methods, using real life cases whose experiences are grounded in theory. Inductive and deductive reasoning were used to analyse and interpret data relying on an interpretivist, pragmatic paradigm.

Traditionally, research can be divided into two main paradigms which tend to be treated as mutually exclusive by researchers. On the one hand, a positivist (quantitative/objective) researcher is attracted to statistical analysis and empirical evidence, whereas an interpretivist (qualitative/subjective) researcher tries to avoid quantitative data and the use of statistics (Reich, 2005:65). According to Northcutt

and McCoy (2004:2), the academic community has historically seen these ontological and epistemological views as being in opposition to each other. Northcutt and McCoy (2004:9) point out that any ideology that is driven to the extreme becomes pathological – one feverishly clings to one's own conceptions to the point of destruction. It is in the heat of such zealous behaviour that scientists have waged the war of paradigms which probably led to the famous words of Schultz, who said in 1967: “The advantage of natural sciences [over] behavioural sciences is that atoms and molecules don't talk back” (Schultz, 1967:33, 221). For a qualitative researcher, the relationship between the observer and that which is observed creates a world of endless paradox (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:1) – the research of human beings who do have a voice to talk back requires a significantly different approach to the world of research.

In seeking to clarify my own ontology and epistemology as the researcher in this study, I have, perhaps naively, been wondering why one has to choose between the two sides of the continuum. Why do I have to hold pure positivist or pure constructionist views as a researcher?

These perspectives may seem to be completely opposed to each other, but Burger (2004:23) proposes that values on a continuum create dilemmas which “signify two sides of the same coin”. Thus, instead of treating research paradigms as opposites, one should attempt to find a reconciliation that leverages the strengths of both sides. The Dilemma Reconciliation Theory advocated by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2002) suggests a creative way to manage the dilemma and to move beyond swinging from one side of the continuum to the other in the traditional linear manner. In an attempt to break free from this “either-or” way of thinking, this study aims to create value by reconciling the creative tensions between the opposite ends of the research continuum. To this end, the positives and negatives of each paradigm are listed below in order to arrive at a reconciliation that uses the best of both worlds.

Table 3.3 (overleaf) provides an overview of the alternative paradigms of enquiry available to a social sciences researcher, based on the researcher's ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Table 3.3 Basic beliefs (metaphysics) of alternative inquiry paradigms

	Objectivism	Subjectivism	Pragmatism
	Positivism	Post-positivism	Interpretivism/ (social) constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism – “real” reality but apprehendable	Critical realism – “real” reality, but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition/community; findings probably true	Transactional/subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Hermeneutical/dialectical
			Critical theory/ Engaged scholarship/ Feminism/ Materialism/ Participatory inquiry

Source: Adapted from Guba and Lincoln (1994:109)

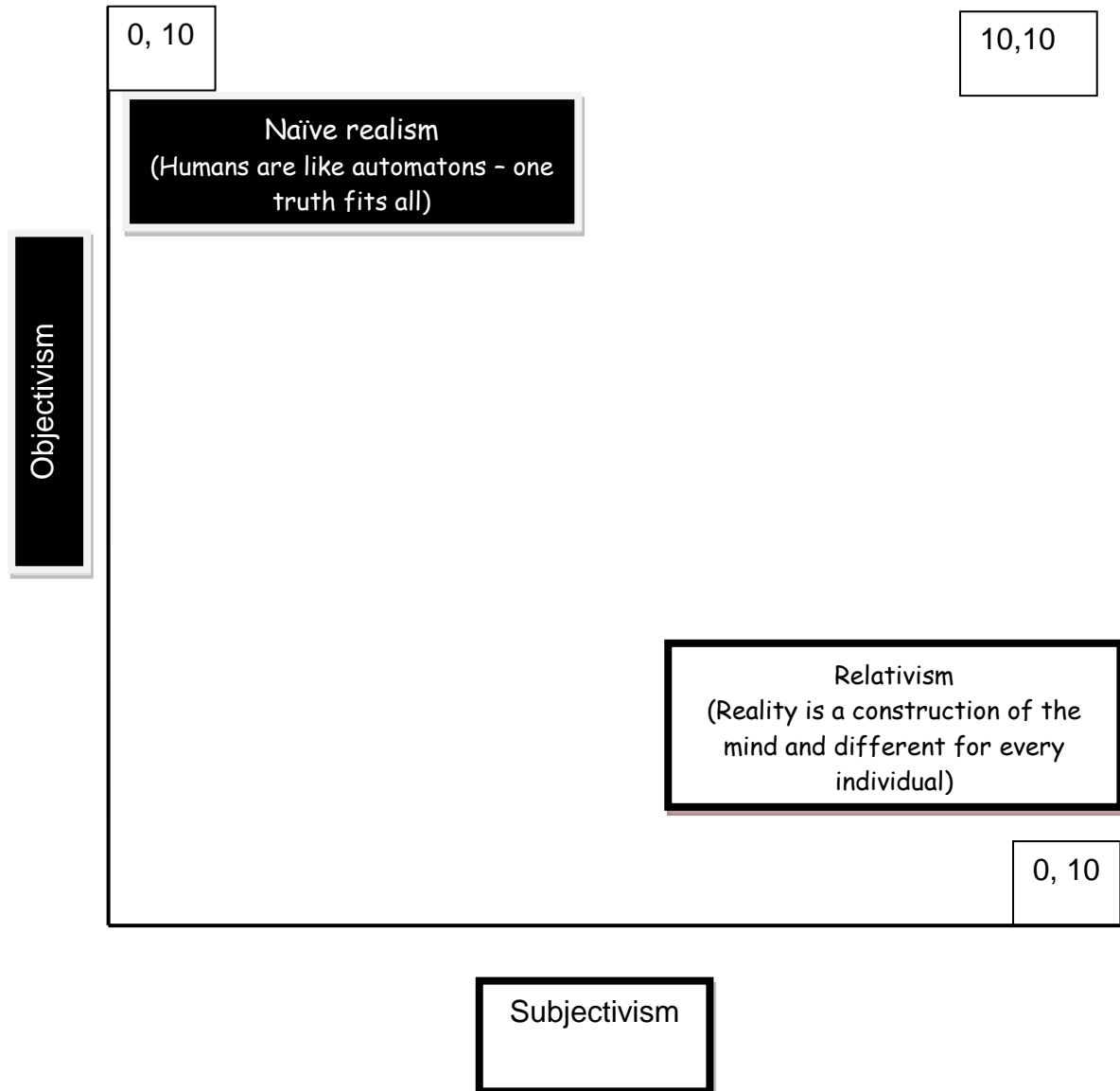
The tension between purely positivist and purely subjectivist research can be formulated as a dilemma:

On the one hand, we want to seek objective truths and laws that predict cause-and-effect relationships.

On the other hand, we want to explore the unique subjective experiences of each individual as he/she constructs his/her own reality.

The pathology that arises from the objective-subjective paradigm is illustrated in Figure 3.2 (overleaf), where the X-axis represents pure objectivism driven to the extreme, and the Y-axis represents pure subjectivism driven to the extreme.

Figure 3.2 The objectivism-subjectivism dilemma



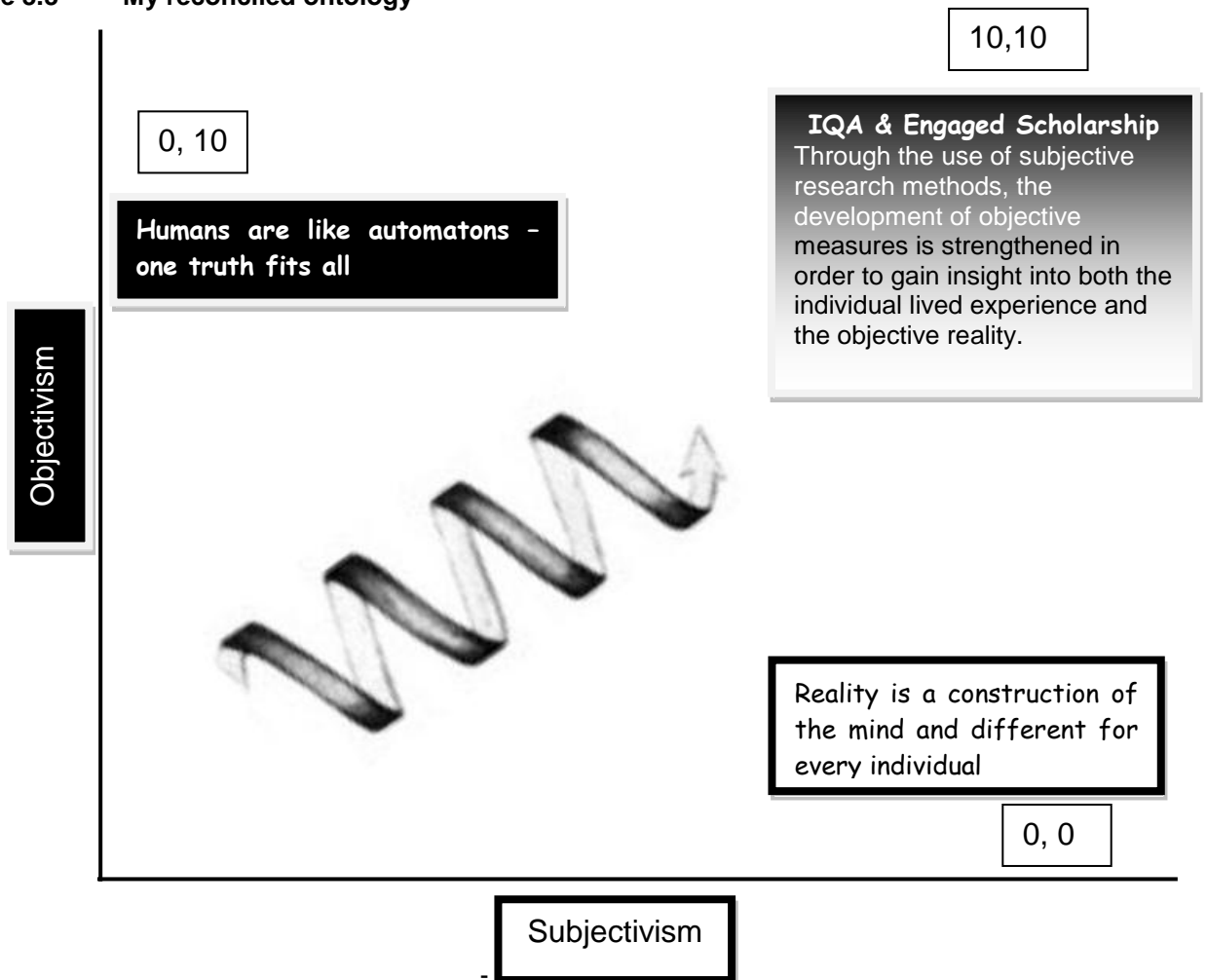
In both extreme instances above, an unsustainable, pathological obsession with either the one or the end of the continuum occurs, without allowing for using the strengths of either side.

In defining my own ontology, I decided to opt for a “best of both” approach, which is best encompassed by adopting the *pragmatic and dialectical* positions (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher & Perez-Prado, 2003:22). IQA as a research process and design aims to use the strengths of positivist research (rigour, structured data analysis, etc.) and combining it with the freedom of interpretation of a subjectivist approach, providing a reconciled epistemology and ontology underlying the research process (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:5).

Van de Ven (2007:63) also seeks to provide researchers with a more integrative philosophy in the form of “engaged scholarship”. Engaged scholarship refers to a “deeper form of research that engages both academics and practitioners...to produce knowledge that meets the dual hurdles of relevance and rigor for theory as well as practice in a given domain” (Van de Ven, 2007:6). Both practitioners and scholars are thus involved in the research process, bringing different viewpoints into the research process (Van de Ven, 2007:10).

My own ontology is thus a dialectical approach based on multi-methods research. Figure 3.3 (below) details my reconciliation of the dilemma between objectivism and subjectivism in the 10,10 position. This study was guided by the ontological principles of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) and IQA (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004). These two research approaches are highly complementary. They seek not only to understand lived individual experience from a subjective point of view, but also to explore general themes that can be applied to a broader, objective reality.

Figure 3.3 My reconciled ontology



I acknowledge the importance of objective and positivist research, but I also find it important to ground my research in real-life experiences. Hence, elements of interpretivism, constructivism and feminism underpin my basic epistemology. The *interpretivist/constructivist philosophy* is grounded in the belief that generalisability is not crucial and that the social world is constructed in a variety of ways by the men and women who inhabit it. It is a world of human consciousness which is meaningful to the people who created it and live in it, who understand it because they made it and are at home in it (Jackson & Sørensen, 2003:165). Again, if taken too far, this approach becomes problematic, which is why I have chosen multi-methods research, where the qualitative, lived experiences of participants, as well as my own experiences, both as researcher and participant, could be acknowledged.

Feminist epistemology is related to constructivism, as it recognises the importance of subjective experience in research. However, it is different from traditional social research, in that it focuses on women or is aimed at women (Wilkinson & Morton, 2007:409). Feminist research allows for the production of management theory which goes beyond masculine models, by taking into account the experiences of women in their workplaces. By considering the gap in our current understanding of SIE women, this study aims to provide a voice to an under-researched group of women. The main concern of this study is thus aligned with the principles of feminist research, namely “reflexively attending to diverse voices and subjectivities in research processes” (Limerick & O’Leary, 2006:89).

Feminist epistemology was deemed appropriate for this study because the aim of the research was not only to find an answer to the “how” of experiences, but also to “why” people do the things that they do (Given, 2006:378). Feminist epistemology seeks to break away from the traditional positivist separation between the researcher and the research object by exploring and making the subjectivity held by the researcher transparent (Limerick & O’Leary, 2006:100). The researcher is thus acknowledged to play an integral part in the research outcome, not only as primary instrument for collecting data, but also as a research subject and participant in the research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:134). Clarifying the role of the researcher in the research process is of crucial importance in order to manage biases and ensure the ethicality of the research process.

Feminist epistemology assumes a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the researched in which the reader of the research is assumed to be a reflexive participant in the research process. Whilst the researcher is often part of the research process, as a writer, reporter and participant, it is up to the reader to determine the usefulness and application of the research (Limerick & O'Leary, 2006:101).

Charmaz (2006:15) and Limerick and O'Leary (2006:106) emphasise the importance of a researcher's own experiences and self-reflection throughout the research process. At the start of this study, I went through a period of adjustment due to my self-initiated expatriation to the Netherlands in 2009. In order to maintain transparency in the research process, I kept researcher's notes and journal entries of my own experiences and interpretations of them, which sometimes differed from those of the participants in the research. My researcher's notes are included in various sections of the research as boxed texts that look like large yellow sticky notes to show my own thoughts and perceptions throughout the collection and analysis of data, making my own reflections on the process more transparent.

This approach is in line with Limerick and O'Leary's (2006:108) approach to feminist research where the researcher, research participants and reader of the eventual research report all play an equal part in the research process and all contribute to the construction of meaning throughout the process. These reflections also enabled me to record the chronological development of insights and ideas throughout the research process, as recommended by Saunders *et al.* (2007:486).

3.4 STRATEGY OF INQUIRY AND BROAD RESEARCH DESIGN – HOW CAN WE KNOW WHAT THERE IS TO BE KNOWN?

The chosen strategy of inquiry enables a researcher to answer particular research questions or objectives and to meet the objectives of the research. In the case of the current research, the strategy of inquiry was guided by the following aspects which Saunders *et al.* (2007:135) list as important:

- the research question and research objectives;
- the extent of the existing knowledge available on the subject;
- the amount of time and resources available to the researcher; and

- the researcher's philosophical underpinnings.

The research design was embedded in the researcher's epistemology and ontology, and in this case involved qualitative strategies of inquiry.

This study used an Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004) research design and process as discussed in the next section.

3.4.1 Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) as a research design and process

The choice of research approach for this study is informed by the research questions and based on prior research. This study made use of qualitative inquiry to explore adjustment experiences and looked at prior explorative research on CQ (Jassawalla *et al.*, 2004:839; Richardson, 2006:473; Van den Bergh, 2008:54). The research resides within the framework of interpretivism, constructivism and feminist epistemology. The qualitative nature of the research design provides a novel approach to explore the relationships between the two fields of study, being SIE adjustment and CQ that the research questions aim to address. Through using a different lens to look at the concepts of adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and CQ, it is possible to explore the unique factors related to women's adjustment which may not be easily visible from quantitative research. The research design and process allows for the exploration of new avenues of research and provides a methodological contribution to the field of expatriate research.

Interactive Qualitative Analysis is a relatively new qualitative research design and analysis method which combines the tradition of phenomenology with systems theory (Sanchez, 2007:1240). According to Patton (1990, cited in Sanchez, 2007:1240), the central question that systems theory aims to address is how and why a particular system functions as a whole. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding social phenomena, and recognises that the meanings that human beings create and interpret as reality are social constructs (Welman & Kruger, 1999:189). Northcutt and McCoy (2004:40) make a connection between phenomenology and systems theory by describing social systems as "systems in which human interpretation of meaning is involved".

The IQA process builds on grounded theory by providing a researcher with a process that allows for the analysis of data and development of new theory without

sacrificing rigour in design, but allows for more freedom in interpretation than purely quantitative research would allow.

I used *grounded theory* as part of a qualitative research design aimed at deriving theory through the use of multiple stages of data collection and interpretation through deductive and inductive processes (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:108; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:142). Creswell, William, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007:239) suggest that grounded theory is best suited for a research design where existing theories are inadequate, where the unit of analysis is a process, action of interaction involving many individuals, and data is primarily collected through interviews. According to Charmaz (2005:508), one of the strengths of grounded theory is that it provides a researcher with tools for analysing processes related to a particular topic, by remaining close to the studied worlds, and developing an integrated set of theoretical concepts from empirical materials that synthesise, interpret and show process driven relationships. Throughout the process, the researcher is thus able to flesh out, refine and check emerging conceptual categories (Charmaz, 2005:508).

Northcutt and McCoy (2004:16) summarise the underlying assumptions of IQA as follows:

1. Knowledge and power are largely interdependent. Power influences which research is interpreted as important, unimportant, relevant or irrelevant. Constituencies form an important component of the research design phase. Therefore it is important to include planned comparisons of the conceptual maps among constituencies participating in the research process.
2. The observer and the observed are interdependent. This assumption challenges the positivist notion that data collection is separate from data analysis, and that only the researcher is qualified to interpret the data.
3. The object of the research in IQA is examining reality in consciousness (phenomenon). This means that reality is researched through the constructions and meanings that people attach to the phenomenon. Reality in itself is far too elusive for any one study or a single human mind. Processes are therefore used as a device for collecting data, which allows the researcher to gain useful insights into a socially constructed reality as reported by members of a group.

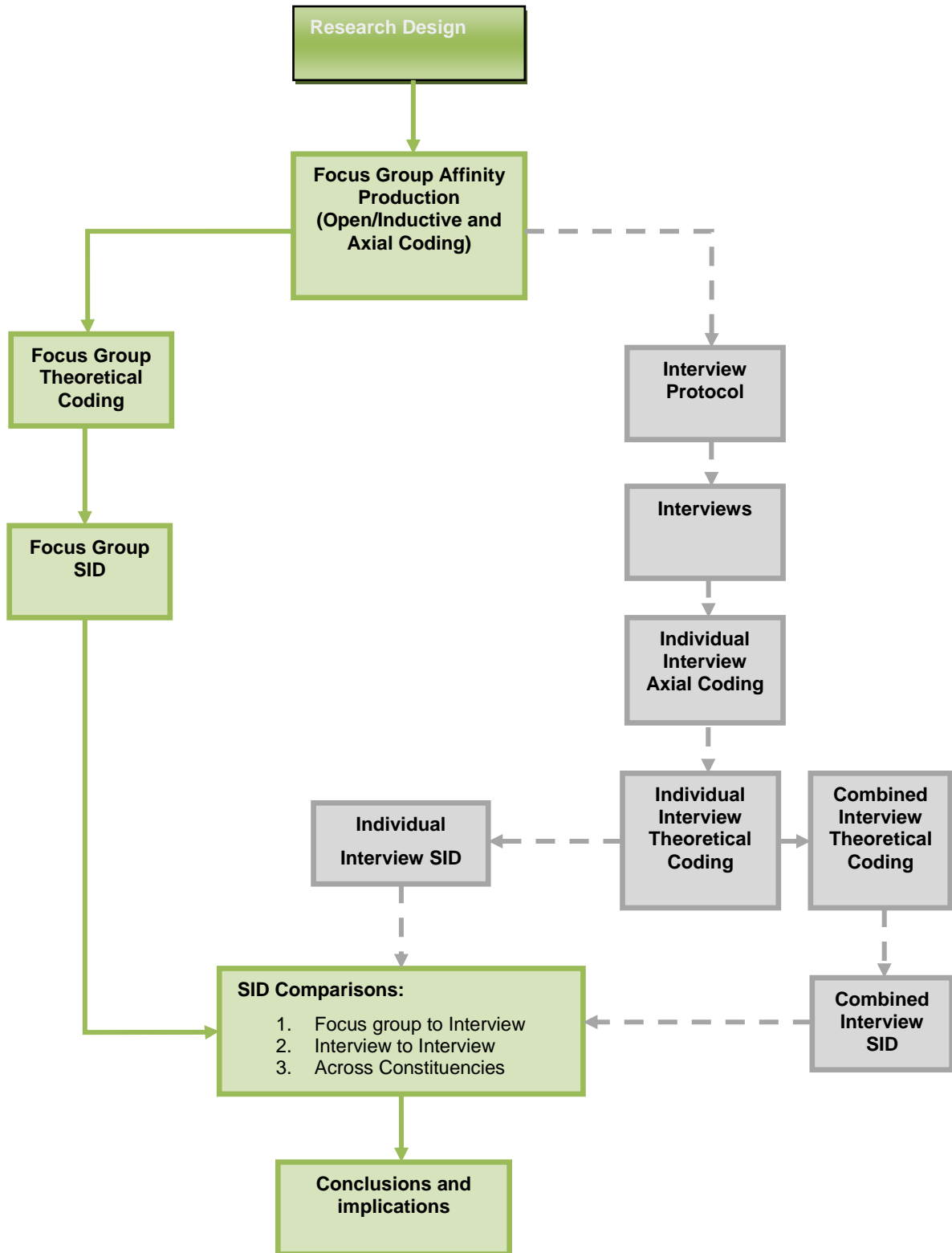
Follow-up interviews are then designed to elaborate on and contrast individual meanings to those of the group.

4. IQA insists that both deduction and induction are necessary to investigate meaning. Participants themselves are asked to induce categories of meaning related to the phenomenon (induction), after which they are asked to define and refine categories (deduction and induction) and, finally, they are asked to investigate deductively the relationship of influence among categories. IQA contends that there is no real distinction between data analysis and data collection (both are based on interpretation), as the two processes correspond with the three formal classes of analysis, namely emergent (open), axial and theoretical coding.

A typical IQA research flow is illustrated in Figure 3.4 (overleaf). For the purposes of this study, an IQA *focus group* design was used; hence, the *green* boxes in Figure 3.4 are highlighted to illustrate the flow used in the current research.

An IQA research flow consists of four distinct phases, namely the research design, the focus group(s), the interview and the report (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:44). During the design phase, the researcher identifies constituencies that have an interest in the research problem and states the research questions implied by the research problem. Through focus groups, the participants identify the affinities of the system that represent the groups' experiences with the phenomenon. Next, the groups identify the relationships among affinities. Through the use of rules and protocols stemming from IQA systems theory, a "mindmap" representing each group's reality is created. The affinities defined by the group are used to develop a protocol for interviews. Interviews are invaluable in the process of exploring meanings' affinities and their systemic relationships. A comprehensive system diagram is then drawn on the basis of the interviews to explain the phenomenon. The final report allows the researcher to describe the affinities and their relationships, draw comparisons between systems and individuals, and make inferences based on the properties of the system.

Figure 3.4 A typical IQA research flow



Source: Northcutt and McCoy (2004:45)

In relation to the design phase, Northcutt and McCoy (2004:47) acknowledge that ambiguity is part of the early thinking of a research project, which is reduced with every recursion of the design cycle. They suggest that the researcher uses the following process during the research design phase:

- identify those who have something to say about a problem;
- ask each constituency (a group of people who have a shared understanding of the phenomenon) two questions:
 - How close is the constituency to the problem, phenomenologically speaking?
 - How much power does the constituency have over the phenomenon?
- note that constituencies tend to provide different perspectives on the phenomenon, based on their lived experience or the level of power they have over it.

IQA aims to address the following types of research questions (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:46).

- What are the components of the phenomenon?
- How do they relate in a perceptual system?
- How do systems compare in terms of components, intrasystemic relationships and intersystemic relationships? (This question is only possible if more than one constituency is involved in the research.)

Research questions are then tested against the following two questions (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:46):

- What problems do these questions, taken as a whole, address? (What is the current problem statement?)
- Is this the problem we should be addressing?

The IQA research design is complete when the researcher can affirm that the problem being addressed is indeed the one that should be addressed (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:47). Thus, a qualitative research project is guided by the initial research problem stated in this proposal, but its focus is adjusted through continuous interaction and the evaluation of participant feedback.

3.4.2 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis in the current research was SIE women (including myself as the researcher, as a subjective, reflexive participant).

3.4.3 Sampling: identifying the constituency

Sampling is a very important part in any research process, but requires special attention in a qualitative research process, because qualitative research is very often criticised for its use of small sample sizes and methods that, on the surface, may appear to be biased. These charges “imply sloppy design and research results that are of little value to practice” (Given, 2006:379).

Since the purpose of this study was to gain insight into the experiences of individuals, and not to generalise results to the greater population of management, a purposive sampling approach was used, as recommended by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:242). Through purposeful sampling, a researcher aims to obtain a group of participants that can provide deeper insight into the topic under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:145). The *target population* for this study was *SIE women professionals, who were living and working internationally* and who were residing outside of their home countries at the time of the data collection.

3.4.4 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling occurs when a researcher selects particular cases to create a small sample group to investigate a specific phenomenon (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:230). Through purposive sampling, deeper insight can be gained into the experiences of a group for the development of theories and concepts (Fossey, Harvey, McDermott & Davidson, 2002:265).

Table 3.4 (overleaf) sets out a summary of the various purposive sampling strategies available to the researcher, highlighting the strategy chosen for this study in blue.

Table 3.4: Different purposive sampling strategies

Sampling Strategy	Description
<i>Extreme case/ Deviant sampling</i>	Cases are selected based on their unusual or special deviance from the norm. The unusual outcomes of these cases lead to increased understanding of and explanations for more typical cases (Devers & Frankel, 2000:265; Saunders <i>et al.</i> , 2007:232).
<i>Typical cases</i>	Cases representing the normal or average of what is being studied are selected to provide an illustrative profile of the “typical” representation of the phenomenon being observed (Devers & Frankel, 2000:266; Saunders <i>et al.</i> , 2007:232).
<i>Heterogeneous/ Maximum variation sampling</i>	Various sample selection criteria are chosen prior to selecting a sample in order to collect data that allow for the observation of key themes (Saunders <i>et al.</i> , 2007:232).
<i>Homogeneous sampling</i>	A particular subgroup is focused on in which all sample members are similar, in order to study the group in depth (Saunders <i>et al.</i> , 2007:232).

Due to the qualitative nature of the current research, *typical cases* were selected, as I wanted to elicit a “typical” profile of the adjustment experiences of a particular subgroup of the management population, namely *SIE women*. Here the term “case” does not refer to case study research specifically in the instance of qualitative sampling, but rather to any study in which more than one participant is selected for participation.

The following guidelines were kept in mind when selecting the participants for the focus groups, as recommended by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:87):

- participants had knowledge about and experience on the issue and were able to generate rich information regarding the topic;
- participants were able to reflect on the question and transfer their thoughts into words;
- participants had the time and inclination to participate in the research;
- the group was homogeneous in respect of distance and power; and
- they were able to practise group dynamics – they were not too timid to speak and share their thoughts, and they did not overpower each other.

The selection criteria applicable to the sample are set out in Table 3.5 (overleaf).

Table 3.5 Sampling criteria and specifications

Criteria	Specifications
Gender: Age: Employment status:	Female 25 – 65 Employed or actively seeking employment
Country of residence:	Not the home country
Organisational level:	Consultant/self-employed Management (Supervisory/ Mid/Senior)
Work experience:	Minimum of 2 years
English language ability:	Good
Educational level:	University Bachelor's degree

Due to the economic crisis in Europe and the USA, the criterion of employment status was expanded to include professionals who were not currently employed but were actively seeking a job. The unstable job market posed a practical limitation to this study, because, in some cases, the job status of some participants who were recruited for participation in the focus group changed from the point of recruitment to the date of actual participation in the research.

Participants for the focus groups were identified via online expat groups on Linked-In and via my own professional network. I created a website (www.expatlady.webs.com) that explains the purpose of the study, introduces myself as a researcher and provides information for potential participants. I posted a short invitation to participate in my study on the forums of expat groups on Linked-In, referring interested women to my website for more information. I also informed my local chapter of the European Professional Women's Association (EPWN) and the International Women's Contact Utrecht (IWCU) of my research. These two associations consequently posted information about my study on their website forums and invited members to participate or refer their colleagues to other interested parties. Linked-In proved to be a very important source of participants. A biographical information sheet was sent to each potential participant to ensure that participants fit the profile that was required for the research. Because SIE women tend to remain in the host country for longer periods of time than traditional expatriates, I decided to include women with a longer tenure in the Netherlands in

the sample than what would normally be considered in adjustment research. This information provided a base for comparison to explore the role of experiential learning over a longer period of time in the process of adjustment.

3.4.5 Sample size

Fossey *et al.* (2002:726) assert that sample sizes in qualitative research may be small without affecting the soundness of the research. In qualitative research, what is important is that the amount of data gathered is thick and rich enough to describe the phenomenon adequately.

Pairwise sampling can be achieved by any of the different sampling schemes available to a qualitative researcher. By using a pairwise sampling design, the selected cases could be treated as a collection that belongs together. Pairwise sampling allows a researcher to compare the “voice” of each of the cases to that of all the other cases, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon in order to achieve data saturation and allow a theory to be generated (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007:243, 244).

Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007:245) warn that although only one case may be sufficient per subgroup, it may pose a threat to internal generalization, with the result that wrongful conclusions may be drawn from the data. Northcutt and McCoy (2004:87) recommend that focus groups should consist of 12 to 20 participants, as a smaller group may influence theoretical coding by skewing the data.

3.4.6 The constituency (sample)

In line with Onwuegbuzie and Leech’s (2007:245) guidelines for sample sizes, the number of subgroups to be compared was limited to two in order to avoid losing richness in the data analysis.

Qualitative data were collected in two IQA focus group sessions, one with 12 and the second with nine participants. The participants for each session are detailed in the Tables 3.6 (below) and 3.7 (overleaf).

Table 3.6 IQA Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010, Utrecht, the Netherlands)

Focus Group 1							
Participant	Age	Country of Birth	Years in NL	Position prior to expatriation	Current position after expatriation	Motive	Background
Adri	27	South Africa	7.5	Post-graduate Student	Full-time researcher	Career-building	Adri first relocated to the Netherlands upon completion of her high school in South Africa. During her childhood, her parents moved around a lot and she lived in many different parts of South Africa. When her parents decided to accept an expatriate assignment in the Netherlands for four years, she saw it as an opportunity for continuing her studies abroad. Her parents has returned to South Africa, but Adri decided to stay in the Netherlands to complete her PhD research. She was engaged to a Dutch man at the time of this study and was married in 2011. Adri is currently living in the USA where she is a post-doctoral fellow. Zelda is a medical scientist and focuses on HIV research.
Annabelle	28	Romania	4	University graduate	Consultant	Career-building	Annabelle was a top honours student in Romania who studied Informatics. She lived in Italy as an exchange student and consequently relocated to the Netherlands to complete her Master's degree. She started dating a Dutch man as a student and entered into a registered partnership with him after her studies. At the time of the focus group, she was employed as a high-potential consultant at Cap Gemini in the Netherlands. Anabelle is fluent in Romanian, Dutch, French and Italian. About a year after the focus group was conducted, Annabelle was divorced from her partner. She decided to remain in the Netherlands and accepted a new position at the Rabobank where she is currently

							employed.
Theresa	36	USA	8	Relationship marketing manager	Investment manager	Exploration	Theresa is from Denver, Colorado. She initially came to the Netherlands because she liked the idea of living in Europe and consequently met a Dutchman whom she married. She speaks English, Dutch and a bit of French and is a mother. At the time of the focus group, Theresa was an investment manager at the time of the focus group.
Michelle	34	South Africa	1	Pattern cutter and designer	Freelance pattern cutter and designer	Family-building	Michelle is a South African who worked with a number of high profile fashion designers in SA before moving to London in her twenties. She met her partner on a plane from Amsterdam to London and after five years of flying back-and-forth, she decided to relocate to the Netherlands. Michelle was very quiet during the focus group and found it hard to participate because she had heard upsetting news about the health of her father-in-law the morning before the session. At the time of the session, she was working as a freelance pattern cutter for a company in London and going through a period of severe culture shock. Since then, she has found an exciting new position at the fashion house MEXX in Amsterdam.
Bonita	37	USA	4.5 months	Grants administrator	Unemployed, seeking position	Family building	Bonita relocated to the Netherlands to join her Dutch boyfriend. She was only in the country for a few months and trying to find her way around the country at the time of the focus group. Since the focus group, she has moved jobs twice and is currently a research coordinator at a hospital in Utrecht.
Sonya	49	Australia	15	Own business	Own business	Financial betterment	Sonya grew up in the USA with her Australian expatriate parents. Back in Australia she met her husband who is of Dutch decent. Because of her husband's Dutch ancestral passport, they decided to relocate to the Netherlands in order

							to set up their own chiropractice. She is a mother and also runs her husband's practice from home. Since the focus group, her children have all left the house and she is currently re-assessing her career options.
Jay	26	South Africa	3 months	Development worker in India	Au pair	Exploration	Jay is a South African who decided to come to the Netherlands as a gap year after her Bachelor studies. Before moving to the Netherlands she worked as a development worker in India for three months. At the time of the focus group she was working as an au pair to save extra money. Soon after the focus group, she started working at a youth hostel in Amsterdam. She is currently working for an NGO in South Africa.
Magdalena	44	Ethiopia (Italian parents)	6	Own business	Own business	Financial betterment (husband is an SIE)	Magdalena grew up in Ethiopia, but has Italian parents. She is married to an Italian man whom she met in Ethiopia. She lived in Africa and Asia before moving to the Netherlands. Magdalena's husband is an SIE and she runs her own small business to support international expatriates in the Gelderland region in the Netherlands. Magdalena is also a mother of two boys.
Inbal	36	Israel	2	Office manager	HR administrator	Family-building	Inbal grew up in the USA with her expatriate parents who returned to Israel. She lived and worked in the UK and Israel. She met her Dutch partner in Israel (he was on expatriate assignment at the time). After some years of long-distance dating Inbal decided to relocate to the Netherlands to be with her partner. She had a successful position in HR in Israel. At the time of the focus group, she was working for the pharmaceutical company Teva. Due to the economic crisis, she was not offered a contract renewal a few months after the focus group and she spent a significant amount of time unemployed. She is currently working at Footlocker.

Rina	26	Romania	1 and 3 months	HR manager	HR consultant	Family-building	Rina is a Romanian who lived and worked in India and Morocco as an expatriate. She met her Dutch partner in India and decided to relocate to the Netherlands and enter into a registered partnership with her Dutch man. Rina speaks English, Dutch, Spanish and French. She is currently going through a divorce process.
Sue	53	UK	14.5	Own business incorporate management training	Freelance trainer and lecturer	Following spouse (husband is an SIE)	Sue lived in the UK all her life. She ran a successful training company which she combined with motherhood. Her husband's expatriate transfer provided her an opportunity for her own SIE. At the time of the focus group, Sue and her husband were considering going back to the UK or remaining in NL. They are now back in their home country.
Tatiana	37	Serbia	4	Gestalt therapist	Own business, psychological practice	Family- building	Tatiana speaks English, Dutch, Croatian, Bosnian and Macedonian. She relocated to the Netherlands to join her Dutch partner. At the time of the focus group she was running her own private gestalt therapy practice for the expatriate community in her area.

Table 3.7 IQA Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010, Amsterdam, the Netherlands)

Focus Group 2							
Participant	Age	Country of birth	Years in NL	Position prior to expatriation	Current position after expatriation	Motive	Background
Anushka	48	Russia	10	Managing partner (financial consulting company)	Senior officer finance	Family- building	Anushka is a Russian engineer who speaks English, Dutch, Ukrainian and German. She moved to the Netherlands to join her Dutch partner. At the time of the focus group she had made a shift from engineering to finance.
Bonnie	27	USA	6.5 months	Senior auditor	European finance and accounting manager	Exploration	Bonnie relocated to the Netherlands with her boyfriend. At the time of the focus group she had just undergone a traumatic break-up and decided to remain in her Finance job at Teva pharmaceuticals after the break-up. After two years in the Netherlands she decided to return to San Francisco.
Sandra	27	Germany	7 months	Event manager, art consulting, media system design	Own business	Exploration	Sandra is a German lady who lived in Ireland prior to relocating to the Netherlands. She decided to follow her boyfriend and good friend Maria to the Netherlands out of a sense of adventure. At the time of the focus group she was running her own business in the creative arts sector. Since the focus group, she has ended her relationship and has returned to Ireland where she is currently a gallery manager.
Maria	28	Spain	2	Freelance translator	Own business	Exploration	Maria is a Spanish translator who relocated to the Netherlands with her boyfriend, together with her friend Sandra. At the time of the focus group she was working as translator in Amsterdam. She completed her master's studies in Brussels and lived and worked in Ireland before relocating to the Netherlands. She is currently living in Ireland again.
Gina	35	Romania	4	Financial controller	Senior management accountant	Career- building/ Family- building	Gina is a Romanian who initially came to the Netherlands on an expatriate transfer through ING. When her contract expired, she decided to remain in Amsterdam on a local contract because of her Canadian boyfriend who is also based in Amsterdam.
Lana	36	Czech Republic	10	Senior accountant	Team manager	Family- building	Lana is from the Czech Republic and speaks Russian, English, Slovak, Dutch and Polish. She decided to relocate to the

Focus Group 2							
Participant	Age	Country of birth	Years in NL	Position prior to expatriation	Current position after expatriation	Motive	Background
							Netherlands after sustaining a long-distance relationship with her Dutch partner. She is the mother of two children.
Monika	32	Slovakia	11	Accountant	Construction professional	Exploration	Monika speaks English, Slovak and Dutch. She relocated to the Netherlands after meeting her Dutch partner during a holiday in the Netherlands.
Tracy	41	Hong Kong	5	Social worker	Freelance social worker in the Chinese community in the Netherlands (<i>her qualifications are not recognised in the NL so she practises her profession in an unofficial capacity</i>)	Family-building	Tracy comes from Hong Kong. Before relocating to the Netherlands she held a high-level position as social worker in the Hong Kong government. She earned a very high salary and was highly regarded in her profession. Her partner is a professor at a Dutch University. They met in Hong Kong at an academic conference. After a few years of long-distance dating, they decided to get married. Tracy relocated to the Netherlands. Since her qualifications are not recognised in the Netherlands, Tracy was not able to continue her career formally. At the time of the focus group she was working in the Chinese community as volunteer social worker and they were trying to build a family. Since the focus group, Tracy has become a mother; she is currently in Hong Kong and filing for divorce.
Laura	41	Canada	10	Social worker	Trainer/consultant (<i>her qualifications are not recognised in the NL, so she opted for a different career path</i>)	Exploration and family-building	Laura is Canadian with Dutch parents who relocated to Canada to give better opportunities to their children. She is a trained social worker and worked in the development field in Latin America and Africa. A trip to the Netherlands to meet her aging grandmother became a permanent arrangement when she met her Dutch partner. At the time of the focus group, she was working in the training department of a cross-cultural consulting company.

3.4.7 The IQA focus group and data analysis

IQA requires a heavy time investment from participants, which is a commodity that is not readily available to most women in the international arena. In order to accommodate participants and keep them interested in the research, an adapted version of the IQA process was used. Two IQA focus groups were hosted in the Netherlands during 2010 – Focus Group 1 was hosted on 24 April 2010 in Utrecht, and Focus Group 2 was hosted on 12 June 2010 in Amsterdam.

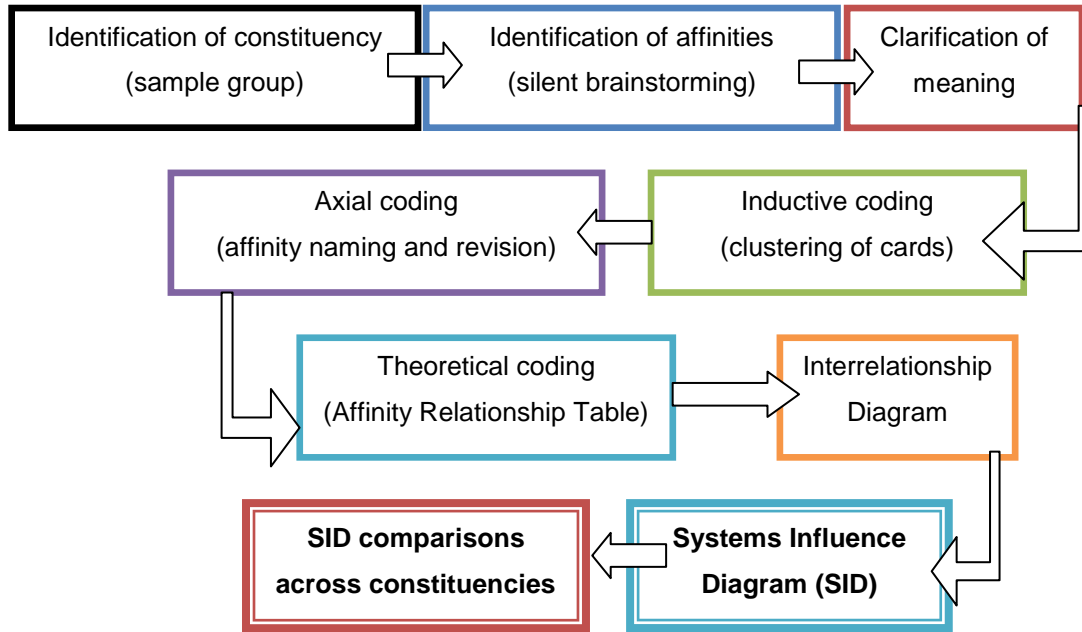
To ensure a clear and transparent process with a comparable experience for both groups, a similar process was followed for both IQA focus groups:

- setting the scene;
- mental imagery warm-up exercise and silent brainstorming;
- clarification of meaning;
- inductive and axial coding;
- affinity descriptions; and
- compiling an Interrelationship Diagram (IRD) and a Systems Influence Diagram (SID).

Due to the fact that many participants moved on to other countries within a few months after these focus groups were hosted, the full IQA process (including individual, one-to-one interviews with participants) could not be followed.

Figure 3.5 (overleaf) provides a “roadmap” for the IQA process that was followed in this study. Each of these sections is described in the paragraphs that follow.

Figure 3.5 IQA focus group process followed in this study



3.4.7.1 Step 1: Identification of constituency

To ensure that participants fit the profile of the required sample, a biographical information sheet was sent out before the session. Participants were asked to indicate their background, experience and potential dates/locations available for participation in a focus group session.

Before each focus group session, various e-mails were exchanged with interested participants to establish rapport and provide logistic information. Figure 3.6 (overleaf) provides an example of such an e-mail.

Figure 3.6 Example of e-mail correspondence with focus group participants

From: XXXXX>
Subject: Re: Research Expat Women
To: "Riana van den Bergh" <rianavandenbergh@yahoo.com>
Date: Wednesday, February 3, 2010, 7:07 PM

Hi Riana,
I have completed the form - please find it in the attachment. I have also read the other document and I find it OK.
Feel free to write to me any other time until the workshop takes place
Best,
XXXXX

On Wed, Feb 3, 2010 at 4:44 PM, Riana van den Bergh <rianavandenbergh@yahoo.com> wrote:
Dear XXXXX,

You have recently shown interest in participating in my study on Cultural Intelligence and the Adjustment Experiences of Expatriate Women living and working in The Netherlands.

In order to arrange focus group sessions, I would like to find out more about your availability and background to make sure that you are grouped in a session with other women who share your experience. Would you kindly fill in the form below and return it to me at a convenient time?

Attached to this e-mail is also a copy of the written consent form for you to read before taking a final decision to participate. On the day of the focus group/workshop session, I will bring hard copies of this form along for you to sign.

Please let me know if you have any questions. I am very excited about the fact that you would like to share your thoughts and experiences during this process and am looking forward to meeting you!

Thank you very much!

Riana van den Bergh

Once a suitable date was found, participants were sent an invitation with logistic information and the address of the venue where the session would take place. Both sessions were video-recorded with the consent of participants, and later transcribed (as far as possible, *verbatim*) for further analysis.

3.4.7.2 Step 2: Identification of Affinities (Silent Brainstorming)

At the beginning of each session, I welcomed the participants and introduced them to the IQA process, after which they were asked to sign the informed consent form (see Appendix 2). Before starting the discussions, participants were informed of the

entire research process and were given the opportunity to decide whether they would want to withdraw from participation. None of the participants opted to do so.

Because the IQA process was new to me, a PowerPoint slide show was used to guide the process and to ensure that all steps of the IQA process were followed. After a round of introductions, the ground rules for the day were established in order to create a safe platform for engagement (see Figure 3.7, below).

Figure 3.7 IQA focus group rules of engagement

Rules of engagement

- Trust
- Anonymity
- Informed Consent
- NOT a session about Holland but about your adjustment experiences – barriers and enablers to adjustment
- Respect & sensitivity to each other's feelings
- Not a training
- Voluntary participation
- Rule of two feet
- What happens in the group, stays in the group
 - Only interested in the FACTS – specific anxiety/anger against someone will not be used against you

Following Northcutt and McCoy's (2004:88) guidelines, participants were asked to engage in a mental imagery warm-up exercise at the beginning of the session. Participants were asked to reflect silently on their experiences of living in the Netherlands, as detailed in Figure 3.8 (overleaf).

Figure 3.8 Mental imagery warm-up exercise for Focus Group 1

Let's imagine...

- In a few minutes, I am going to ask you to tell me about your adjustment in life and work in the have been barriers to your adjustment? Netherlands.
- To begin with, try to get as comfortable as you can. Close your eyes.
- Putting aside all your thoughts of the day/week, take a deep breath.
- Think about your personal and professional life here in the Netherlands. Allow yourself to reflect on how you are adjusting to life here. Think about the different parts of your journey and where you think it may take you in the future. How has your thinking, motivation and behaviour been challenged in the time that you have been here? Which things have enabled you to adjust better and which things

After the warm-up exercise, participants were invited to engage in a silent brainstorming exercise. During this exercise, they were asked to “[w]rite one thought or one experience per card, using words, phrases, sentences, pictures or diagrams”. The cards were then stuck on a wall.

3.4.7.3 Step 3: Clarification of Meaning

Northcutt and McCoy (2004:94) suggest that, once the cards are on the wall, all the cards on the wall be discussed in order to clarify their meaning. In both groups, some clarification of the cards was done, and the discussion was video-taped. However, time constraints and energy levels did not allow for a full IQA clarification of meaning process as described by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:94), for various reasons. These reasons included my relative lack of experience with the process and the resistance of the group to being guided more quickly from theme to theme, and the fact that the group was particularly vocal in sharing their experiences, leaving little room for me to facilitate the direction of the discussion. Moreover, apart from these limitations, I am of the opinion that a full process of meaning clarification for such a complex topic would take much longer than a few hours, as suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:110). It was decide to invest time in deep conversation around the topics participants found important, rather than to rush

through all topics superficially. The discussion also tended to wind around various topics, despite the fact that a particular card may not have been explicitly mentioned.

The videos of the focus groups were transcribed twice, first in the form of a paraphrase to allow a “bird’s-eye view” of the broad themes that were discussed. However, as data analysis continued, the need for greater depth and context became apparent. Consequently, the researcher engaged in a second round of *verbatim* transcription of the video recording. The latter transcription was used as a basis for detailed data analysis.

3.4.7.4 Step 4: Inductive Coding (Clustering of Cards)

After the first round of discussions around the cards on the wall, participants were invited to move cards on the wall and to begin to group them into affinities and sub-affinities. This process consisted of two parts. First, the participants were asked to start moving cards along the wall silently into different groups and themes. All participants joined in this process. During this process, a number of conversations occurred outside of the main discussion, during which participants discussed the meanings of different cards further. These conversations were also transcribed insofar they were intelligible on the video-tape.

After the inductive coding process, participants were asked to begin naming, re-organising and refining categories. To assist them, the following guidelines suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:98-99) were given to participants:

- Narrow down our themes and sub-themes further: +/- 5 themes.
- Can anything be combined?
- Should anything be divided?
- Focus on the characteristics of each theme/component, noting that it should
 - not be about a person/place/physical thing;
 - be about one concept;
 - be easy to define; and
 - look at the relationship to other things, but does not depend on other things.

3.4.7.5 Step 5: Axial Coding (Affinity naming and revision)

Once all cards had been placed into main themes/categories, participants began to label them (these labels are affinities). Northcutt and McCoy (2004:314) suggest that affinities are described and defined in the “words of the group”, preferably through discussion or write-up by participants (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:113). Due to time constraints and other factors (see the researcher’s note overleaf), affinity descriptions were completed after the session by the researcher by referring to the focus group transcripts and coded cards from the silent brainstorming process.

The following protocol was used to serve as evidence for findings during the affinity write-up (axial coding) (please refer to sections 4.2.5 and 4.3.5) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:317-320):

- The first sentence in bold is the voice of a participant and serves to interpret the paragraph.
- The second sentence is italicized and interprets the first sentence in the voice of the investigator.
- The remainder of the argument is in “quotes” and presents examples and evidence of the argument in the voice of participants.

***Researcher's note:**

The process of clarifying meaning and defining affinities felt like a crisis point in the focus group process to me – both in Focus Group 1 and 2.

During Focus Group 1, I was low on energy myself by the time we had to begin the affinity description process. There were some strong personalities in the group who were difficult to guide into any specific direction. It felt as if there was a large amount of uncertainty and mounting tension in the group, I suspect this was a result of the fact that the coding process did not involve everyone equally. It would probably have been wise to take a break at this point, but the venue we hired had not break-out area, so there was no possibility of a change of scenery to break the tension. We also had to leave the venue by a certain time, so we were pressed for time to complete the process. The group was in a deadlock with the categories they had chosen and my attempts to help them clarify meaning seemed to add to the sense of tension that was building. It was my first ever attempt at facilitating an IQA focus group, and I was facilitating single-handedly, whilst trying to arrange the logistics of catering and filming. This made me feel uncertain and, looking back on the process, I realize now that I was trying to steer the group into my own pre-conceived framework without paying attention to the meaning they were creating. Sonya and Sue, who are both experienced facilitators, noticed what was happening and played a crucial role in helping me regain control of the process and reduce the tension in the group. Upon watching the video recording again, I realize that I never explained the full IQA process to participants from the very beginning, so the fact that they did not know what to expect next probably also contributed to the sense of uncertainty. Sue and Sonya, as experienced facilitators, picked up on what was happening and very gently asked some key questions to me to help break the tension and get the discussion back on track. We decided together as a group that I would continue to define the main affinities after the focus group session by referring to the focus group transcript and the coded cards. This process was in line with the guidelines for IQA affinity descriptions (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:100).

Based on the experience during the first session, I decided to ask two ladies, Tracy and Laura, to support me with filming, facilitation and logistics surrounding lunch and refreshments for Focus Group 2. Tracy is from Hong Kong originally, where she held a high-ranking position in government as a social worker. At the time of the focus group, she was still seeking employment. Tracy was responsible for filming, but also supported the facilitation of the group session by asking probing questions and sharing some of her own experiences and stories. Laura is a colleague of mine at Trompenaars Hampden-Turner. Since the second focus group session was hosted at Trompenaars Hampden-Turner, she was a logical choice as support-person as she is familiar with the environment and facilities. Laura is of Dutch-Canadian origin and also shared many of her own experiences of adjustment during the session.

3.4.7.6 Step 6: Theoretical coding (Affinity Relationship Table)

Once the process of clarification of meaning is complete, the IQA process allows the researcher to gain insight into the group's representation of reality by creating a visual representation of the system in the form of a Systems Influence Diagram (SID) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:149).

Through theoretical coding, focus group participants are invited to hypothesise about the relationships between affinities and how they affect each other. According to Northcutt and McCoy, (2004:151), affinity relationships are as follows:

- **A>B (A influences B)**
- **A<B (B influences A)**
- **A<>B (No relationship).**

In order to gain depth and breadth of insight, in the current research, each participant was provided with her own Affinity Relationship Table (ART) according to the guidelines of Northcutt and McCoy (2004:153). The ideal would have been to have each participant hypothesise about each possible relationship between affinities, but time constraints made it impossible to get this level of detail from every participant. Participants were given the freedom to choose between filling in a detailed ART (which hypothesises about relationships between affinities) or a simple ART which merely states the relationships between affinities. A number of participants did take the time to clarify the relationships between affinities, which provided additional insight into the eventual mindmap that was to be created. It is important at this point to note the ambiguity of certain relationships. During this coding phase, participants mentioned that there was a bi-directional influence between some affinities.

In the case where relationships are ambiguous, Northcutt and McCoy (2004:162-163) describes the possibility of a common influence by a third, unmentioned affinity, or the possible presence of an undetected feedback loop. Thus, during the coding process, participants were asked to mark any ambiguous relationships as follows: $A \leftrightarrow B$ (bi-directional relationship).

The total number of "votes" cast for each possible pairwise relationship are tallied and represented in an Interrelationship Diagram (IRD). The "no relationship" votes

were not included in this analysis, and bi-directional relationships were marked as “possible conflicts”. For possible relationships where no votes were cast, a zero value was awarded. The IRD was then transferred to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (Pareto table) and sorted in descending order of frequency according to the guidelines supplied by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:156). Four columns are included in the Excel spreadsheet (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:160):

- *Cumulative frequency* – the frequency of votes cast for each affinity pair is added to the previous total;
- *Cumulative percentage (Relation)* – the cumulative percentage is based on the number of total possible relationships;
- *Cumulative percentage (Frequency)* – the cumulative percentage is based on the total number of votes cast; and
- *Power* – this is the difference between the cumulative percentage (frequency) and the cumulative percentage (relation).

In order to determine the cut-off point for deciding which relationship pairs to add to the IRD, the last two columns of the Pareto table are used. The composite should account for maximum variation of the system, whilst achieving parsimony (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:160). Following the Pareto (80-20) Principle suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:160), maximum variance in the system can be accounted for by approximately 20% of the relationships in the system. “Put in systems terms, the Pareto Principle states that *something like 20% of the variables in a system will account for 80% of the total variation in outcomes*” (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:156, my emphasis).

3.4.7.7 Step 7: Interrelationship Diagram (IRD)

The output from each theoretical coding process was summarised in an IRD. The IRD illustrates the causality of relationships between affinities and the direction of relationships, thus illustrating the perceived reality of each individual focus group participant. The IRD is created through a double-entry system and forms the basis for development of the SID. Through the IRD, the researcher is able to identify the topological zones represented by each affinity in the system, as indicated by the delta values assigned to each affinity (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:173):

- *primary drivers* represent affinities that cause outcomes for many affinities but are not affected by others (many Outs, but no Ins);
- *secondary drivers* have a relative influence on affinities in the system (more Outs than Ins);
- *circulars/pivots* have equal numbers of Ins and Outs and represent a middle point in the system.
- *secondary outcomes* reveal a relative effect (more Ins than Outs); and
- *primary outcomes* reveal a significant outcome caused by other affinities and that do not affect other affinities (no Outs).

3.4.7.8 Step 8: Systems Influence Diagram

The SID provides a visual representation of a group's perception of reality. The protocol provided by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:178) was used to draw the SIDs in this study. The graphic utility of Microsoft PowerPoint was used to present the SIDs. The affinities are first placed in relative topological zones according to the delta values identified in the IRD (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:180). Primary drivers are positioned to the left and primary outcomes to the right. Secondary drivers and outcomes are then placed between the primary drivers and outcomes. The relationships between affinities are drawn based on the IRD values using colour-coded boxes and arrows.

3.4.7.8.1 Cluttered Systems Influence Diagram (SID)

The first version of a SID contains every possible relationship within the system. The system is saturated and represents all links identified in the IRD (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:176). This cluttered diagram is very complex and rich in detail, offering a very comprehensive overview of the system. This complex illustration may, however, be confusing and difficult to interpret due to the large number of connections between affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:176). In order to create a more understandable representation of the system, an uncluttered ("clean") SID is then created.

3.4.7.8.2 Uncluttered ("Clean") Systems Influence Diagram (SID)

The "clean" SID represents a reconciled version of the cluttered SID by removing all redundant links on the one hand (for the sake of parsimony), whilst maintaining

a system that represents the greatest level of variation. Redundant links are those links that represent direct pathways between affinities. The same pathway could also be reached via another affinity, which would simplify the system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:176).

3.4.7.8.3 Feedback loops and Zooming

An important aspect of a system is that one can “zoom in” to the system to find that it consists of smaller sub-systems or that one can “zoom out” to see that it is a micro-system within a larger macro system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:35). Affinities that form feedback loops within a system may represent the presence of a sub-system within the larger system. Northcutt and McCoy (2004:335) suggest that, in such a case, axial codes, descriptions and the placement of feedback loops within the SID be inspected to determine whether certain codes form part of a sub-system.

3.4.7.8.4 Step 9: SID comparisons across constituencies

The last step in the IQA process is to compare data sets and draw conclusions from the data (Northcutt & McCoy, 2005:342). Northcutt and McCoy (2004:343) suggest that comparisons are drawn at the individual and system level, through one of three frames of reference, namely

- the structural – comparing SIDs in terms of their systemic properties;
- the theoretical – examining systems and comparing them to existing theoretical perspectives; and
- the inferential – examining the impact of different scenarios or extrasystemic influences on the outcomes or drivers of a system.

Since individual interviews were not performed, in this study, comparisons were drawn at a systems level between groups by explaining the structural systemic properties of the SIDs developed by the two focus groups. Comparisons to existing theories were also drawn in the final conclusions and interpretations of results in Chapter 6.

3.4.8 Further analysis of qualitative data

The qualitative statistical analysis software package, QSR NVIVO 9 was used for further coding and analysis of the focus group transcripts. QSR NVIVO allows a

researcher to identify recurrent patterns and themes in data by indexing, coding and modelling relationships in data. The software package also allows a researcher to make notes and present reflections throughout the research process. Furthermore, through the use of hyperlinks, the software makes it possible to move easily between themes and different sections of data that are closely related.

The guidelines by Saunders *et al.* (2007:477,478) were used in preparing the data for analysis. In order to protect the identities of the participants, aliases were used in the final analysis of transcripts. Data were stored on an external hard drive to avoid loss of data and to protect access to data.

Through the process of *perusal*, an overall impression of the data and general themes was obtained. Due to the interactive nature of qualitative data analysis, a preliminary analysis of important themes, patterns and relationships was conducted throughout the data collection process. The analysis, development and verification of relationships and conclusions are interrelated and interactive processes. It is particularly useful that the IQA process enables preliminary data analysis even whilst data was being collected (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:484).

Content analysis was conducted based on the guidelines provided by Saunders *et al.* (2007:493). Data were classified into meaningful categories based on the review of extant knowledge, key recurrent themes discussed by participants and key affinities identified by participants through the SIDs. Units of data were then labelled in the different transcripts through a process of evaluation, reflection and re-classification of data. Frequency analysis and tree diagrams were also used to help organise data and to provide an overview of the main recurring themes in the data and the critical patterns and relationships in the data.

Thematic content analysis (TCA) was used to provide a descriptive presentation of the qualitative data from the interview transcripts by dividing the data into common themes for analysis, as suggested by Anderson (2007:1). TCA can be conducted either inductively (allowing theory to develop from the research) or deductively (organising and directing data analysis based on an existing theoretical framework. Bryman and Bell (1988:81) oppose the use of a deductive approach because it increases the possibility of premature closure on the issues to be investigated and excessive disparities between theoretical constructs and the views of participants.

However, a deductive approach can aid a researcher in linking research into an existing body of knowledge by providing an initial analytical framework (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:488). For the purposes of this study, an initial deductive framework was used with the incorporation of an inductive approach as the analysis progressed.

A priori coding was used to establish categories prior to analysis, based on adjustment, acculturation and adaptation theory, and the theory was compared with the coding used by the participants during the IQA process. In order to test initial findings and coding categories, a poster-presentation was submitted to the 15th Conference of the European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology Maastricht, 25-28 May 2011. Coding categories were discussed during this conference with colleagues in the field in accordance with the guidelines provided by Stemler (2001:4).

3.5 QUALITY AND RIGOUR IN QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

A good research design is one that maximizes the validity of its results by providing a clear explanation/description of the phenomenon being studied and controlling for all possible sources of bias that may distort research findings of the occurrence being studied (Bickman & Rog, 2009:12).

Maxwell (2009:215) asserts that the activities involved with the research process are interrelated and thus a researcher is continuously dealing with threats to validity. Each part of the process influences all other parts of the process, necessitating a different model for assessing quality and rigour of the research design. Hence, some aspects in terms of quality and rigour have already been discussed in previous parts of this chapter, but are replicated in the following sections for the sake of completeness.

3.5.1 Bias

In positivist research, a researcher's own perceptions and experiences are seen as sources of bias which should be eliminated at all costs (Given, 2006:379; Maxwell, 2009:224). However, in qualitative research, closeness to the phenomenon is a key criterion in the sense-making process (Van de Ven, 2007:53). Northcutt and

McCoy (2004:8) suggest that qualitative researchers “must of necessity approach their work from some viewpoint that is part of their being” – in this case, my interest as a researcher in the topic was fuelled by my own experiences with intercultural interactions and adjustment experiences as an SIE. Mellon (1990:26) notes that it is impossible for any researcher, qualitative or quantitative, to be entirely objective. Acknowledging and embracing bias as part of the investigation is thus a core of qualitative feminist research (Given, 2006:379; Limerick & O’Leary, 2006:100).

Maxwell (2009:225) explains that the researcher’s own background and experience can be a valuable component of the research process as a source of insights, hypothesis and validity checks. He warns, however, that a researcher should guard against imposing assumptions and values uncritically on the research. By keeping a detailed researcher’s diary and reflexive journaling, I was able to reflect critically on my own experience and thought processes – both as a participant and as a researcher. Through articulating the “cultural baggage” brought into the research process, my subjectivity was explored and made transparent, as suggested by Limerick and O’Leary (2006:100).

Fossey *et al.* (2002:729) emphasise that data cannot be adequately described if there is no evidence of the conceptual processes of “exploring meanings, patterns or connections among data that involve the researcher’s own thought, reflection and intuition” that were involved in exploring the data. According to Davidson *et al.* (2001:42), a transparent description informs the reader of the researcher’s own thought patterns and analytical interpretations, how they were reached and how they contributed to the analysis of competing accounts in the data. Furthermore, the analysis and interpretation of data is not merely a one-way process, it also involves the participants and the reader. In this case, the participants were continuously involved in the evaluation process in order to add transparency to the research, to establish reciprocity between myself as the researcher and the participants, and to permit the reader to evaluate the authenticity of my representations (Fossey *et al.*, 2002:278; Limerick & O’Leary, 2006:101). Through the continuous and reciprocal involvement of the participants in the analysis process, and transparency in the researcher’s own perceptions, the reliability of the analysis and findings can be assured.

3.5.2 Triangulation

Triangulation of research means that the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches are taken into account, cancelling out the “method effect”, leading to greater confidence in the research conclusions (Hussey & Hussey, 1997:74; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:147). Through the use of two or more independent sources of data or data collection methods within one study, the reliability and validity of results is increased (Jonsen & Jehn, 2009:28; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:614).

The dialogical nature of IQA research allows for a researcher to compare both the individual and group realities by facilitating comparisons among individuals within and across constituencies, for example, by comparing individual mindmaps to each other and to composites, and to raw comparisons among constituencies. The research thus represents both the individual and group realities, allowing the researcher to answer two interpretive questions: What is...? and What if...? (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:50). This process thus facilitates data triangulation throughout the process. In this study, triangulation was facilitated through:

- the focus group process itself where participants created a shared reality based on a combination of their individual experiences;
- comparisons of individual SIDs in each focus group with the group composite;
- comparisons of individual ‘if-then’ statements by participants with the final SID for the group;
- comparisons of two focus group SIDs with each other;
- collection of additional data through personal reflections and informal follow-up interviews with participants – this data was used for comparison during the final analysis but is not reflected in the findings presented in this thesis.

3.5.3 Existing theory and research

There is much discussion and debate among qualitative researchers about the use of existing theory and research in qualitative analysis (Maxwell, 2009:227; Saunders *et al.*, 2007:492; Shah & Corley, 2006:1826).

The benefit of building a strong theoretical framework for analysis is that research is linked to an existing body of knowledge which provides a researcher with an initial framework for analysis. It also provides a researcher with a clearer understanding of what is being investigated by helping the researcher to see relationships and connections which might otherwise have gone unnoticed (Maxwell, 2009:227).

However, the converse is also true. A researcher may become so obsessed with fitting data into a theoretical framework that the views of participants that do not align with the theory may be overlooked (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:488). Becker (1986, cited in Maxwell, 2009:227) warns against trying to fit data into a theoretical framework, as it may distort data so that key ways of conceptualising or key implications on results may be overlooked. In order to counter these threats, Maxwell (2009:227) suggests that theory should be used for the following reasons:

- to provide a justification for the research;
- to inform decisions about methods – suggesting alternative approaches or revealing potential problems with the plan;
- to serve as a source of data for testing or modifying theories to see if existing theory, the results of a pilot study or experiential understanding are supported or challenged by previous research; and
- to aid in generating theory rather than simply borrowing theory from the literature.

In accordance with the guidelines for engaged scholarship suggested by Van de Ven (2007), existing theoretical models were used in the design of the research questions for the current research and as a basis for grounding and testing the theoretical frameworks that were developed.

3.5.4 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the *reliability* in qualitative research which refers to the degree to which data collection techniques or analysis procedures yield consistent results when one is using the same measure on different occasions, when different observers reach similar observations and in the degree of transparency through which sense is made of raw data (Saunders *et al.*, 2007:149). In terms of qualitative analysis, trustworthiness is concerned with *stability* (intra-rater reliability) and *reproducibility* (inter-rater reliability) (Stemler, 2001:5).

It is crucial that a qualitative researcher builds some sort of validation into the research design. Inferences made from one analytic approach demands the use of multiple sources of information in order to lend credibility to findings (Stemler, 2001:n.p).

Rigour in the IQA process is achieved by allowing research *participants* to identify the elements and relationships between elements of the phenomenon under investigation (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:38), as was the case in this study. The classification of clusters and themes was then subjected to consensus-building between all participants (intra-rater reliability), following the guidelines of Northcutt and McCoy (2004:38). In the IQA process, reliability is enhanced through a process of rationalisation – regardless of the subjective meanings that an analyst may ascribe to the components of a data set, standard guidelines for visual representation mean that different researchers should be able to develop similar systems diagrams: cluttered, uncluttered and clean (inter-rater reliability) (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:38). In the case of this study, a democratic voting protocol, pareto tables and guidelines for drawing the cluttered and uncluttered SIDs as suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:178) was followed closely (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, the use of multiple focus groups allowed for triangulation and comparison across and within constituencies.

3.6 ENSURING QUALITY DATA

No discussion on the rigour and quality of the research design would be complete without a summary of steps that were taken to ensure the collection of data of a high quality.

Given (2006:380) suggests the following steps in ensuring the quality of data obtained:

- prolonged engagement in the field;
- persistent observation;
- triangulation of methods;
- negative case analysis;
- peer debriefing; and
- member checks.

For the purposes of the current research, prolonged engagement with participants, persistent observation, triangulation, negative case analysis and member checks were implemented to ensure the quality of the data collected.

The nature of the research was such that long-term relationships with participants naturally developed, which allowed for informal follow-up interviews, conversations and repeated observations, in line with the guidelines proposed by Maxwell (2009:244).

In order to gain feedback on initial findings, the first SIDs were e-mailed to participants for comment. Participants did not respond to this e-mail and I had to pursue another strategy to check my initial findings. I had informal meetings with Inbal, Rina, Magdalena, and Sonya in order to share some of my findings and to check whether they were in agreement with them. Annabelle and Sue both wrote short reflections on their experiences as expatriates which they sent to me via e-mail. These reflections provided me with useful background information to better understand their comments during the focus group and the data from their reflections was coded during the TCA for triangulation purposes. It was decided not to include the data from their reflections in the final analysis presented in Chapter 4 so as not to disturb the group reality presented in their focus group discussions. I tried to connect with other participants (member checking) to check my understanding of the findings, but they did not respond to my e-mails. To further test the credibility of my findings, I participated in various expatriate discussion forums and wrote short articles for popular expatriate newsletters which made preliminary findings more accessible to women professionals in practice. Through these short papers, I was also able to test the emerging theories with the real-life

experiences of a broader group of women outside the sample group. This process helped to provide me with a mirror of my own preconceptions and biases, as recommended by Maxwell (2009:244). Furthermore, I gained feedback on my findings from the academic community through participation in conference proceedings and journal publications.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

This study was based on a deontological view of ethical research. Deontology argues that the ends of a research project never justify the means, and therefore unethical research can never be tolerated (Saunders *et al.*, 178). To ensure ethical conduct various actions were taken as described below: the research proposal and steps in the research process were approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria (See Appendix 1).

- all participants were duly informed of the implications of participation in the research - prior to participation in the research, participants could find out more about the research and the researcher via a website that was created for the research (www.expatlady.webs.com). The consent form was also made available on this website for perusal. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form at the beginning of each focus group session;
- during the focus group, issues of confidentiality was addressed and participants were informed that participation to this study was voluntary, with the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time;
- participation in this study did not pose any threats of physical or emotional harm to participants and care was taken to set ground rules at the beginning of the focus group session to ensure respectful interaction between participants;
- participants' names were changed in the transcriptions of the focus group videos in order to protect their confidentiality;
- all transcriptions were conducted by myself in order to ensure the credibility of data and confidentiality of participants;
- transcriptions were checked by the research supervisor ensuring trustworthiness;
- data was stored and is available on a password-protected external hard drive;

- I acknowledged my own possible bias as researcher and tried to deal with it in a transparent and credible manner.

3.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter started with an introduction to the key principles underlying this study, and discussed the cyclical process that aims to contribute to our understanding of the world by contributing to three worlds: the world of science, the world of meta-science and the world of everyday life.

This study was based on the principles of IQA and was founded in a pragmatic ontology that aimed to understand the lived experiences of individuals, which can then be generalised to a broader objective reality. Furthermore, the research was guided by a feminist, constructivist epistemology, acknowledging the mutual, interactive relationship between the researcher and the researched.

A multiple methods approach was employed in the data collection inclusive of the use of IQA focus groups, and detailed reflections by myself as the researcher. Purposive sampling was employed to select focus group participants who complied with the requirements for the research.

An overview was also provided in this chapter of the methods employed in the research to address possible issues of bias, triangulation, credibility, transparency and trustworthiness in ensuring ethical conduct in the research process.

The next Chapters 4 and 5 will continue where Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the qualitative data that were collected through this research and Chapter 5 an in-depth discussion of the qualitative findings in order to provide the first steps towards building a theoretical framework of understanding.

CHAPTER 4

INTERACTIVE QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS



Photo 4.1 Testing initial findings through a poster presentation at the EAWOP conference, Maastricht May 2011.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

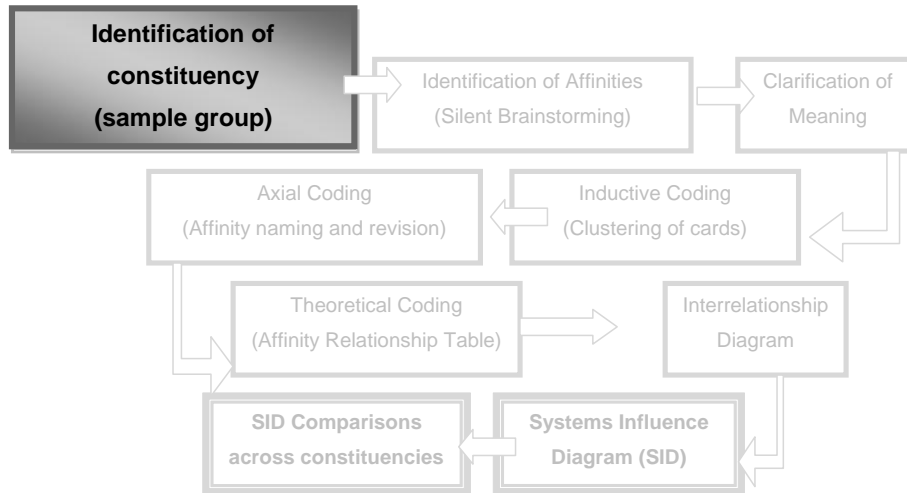
I'm 40 years old, I'm living in a new country and a new culture, so I'm absorbing something. So I'm not the same person that you knew. I'm another one and now I'm adjusting to what I had, what I've been and what I'm now. So you have to adjust too! I'm sorry!' And it's difficult.

**(Magdalena, an Italian-Ethiopian SIE
about adjusting to life in the Netherlands,
24 April, 2010)**

The purpose of this chapter is to present and report the findings from two IQA focus groups hosted with SIE women on 24 April 2010 and 12 June 2010 in the Netherlands. This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first details the IQA findings for Focus Group 1, which was hosted on 24 April 2010 in Utrecht. The second details the IQA findings for Focus Group 2, which was hosted on 12 June 2010 in Amsterdam. The IQA process as detailed in Section 3.4.7 is discussed for these two groups in order to provide a rich and thick description of the experiences and eventual system of meaning represented by the SIDs of the two groups. My own interpretations and links to other streams of literature are not included in the chapter, as it was important first to create a platform where the “voices” of the participants can be heard. Researcher’s notes are used to describe phases in the research process where my own views may have influenced the description of the data. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key results. The full IQA process and protocol for representing data as described by Northcutt and Mc Coy (2004) is described in this chapter for the sake of comprehensiveness. This means that the chapter is very long and could confuse the reader who is searching for the core findings. The key findings from the IQA analysis are summarised in the text as follows: Tables 4.11 and 4.27 provide summaries of the key affinities and their definitions as identified by the two focus groups. Diagrams 4.12 and 4.23 present the final Systems Influence Diagrams developed by the two focus groups and the Researcher’s note on page 261 provides insights into the spiralling nature of the two systems.

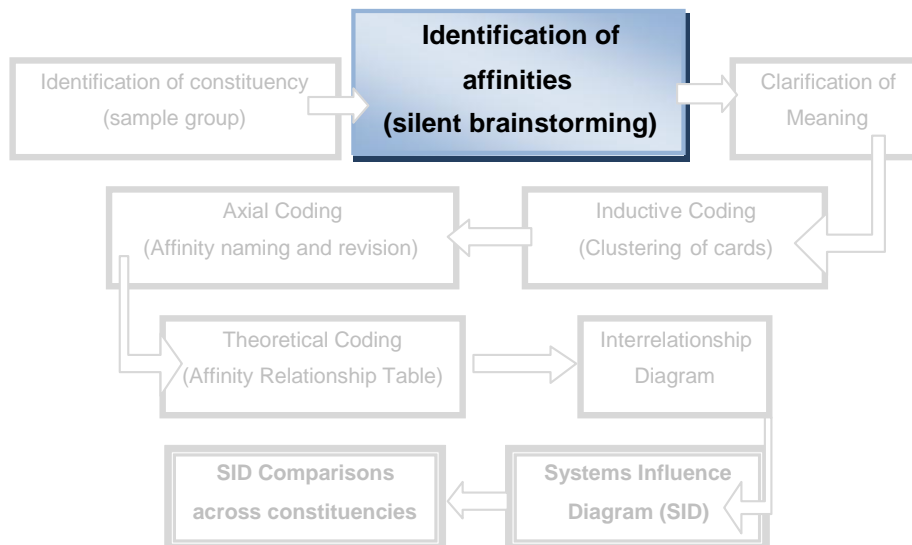
4.2 IQA FOCUS GROUP 1 - 24 APRIL 2010

4.2.1 Step 1: Identifying the Constituency (24 April 2010)



A total of 12 women participated in the first focus group. Two of the participants (Sonya and Jay) arrived unexpectedly – Sonya had heard about the session via a friend and decided to participate at the last moment, and Jay was invited to participate by her sister, Michelle. For a detailed description of the women who participated in the research, please see Section 3.4.6.

4.2.2 Step 2: Identification of affinities (silent brainstorming) (24 April 2010)



During the silent brainstorming process, a total of 137 cards were generated by the group. Table 4.1 (overleaf) provides an example of cards that were generated

during the process (see Appendix 3 for the full list). These cards were then shuffled and taped on the wall in rows and columns, as illustrated in Photo 4.2 (below).



Photo 4.2 Cards from the silent brainstorming process taped to the wall (24 April 2010)

Table 4.1 Examples from cards generated during the silent brainstorming process (24 April 2010)

Being a mother in Holland
Being assertive, direct
self
Career Counsellor
Challenging work
Chance for reinvention
Choice
Cold weather (Lack of Sun)
Commitment (X2)
Confrontational Culture
Cooking (+)
Cultural Differences
Culture

Dealing with the practicalities of life – the nitty gritty, day-to-day living

Determination

Europe no boundaries

Feeling as though you have to conform

Feeling isolated, and being isolated (home, no work yet)

Finding a job that is in my field (not educated in my professional work field)

Finding friends and colleagues

Finding girlfriends

Food (X3)

Frustration

Giving up my established “Life” to start a new one – identity crisis

Going home regularly

Have clear goals

Having clients – beginning with work process

Having realistic expectations

Heartache of being separated from family and old friends

Helping others

Homesick

Insular social circles

Lack of precise/useful information (not only commercial)

Learning the language

Looking at life as an adventure

Meditation about who I am

Men culture in companies

Missing my friends and family

My children (Motivation)

My family at home

Networking ☺

Precious attitude of the Dutch towards qualifications and education levels
from other countries (non-acceptance/arrogance)

Rules society

Skype, Facebook, etc are game changers

To integrate in my local community

To support my daughter (9 years old when we came here) in her adjustment
and integration process

To work out who I was once my work identity had been pulled out from under
me (self-esteem)

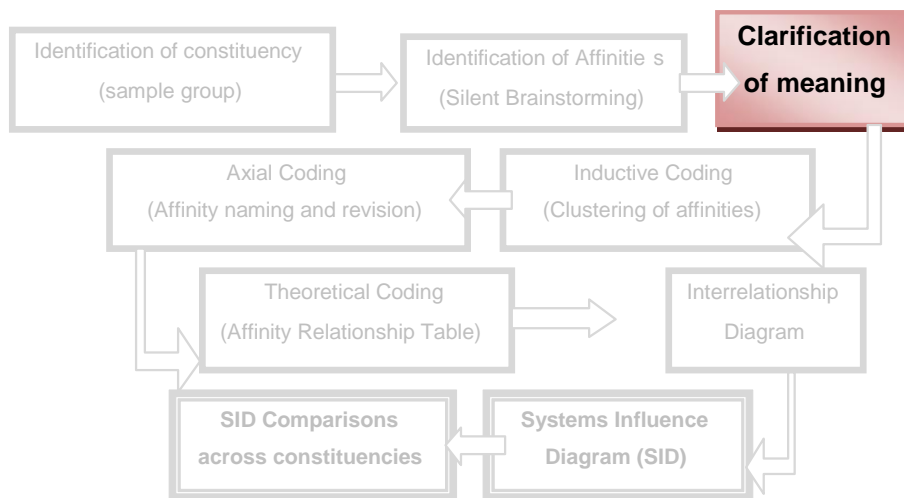
Women business organisations

Work – used network to get work

Work colleagues

Work culture

4.2.3 Step 3: Clarification of Meaning (24 April 2010)



The third step in the IQA focus group protocol is that of clarification and sense-making. This section provides a broad overview of key themes that were discussed in the focus group session as identified and gleaned from the focus group transcript. Table 4.2 (overleaf) shows an example of the cards that were explicitly defined by participants and the evidence from the quotes derived from the silent brainstorming (printed in black) – a detailed card description is provided in Appendix 3. Those cards which were touched upon implicitly through the natural flow of conversational topics were later identified in further analysis of the focus group transcript and are indicated in red. Additional themes that were discussed by participants and identified during the analysis of the focus group transcript are presented in blue. My own comments and notes are presented in green. The keywords relating to the silent brainstorm card were underlined in participant's quotes for ease of reading.

Table 4.2 Examples of clarification of meaning (24 April 2010)

Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
Career counsellor	<p>“...once you have everything there, and information and everything is available to you, then you are able, maybe, if you get into yourself and you understand where you want to go, your direction. But first you have to have all this information around you and that allows guidance that allows you to just go in your direction. So I think first, before, a <u>career counsellor</u> would be I think, a good step.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</p> <p>“...deciding what you can do, what you can offer, but then find a <u>mentor who has done it and has gone before</u> you and done it, and then hook onto them...it doesn't even have to be in career, it can just be getting your kids into school....” (Sonya, Australia)</p>
Choice	<p>“...realising that it is a <u>choice</u> that I made to be here. And so that one might be inclined to complain about things, but also taking responsibility that there are reasons for us to come here and remembering what were those reasons...” (Theresa, USA)</p> <p>“I think also its sort of overwhelming the <u>number of choices</u> you have to do at one time...I've made...the same kinds of choices over the course of...35 years...But then to make them all at once. And you MUST choose. There is <u>no choice in choosing</u>. You have to choose and you have to <u>choose it right away</u>....sometimes in life you don't choose, you just deal with what you have...it's almost too much choosing, you know... So it's almost like <u>choosing isn't a freedom</u>. It's kind of its own trap.” (Bonita, USA)</p> <p>“...making the <u>choice</u> of...moving here...we made that choice...” (Inbal, Israel)</p>
<p>Chance for reinvention</p> <p><i>This card is also related to 'choice' – reinvention is a choice.</i></p>	<p>“It is a <u>choice</u> to become <u>what you want to become</u> and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to choose all kinds of stuff...” (Tatiana, Serbia)</p> <p>“I see that as a <u>choice</u> also for <u>re-invention</u>. <u>You can totally reinvent yourself</u>.” (Sonya, Australia)</p>
<p>Giving up my established “Life” to start a new one – identity crisis</p>	<p>“For me, I felt that <u>I didn't know who I was</u>. I, I felt that I lost myself and I had doubts... I had so many choices in my country, I was so successful and <u>I had everything and at once everything changed</u>. I didn't know what my choices are, although there were so many choices. So that was <u>my crisis</u> at a certain point.” (Annabelle, Romania)</p> <p>“...<u>my life that I had before I came here</u>...was wonderful. I had lovely friends, I was doing well in my work – I was building it up, my child was happy, and all sorts <u>of things were going really well</u>...I came with him for his work... I</p>

Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
	<p><i>was on my own, with my child, trying to get her to adjust, <u>trying to adjust myself...and I just felt: "Excuse me?"...it just felt to me at the time because I was so miserable, that he was ok...I couldn't earn money at the time, and he had to go do his job....I was the one who was <u>trying to integrate and learn the language, do all these practical things, and support my child...</u>"</u> (Sue, UK)</i></p>
<p>To work out how much I actually was willing to change/adapt and what was important (to me) to keep the same.</p> <p><i>The descriptions of these cards link to the concept of compromising one's value systems.</i></p>	<p><i>"Starting from three years...you become <u>aware of what you are, of who you are, and of what you can.</u>"</i> (Annabelle, Romania)</p> <p><i>"<u>First you really want to integrate, and then you come to this after four, five years, obviously because we're the same now... What you really don't want to compromise and then you go to the balance...</u>"</i> (Tatiana, Serbia)</p> <p><i>"But you realise that there are <u>some aspects you want to have and that you don't want to compromise.</u>"</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</p>
<p>To integrate in my local community</p>	<p><i>"I think when I first came, I thought that I didn't have a choice <u>and I expected that I would integrate. That's what I thought I should do: integrate, learn the language, get a job. And I thought that was going to take place in about 18 months or a year or two years at the absolute most.</u>"</i> (Sue, UK)</p>
<p>Challenge: dealing with the practicalities of life – the nitty gritty, day-to-day living</p>	<p><i>"...at the beginning I was also overwhelmed. You know the <u>practicalities of life. Just, you know, how do you set up a bank account? The nitty gritty stuff overwhelmed me and took up all my energy and focus for a long-long time. So that these other choices about work, identity and self-esteem and all the rest of it...you don't really physically have the energy and time for that until later on. So that's why it sounds a long time, four and a half years, but you have sorted out a lot earlier than that to get your stability and your grounding, before, for me anyway, my experience, I could come on to that next level, really.</u>"</i> (Sue, UK)</p>
<p>Other expat girl friends</p>	<p><i>"I found that really important, this one... that's where I found my <u>girlfriends. And I went: 'aaah you're just like me!'... But to find a girlfriend... 'ah, this is great'...we're doing the same thing...you <u>try to go through life together</u> because, I adore my husband, of course. But...he doesn't always get me...I just want a girlfriend...I just want to recommend it to anybody that lives here... <u>Go find a girlfriend first. And you'll be able to get through everything.</u>"</u></i> (Sonya, Australia)</p>
<p>New friendships</p>	<p><i>"The challenge, though, in the international context that you find yourself in,</i></p>

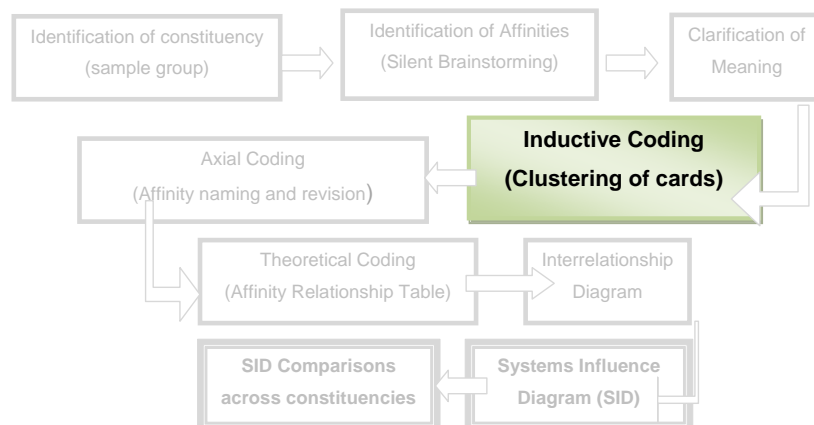
Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
	<i>is the fact that there's this <u>continuous shuttle...you have to select...</u>" (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i>
Insular social circles	<i>"...when I came here, there was barely any foreigner in sight. There were <u>only the Dutch white community</u> that I was living in, all Dutch...I was in Oud-Loodsrecht...they were very Dutch in their essence..." (Rina, Romania)</i>
Finding girl friends	<i>"...I find <u>kids here a connector</u>. I just throw my kids into school and tell them to go find people and then I go meet their mom." (Sonya, Australia)</i>
Being a mother in Holland	<i>"Don't you find that you have <u>changed your mindset in terms of being a parent being here?...</u>You change totally..." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i>
To adjust to Dutch norms and values	<i>"...this one is also tough for them to accept because really, <u>it is a revolution in terms of values</u> as well. It is. I found it very hard to, and I'm still going through the process of <u>adjusting</u> to certain things." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i>
Agenda-culture, not spontaneous	<i>"It's like they have these <u>lists of topics that you talk about</u> when you meet your friends: How's work, how's that? How's that? They run through all those important topics, pah, pah, pah, pah...It's like, Ok we've covered all the bases, <u>set the agenda and in four months we do it again</u> and then you talk about all these..." (Adri, South Africa)</i>
Having clients or beginning the work process	<i>"...that helped you also to be active and <u>to have work and to communicate...</u>" (Annabelle, Romania) <i>"For me this had a different meaning....For me consultancy was new. I used to be in mainstream HR before I started being a consultant here.... But for me, <u>starting work actually demolished one of the basic understandings I had about Holland</u> as a country that accepts international people. And...doesn't necessarily try to adapt, but tolerates them in the society." (Rina, Romania)</i></i>
Disrespect	<i>"I take it as a thumb rule that whenever you have someone in the room that doesn't understand a language; everybody comes to speak the language that everybody speaks...I started working and four days after that we had a very important business update....that was in Dutch. That was a moment when things really started to fall down and fall apart...as...something that goes down the side of a mountain and it doesn't stop. Because it was so against my values and I just couldn't understand this. <u>I felt disrespectful</u>, not to me as a person, but overall also to the company as such. So it took me some time to actually stop being angry and frustrated at them, and understand that also maybe they don't need to stop speaking Dutch in their lunch break, even when I'm sitting next to them and have no one else to speak to and I'm just eating my own lunch. Because in the end, they are in their own country; because they never worked in another country; so they</i>

Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
	<i>don't really know how you feel..." (Rina, Romania)</i>
Learning the language	<i>"...I decided because my Dutch...it was difficult to get it to the level, I decided to open my own practice for expat people....But I'm still limited with the language – Dutch language and Dutch administration." (Tatiana, Serbia)</i>
Not understanding the Dutch (directness, behaviour towards other people etc)	<i>"...we say that Dutch people are direct, but...it is not true...it is not true that the culture is direct, or the people are direct...this directness is actually sometimes manipulation... But this manipulation is that you are just putting in my face something, just because you want to have something back... this is one aspect that I find very hard." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i>
Male culture	<p><i>"...I was at a workshop...Strategy for women...it was all about associating in a man's culture here in the Netherlands...their culture is dominated by men, women don't get any management positions, except some line positions or middle management, but Top management is like really hard to get. And it was about these qualities of women who succeed and qualities of men who succeed. It was really an eye-opener. There is no recipe, you just have to be yourself and just start from your own values." (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>"I really think it depends on the field...in the science as well...my boss is a professor and she is head of the department...80 % of people working at the hospital are female." (Adri, South Africa)</i></p> <p><i>"...it all comes down to like men in management...I think it still really comes down to choice. If you choose to go and work in that company, you have to understand the culture of that company and where you're going to fit in. If the culture of the company is male-orientated, you're stepping into a male-orientated company." (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>"Because the husbands have a higher position and the women can afford to stay home." (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
No support of companies or institution for families (women mainly)	<i>"...I think what has to be done is that...international companies...I mean it is a country with a lot of international-based firms. So if firms allow families to come in, they also have to understand that they don't have to cater only for the man or woman professional; they also have to cater for the whole situation of the family. The package. So there are relocation companies, but still there is a vacuum there." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i>
Food	<p><i>"...I can summarize that in one word: Terrible. There is no Dutch cuisine." (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>"Fifteen minutes cooking!" (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p>

Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
Weather	<p><i>“Go out in summer a lot!... Try Russian winter... This is nothing. <u>This is not even winter here!</u>” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“It’s exactly the <u>same as the British weather</u>, so...the <u>crisp days in winter</u> are actually quite enjoyable I find.” (Sue, UK)</i></p>
Homesick	<p><i>“...I would be <u>homesick</u> if it wasn’t for Skype...” (Bonita, USA)</i></p>
Skype, Facebook etc. are game changers	<p><i>“...you have the <u>internet</u>, and the <u>telephone is much cheaper</u>, you have <u>Skype</u> and everything else...” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“<u>Skype</u> is the best invention ever!” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“I <u>speak to my mom</u> more now that I’m away, than I was actually living at home. Because living at home...I was so busy and I would go for like Sunday lunch and then, ok, bye mom! I’m busy.” (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“When we moved here, it was in ‘95. And there was <u>no Skype</u>, and there was no...there was nothing. We had a <u>fax machine and a telephone</u>, you know? And we didn’t go home for five years...It was really hard to make <u>phone calls</u> because we couldn’t afford the cell phone bills and things like that...” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
Going Home regularly	<p><i>“I don’t have that feeling. I have a feeling now that I have <u>two homes</u>. One is here, and one is there. Friends here and friends there.” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“When we moved here, it was in ‘95...<u>we didn’t go home for five years.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
Support from your family	<p><i>“...we locked down, but we had no money. We came here with 300 guilders and four children and we just had to start...my <u>husband’s grandfather</u> was here....the grandfather called him over and gave him 500 guilders. And I was like ‘ah, you know, we can eat! This is wonderful!’” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...if anything ever goes wrong...we always have someone to <u>fall back on</u>. <u>Mommy and Daddy and the family and the close people.</u>” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“...we lived with my parents. And I had four kids...their grandkids... And we said: ‘we’re taking them away from you; we’re going to move to the other side of the earth.’ And they were like: ‘no, you can’t do that!’ They didn’t talk to us for ages after we left. <u>We had no support whatsoever.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
My children (Motivation)	<p><i>“...<u>children....give you energy.</u>” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“<u>Children are a big motivator to just survive.</u>” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p>
Previous expatriate	<p><i>“...when I was a child we went and <u>lived in the States five years</u> and I grew up there...I said [to my parents]: ‘...you can’t offer me the world and not expect me to use it!’...’this is what you did to me, I’m out of here’...I said to</i></p>

Clarification of meaning: silent brainstorm card Affinity	Evidence quotes
experience	<i>my mom: ‘You taught me to live this way. You taught me to be independent. You taught me how to do it.’</i> (Sonya, Australia)
Cultural differences	<i>“...cultural difference, because we are coming from different cultures and we are confronted with Dutch culture.”</i> (Tatiana, Serbia)
Identity	<i>“...if we go deep into who you are, you can be two different things, or persons if you want, but then you have a card. You tell them, well, I work here, I do this, I live here... Your identity is challenged by the environment...”</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia) <i>“...it evolves...and it is being influenced by the rest. Because we all change...”</i> (Annabelle, Romania)

4.2.4 Step 4: Inductive Coding (24 April 2010)



Once the clarification of meaning process was completed, participants were asked to review all the cards on the wall and were invited to silently start moving the cards into groups and themes. During this process, a number of informal conversations occurred during which participants discussed the meanings of different cards further. These conversations were also transcribed insofar as they were intelligible.

After the inductive coding process, the participants were asked to begin naming, re-organising and refining categories (Photo 4.3, overleaf), as described in Section 3.4.7.4.

Photo 4.3 Participants sorting cards into categories (24 April 2012)

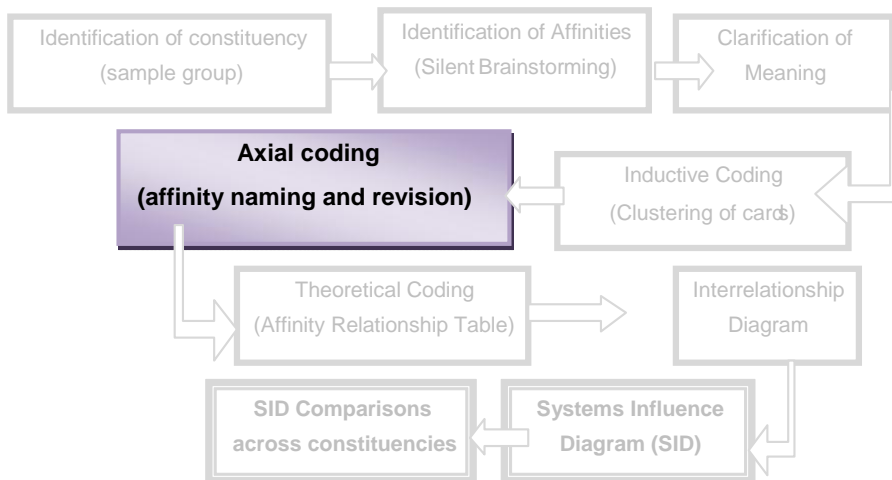


A serious limitation during this process was the lack of space available in the room where the focus group was hosted. As a result, the process of axial coding was dominated by a few dominant members of the group, which led to disengagement from the process by the rest of the group (see Photo 4.4 for an example of how this played out in the room). The researcher tried to steer the conversation of the group towards the further classification of cards by the group to achieve consensus from everyone, but time constraints also influenced this process.



Photo 4.4 Due to limited space in the room, the sorting of cards was dominated by a few dominant members in the group

4.2.5 Step 5: Axial coding (affinity naming and revision) (24 April 2010)



After sorting the cards into different clusters, each cluster was provided with a heading representing the label of each category (affinity). The cards resorting under each affinity were then sorted further into sub-affinities and positives/helps and enablers/barriers by participants. This section clarifies the definitions of affinities based on the clustering of the cards – the clustering of cards by participants per affinity is presented and discussed with evidence from the focus group transcript towards the development of a definition for each affinity.

Participants identified seven main affinities, namely

- Environment;
- Identity;
- Culture/Cultural Differences;
- Language;
- Family;
- Social Life; and
- Work.

These affinities were then sub-divided by the participants into a number of sub-affinities (see Table 4.3 below), which were also sub-divided into challenges and enablers for adjustment. Through further analysis of the focus group transcript and the cards classified under each affinity, the definitions of the final affinities were deduced, as explained in more detail in the next section.

Table 4.3 Summary of affinities and sub-affinities: Focus Group 1

Affinity	Sub-affinity
1. Environment	<i>Food, Weather, Location, Practical Things</i>
2. Identity	<i>Personality, Loneliness, Dedication</i>
3. Culture/Cultural Difference	
4. Language	
5. Family	
6. Social Life	
7. Work	

***Researcher's note:**

At first glance, the tables below may suggest that participants had classified mainly enablers or barriers under an affinity, based on the number of cards clustered under that category. This may be misleading in respect of the meaning participants were trying to create. To reflect this, a number of speech bubbles with *verbatim* quotes from participants have been added to each table below to give "life" to the table and help to reduce the temptation to draw preliminary conclusions.

4.2.5.1 Affinity 1: Environment

“Environment” was an over-arching concept used to describe the sub-affinities of “Food”, “Weather”, “Location” and “Practical Things” as summarised in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4 Environment

Affinity 1: Environment	
Food, Weather, Location, Practical Things	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Affinity 1.1 Food	
Food (X3) Food plain... sometimes Stress of not being able to buy/ find familiar tea etc! ☹️	Cooking (+) Cooking helped a lot.
There is no Dutch cuisine	It's your base. This is where you function. My corner of life.
Affinity 1.2 Weather	
Weather (X2) Weather – rain clouds Challenge: Cold weather (lack of sun)	Weather The cripes days in winter are quite enjoyable. If winter is dark and grey, change it.
Like bombs and stuff. With the way the wind works.	
It was the first winter I ever experienced in my life.	
Affinity 1.3 Location	
The middle of nowhere. Wonderful environmentally, but no infrastructure in terms of expats' lives.	Europe no boundaries Living in Europe ☺️ Easy Travelling Wealthy Country Being located in The Hague Beauty of Nature (Where I live) ENVIRONMENT I just need to be able to see a windmill.
	It's just so close to the rest of Europe.
Affinity 1.4 Practical things	
Transport Driving Licence Dealing with the practicalities of life – the nitty gritty, day-to-day living	The nitty gritty stuff overwhelmed me.

The *environment* relates to a person’s direct surroundings, both tangible (such as one’s home, or the natural environment) and intangible (the broader practicalities

of living and working in the Netherlands), as well as aspects outside one's control, such as the weather.

- **This is my home today. It's your base.** Physical location and *physical address* was a component of the environment that made participants feel grounded in the Netherlands – while the home country was considered a *base*, the Netherlands is considered to be *home*, the place where one *functions*:

"It's your base." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

"It's my base, but this is my home today..." (Inbal, Israel)

- **My home, my corner, my life, my everything.** The environment was also described as one's *home*, a physical place of residence where one's *life* is:

"...my corner my life, my everything. Because I see my life here today. Not in Israel in boxes." (Inbal, Israel)

- **The first winter I ever experienced in my life.** The weather and one's ability to adapt to unfamiliar or extreme weather conditions such as wind or snow also resorted under the environment:

"...when I moved here it was the first winter I ever experienced in my life...I survived last winter, and then we had this winter which was so long and it was so cold...we had eight weeks of snow." (Inbal, Israel)

4.2.5.1.1 Affinity 1.1: Food

- **There is no Dutch cuisine.** *Food* also formed part of the environment, and in the Netherlands, it was summarised as *terrible*, with a lack of cuisine:

"But I can summarise that in one word: Terrible. There is no Dutch cuisine."
(Inbal, Israel)

- **Cooking helped a lot.** *Cooking* foods from one's home country, however, was a source of *relaxation*, good *memories* and *comfort* during the adjustment process, and it helped participants retain a part of their national identity and remember the good things from *the past*.

“For me...cooking helped a lot. Because it’s relaxing me and also brings me close to things that I love: memories to friends, to things from the past...when [my Dutch friends]...come to me I cook my own. Because I am Romanian, I cannot be something else.” (Rina, Romania)

- **There’s no such thing as having seconds.** For many participants, the culture surrounding eating was a tough aspect to adapt to in the Netherlands. Sharing a meal and cooking extensively for guests is considered a sign of *hospitality* in many cultures, which is not necessarily the case in the Netherlands. Food is thus a carrier of *cultural identity*:

“There’s no such thing as having seconds. Like in Israel, if you have five people coming over, you cook for ten people, right. Because just in case if anybody wants extras, or my neighbour decides to come by, you just cook...” (Inbal, Israel)

4.2.5.1.2 Affinity 1.2: Weather

- **If winter is dark and grey, change it.** The crisp days in winter are quite enjoyable. One’s own perception of the weather is crucial in the adjustment process – being *creative* and engaging in activities *outside* is important in reframing *winter* from *dark, grey* and *depressive* to *enjoyable*. One should guard against a negative mindset and turning *winter* into something *depressive*:

“...but once you put it into their culture and saying ‘winter is depression for you. So get used to it, it’s grey, it’s dark, you’re gonna have to stay inside, you’re gonna have to get really sad. You know’. And no, no, what I’m saying is and they’re putting that into the culture...If winter is dark and grey, change it. Like change what you do. Become creative, go out....” (Sonya, Australia)

- **Like bombs and stuff. With the way the wind works.** However, there are some weather conditions, such as the *wind*, over which one has no control, because there is *nothing to stop the wind*. For participants who were not used to windy conditions, this aspect of the environment proved challenging:

“...But the wind...I feel like you are shelled...it’s almost like it is something that comes over you. Like bombs and stuff. With the way the wind works.

And where I was living...There was nothing to stop the wind there.” (Rina, Romania)

4.2.5.1.3 Affinity 1.3: Location

- **Wonderful environmentally, but no infrastructure in terms of expats’ lives.**

For many participants, *location* includes aspects of the direct living environment (*area*) and the location in which they are based. The location or town in which they are living, has a major influence on the *infrastructure* available for expatriates, possibilities for *meeting* people (friends in the international community) and isolation (being *stuck there*):

“I’m coming from Arnhem and that area which is very wonderful environmentally speaking area. But it has no infrastructure in terms of expats’ lives.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **The middle of nowhere.** Being located in *the middle of nowhere* also affects one’s proximity to work. Spending many hours *commuting* requires a lot of energy and consequently has a negative influence on one’s social life because it is *very difficult* to find the time/energy to *go out there and actually meet someone*:

“...I was living in Oud Loodsrecht, the middle of nowhere...so 3 hours from my day were actually commuting to work and home. And then I would be stuck there, and to get out of there and actually meet someone would be very difficult.” (Rina, Romania)

- **I just need to be able to see a windmill.** *Location* also relates to the physical environment and beauty of nature where one is situated and a landscape features such as windmills or canals:

“I just need to be able to see a windmill or look at a canal out my window. I don’t care where I live...so, we moved onto a canal and the rest I didn’t care. You know, the rest is like living in Australia...” (Sonya, Australia)

- **It’s just so close to the rest of Europe.** The fact that the Netherlands is so central, which allows for easy access to the rest of *Europe*, also made *location* a supporting factor for living in the Netherlands – *school trips* to historical

locations and the relatively low cost of air travel were also considered to be benefits to being located in the Netherlands:

“...you just get on a plane and you fly five hours and you’re home.” (Inbal, Israel)

4.2.5.1.4 Affinity 1.4: Practical things

- **The nitty gritty stuff overwhelmed me.** The *location* in which one is based also influences the day-to-day *practicalities of life* in terms of proximity to one’s work, travel time or setting up basic services:

“...the practicalities of life...how do you set up a bank account? The nitty gritty stuff overwhelmed me and took up all my energy and focus for a long-long time.” (Sue, UK)

4.2.5.2 Affinity 2: Identity

Identity was discussed in terms of *Personality, Loneliness and Dedication*, as summarised in Table 4.5 (overleaf). As an overall theme, *Identity* was discussed at the levels of individual identity and cultural identity.

Table 4.5 Identity

Affinity 2: Identity	
<i>Personality, Loneliness, Dedication</i>	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
<p>Misunderstood</p> <p>Loss of independence (X2)</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">I didn't know who I was.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">You don't really physically have the energy and time.</div> <p>To work out how much I actually was willing to change/adapt and what was important (to me) to keep the same.</p> <p>To work out <u>who I was</u> once my work identity had been pulled out from under me (self-esteem)</p> <p>Loss of identity</p> <p>Giving up my established "Life" to start a new one – identity crisis</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">My core values and norms.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">Sometimes you lose a little bit of who you actually are.</div>	<p>Meditation about who I am</p> <p>Stepping out of comfort zone</p> <p>Letting go of old self</p> <p>Helped me: To see the situation as an opportunity.</p> <p>Eg. Did the study I had not had time for in the UK</p> <p>Chance for reinvention</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">A choice also for re-invention</div> <p>New experiences☺</p> <p>One day I will write a book about it</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">You start building yourself again.</div>
Affinity 2.1: Personality	
<p>Becoming extrovert assertive</p> <p>Choice</p> <p>Burning bridges</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">Choosing is no longer a freedom.</div>	<p>Being assertive, direct</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">It's a choice to become what you want to become.</div> <p>Choice</p> <p>Have clear goals</p> <p>Go for it</p> <p>Think in solutions</p> <p>Having realistic expectations</p> <p>Looking at life as an adventure</p> <p>Being willing to laugh at yourself</p>

Affinity 2.2: Loneliness	
<p>Isolation</p> <p>Insular social circles</p> <p>Feeling isolated, and being isolated (home, no work yet)</p> <p>Missing my friends and family/Homesick</p> <p>Heartache of being separated from family and old friends</p> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">It's the physical touching.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;">There was barely any foreigner in sight.</div>	<p>Developing <u>NEW</u> interests and hobbies, as well as keeping some old ones!</p> <p>Motivation: Arts, Music, Dance</p> <p>Do not always think: "Back home we do it like this..."</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; background-color: #c6e0b4; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;">Developing new interests and hobbies</div>
Affinity 2.3: Dedication	
	<p>Helping others in the same situation</p> <p>Finding your gift to offer</p> <p>Commitment (X2)</p> <p>Determination</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; background-color: #c6e0b4; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;">You just dig in.</div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; background-color: #c6e0b4; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;">I'll immerse myself, I'll help my children, I'll help everybody.</div>

- A choice for re-invention.** Some participants felt that their move to the Netherlands challenged their established identities. Their perception of this process was both a vice and a virtue – it offers a chance for *re-invention* and *choosing who you want to be* can lead to *reinventing* yourself, but choice becomes a *trap* that leaves little *energy* for determining *work, identity and self-esteem* in the early stages of adjustment:

"I see that as a choice also for re-invention. You can totally reinvent yourself...I came here and nobody knew me...so it's like 'who do I want to be?'" (Sonya, Australia)

"...choosing isn't a freedom. It's kind of its own trap." (Bonita, USA)

“...these other choices about work, identity and self-esteem and all the rest of it...you don’t really physically have the energy and time for that until later on.” (Sue, UK)

- **Sometimes you lose a little bit of who you actually are.** Some experienced a sense of *identity loss*, due to the *adaptation* and *integration* to the culture of the host country and a sense of loss of their own cultures:

“...because you want to become fully adapted, sometimes you lose a little bit of who you actually are...I am willing to change some things, but not all.” (Inbal, Israel)

- **I didn’t know who I was.** The fact that *everything changes* at once when one moves to the host country leads to a sense of *crisis*:

“For me, I felt that I didn’t know who I was. I...I felt that I lost myself and I had doubts...I had so many choices in my country, I was so successful and I had everything and at once everything changed. I didn’t know what my choices are...” (Annabelle, Romania)

- **You don’t really physically have the energy and time.** It takes *time* and a lot of *energy* to sort out the *practicalities of life*, which leaves little room for *other choices*, thus it may take a while before one can move on to choose who one would like to become:

“...at the beginning I was also overwhelmed...The nitty gritty stuff overwhelmed me and took up all my energy and focus for a long-long time. So that these other choices about work, identity and self-esteem and all the rest of it... you don’t really physically have the energy and time for that until later on...” (Sue, UK)

- **My core values and norms.** The influence of *culture* on identity was specifically highlighted as a crucial aspect influencing identity in the adjustment process because culture is a carrier of core *values* and *norms* that one may not want to *compromise* during the adjustment process and that could contribute to the *identity crisis* when these *core values* of the individual are in conflict with the core values of the host culture:

“Occasionally, still I have a crisis...from sort of 5 years I really had adjusted sufficiently to appreciate the things in the Dutch culture that I did want to take on board and try and integrate myself into, and the things that had to do with my core values and norms and me, that I was not willing to compromise on.” (Sue, UK)

There are aspects of one’s own culture that one would like to keep and some that one would not want to compromise:

“...you realise that there are some aspects you want to have and that you don’t want to compromise.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **There are some kind of phases.** One has to successfully go through the *phases* of adjustment in order to find *balance*:

“I think there are some kind of phases. First you really want to integrate, and then you come to...What you really don’t want to compromise and then you go to the balance...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

- **You have to leave all the familiar things and the things that make it cosy and happy for you.** In choosing to relocate to the Netherlands, one also has to leave behind many of the things that reinforced one’s identity, *job, friends, family*, in order to re-invent one-self in the new country:

“Back home I had a great job and I had a very active social life and everything, and its like: no, you have to quit your job, you have to leave your friends, and you have to leave your family...And you know, you’re not 20 or 21 years old...where it’s like ok I go and I experience one or two years and I go back.” (Inbal, Israel)

- **You start building yourself again.** Life *stages* also seemed to have an impact on identity development – this was particularly true for participants who had put a lot of effort into their careers early in their lives and were now seeking more stability and the chance to *develop* themselves in other areas of their *personal* lives. At a time where one would normally start pursuing other interests, one has to start *rebuilding* oneself:

“...you reach a stage in life where you feel like you’re developing yourself...not only in school and in my career but also in more personal and fun things. But then it’s like, oh no, now you move to another country. Stop. And you move back 10 steps and then you start building yourself again.”
(Inbal, Israel)

- **What I feel in the circumstances.** Upon further exploration of *identity* as a concept, a conflicting view of identity also arose in terms of the meaning attached to the word. For example, Adri considered *identity* as a changeable concept that is dependent on *feelings* in different *circumstances*:

“All of the identity was feeling, I thought. It’s all about what I feel in the circumstances.” (Adri, South Africa)

Annabelle on the other hand considered *identity* a meta-cognitive (*meditative thinking*) process that helps one to deal better with the *crisis* that emerges from being exposed to another culture:

“Because it is by thinking. That is why I wrote there ‘meditation about who I am’. So this is the way you come to yourself. You come closer to yourself from this crisis. This is the door to a step out of this crisis. Thinking. This is what I meant with ‘meditation’.” (Annabelle, Romania)

- **Identity is in the middle, because it’s being influenced by all the rest.** After some deliberation, participants agreed on the analogy of concentric *circles* to describe the concept of identity. At the core, there are parts of one’s identity that are stable and unchangeable (*not influenced* by the environment), whilst other parts of identity are *influenced* by all other categories such as *environment*, culture, language, etc. and continuously *evolves* as one is challenged by *what you have around yourself*.

“Identity” is in the middle, because it’s being influenced by all the rest.”
(Annabelle, Romania)

“...there is a core that is not influenced. You are you, whatever you do, wherever you are...like a middle and then circles around it. You can’t really see that. Pieces which is just core of your being...you will change certain stuff, but the core you will never change.” (Tatiana, Serbia)

4.2.5.2.1 Affinity 2.1: Personality

- **It is a choice to become what you want to become.** *Personality* was not discussed explicitly by the group, so no clear agreement was obtained as to the specific meaning of this sub-category of identity. However, the notion of *choice* and choosing who one wants to become was a clear theme throughout the discussion as a factor influencing personality and identity in the adjustment process:

“It is a choice to become what you want to become, and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to choose all kinds of stuff...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

- **Choosing is no longer a freedom.** Choosing who one wants to become or developing one’s personality in the host country is an *overwhelming* task, considering the sheer *number of choices* one is faced with at the same time in trying to re-establish previously taken-for granted aspects of daily life. Choosing is no longer a *freedom*:

“...it’s sort of overwhelming the number of choices you have to do at one time...I’ve made lots of the same kinds of choices over the course of...35 years...But then to make them all at once...And you MUST choose. There is no choice in choosing. You have to choose and you have to choose it right away...So it’s almost like choosing isn’t a freedom. It’s kind of its own trap.” (Bonita, USA)

- **You’re far too polite.** An aspect that emerged indirectly in terms of personality was also the cultural value placed on assertiveness and *directness* in the Netherlands. For many participants, this proved a challenge to adapt to – setting their own boundaries:

“...this directness is actually sometimes manipulation....I can accept this directness, and the toughness, or roughness... But this manipulation is...something that I find very much difficulty with too, to really, so this is one aspect that I find very hard.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

4.2.5.2.2 Affinity 2.2: Loneliness

Although the concept of “loneliness” was not explicitly discussed during the session, the implicit meaning of the affinity can be deduced from the cards that were sorted under this category as well as from implicit reference to the concept during the discussion.

- **There was barely any foreigner in sight.** Loneliness resulted from physical isolation, either through location and the proximity of other internationals, or through not yet working and being unable to build new networks of friends and colleagues:

“... we ended up in Bommel in a very little tiny village. After the fifteen million mega-city Manila...my husband started travelling and I was there. Stranded. With two children: 2.5 and 5. In this little tiny village with this little international school.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **It’s the physical touching.** Being *physically* removed from family and friends in the home country contributed to feelings of loneliness and isolation in the host country. It takes time to make friends in the host country and to build up relationships, with the result that feelings of loneliness and isolation are increased:

“...Israeli’s are very family-oriented...I mean, for me, I would see my parents every week...And for me not seeing them on a regular basis, it’s difficult. I talk to them on the phone every day, but it’s not the same. It’s the physical touching.” (Inbal, Israel)

- **Developing new interests and hobbies.** Finding new interests and exploring different hobbies, and changing one’s mindset about one’s situation were considered important support mechanisms for helping to reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation:

“...and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to choose all kinds of stuff...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

4.2.5.2.3 Affinity 2.3: Dedication

- **You just dig in.** In order to adjust successfully and integrate in life in the Netherlands, participants highlighted the importance of dedication and perseverance. A woman has the power to shape the *experience positively* for her *children* and *partner* in order to help them *survive* in the new country:

“You just dig in, and you go: ‘we’re gonna make it’...Do you wanna survive, do you wanna make these kids a positive...do you wanna give them a positive experience? And the woman controls the temperature of the house...you have to just take it on...it’s up to you to survive and make it the best that you can make.” (Sonya, Australia)

- **I’ll immerse myself, I’ll help my children, I’ll help everybody.** For Magdalena, dedication meant supporting others in the adjustment process through volunteer work and creating a *website* for the international community in order to support her own *adjustment* process:

“...I decided to create a website for the international community...Arnhem where we live now...I’m just looking around and seeing how to fulfil my life in a way and how to keep on being adjusted and adjust to this interesting, challenging country...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **I’m nervous and stressed out.** However, the dark side of over-dedication and lack of acknowledgement of one’s efforts as a volunteer may lead to feelings of burn-out, being *nervous, stressed out*:

“...I’m overwhelmed...and my house is not even...I’m nervous. I’m coming back home and I’m stressed out. So I have to just stop, step away and back and see what I can really do.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia.)

4.2.5.3 Affinity 3: Culture/cultural differences

Two related concepts, “culture” and “cultural differences” were used to describe the third affinity, as summarised in Table 4.6 (overleaf).

Table 4.6 Culture/cultural differences

Affinity 3: Culture/cultural differences	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
<p>Culture in terms of INTER- INTRAPERSONAL RELATIONS (Individualistic)</p> <p>Challenge: Dutch Administration</p> <p>There are multiple cultures here to deal with.</p> <p>Not understanding the Dutch (directness, behaviour towards other people, etc)</p> <p>Taking criticism</p> <p>Confrontational culture</p> <p>Direct onfrontation</p> <p>To integrate in my local community</p> <p>To adjust to Dutch norms and values</p> <p>Cultural differences/dfferences between my and Dutch culture including in my marriage</p> <p>Feeling as though you have to conform</p> <p>Lack of precise/useful information (not only commercial)</p> <p>Disrespect</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>Agenda culture, not spontaneous</p> <p>Advance planning culture</p> <p>Busy schedule</p> <p>“Rules society”</p> <p>Double standards</p> <p>To find work here that I could do in my own language (at a reasonable level for me)</p>	<p>Perspective of women equality ☺</p> <p>Integrate, learn the language, get a job.</p> <p>Understand how things work.</p> <p>Highly organised life</p> <p>Organisation</p> <p>Dutch “Inburgeringscursus”</p> <p>Inburgerings trajectleider (tries to help adjust)</p> <p>A revolution in terms of values.</p>

- **There are multiple cultures here to deal with.** Culture and cultural differences refer to the *multiple* cultures and sub-cultures one has to *deal with* in the host country, both in one's *profession* and at a country level:

“There are multiple cultures here to deal with...I mean you have to deal with a new work culture...your profession might have its own culture and then the office has its own culture...” (Bonita, USA)

- **They don't speak about their feelings.** A major cultural value difference that participants noticed was the *directness* or *assertiveness* of the culture, yet in relationships the Dutch *don't speak about their feelings*. Instead, when meeting with friends, a certain *list of topics* is covered, and then, true to the *agenda culture* a next meeting is scheduled to talk about the same topics again:

“Assertiveness, that is something you have to learn here in the Netherlands...” (Jay, South Africa)

“The Dutch are direct but they don't speak about their feelings.” (Annabelle, Romania)

- **A revolution in terms of values.** Cultural differences do not only affect the SIE, but also the family in the home country who are also confronted by different cultural norms and *values*:

“...it is a revolution in terms of values as well. ...and I'm still going through the process of adjusting to certain things...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **Understand how things work.** *Understanding* the culture and its basic assumptions is important for helping one integrate and find one's way in the new country – as one *comes to terms* with *how things work*, one can begin to adapt one's *behaviour* appropriately:

“...it is important to understand how things work in a country and once you understand that, then you come into terms with it and you know how to behave...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **We're prepared to adapt to them, but they're not prepared to adapt to me.** The one-sidedness of the adaptation process was also experienced with some

ambivalence. For some, it was a constructive realisation that the adaptation process was one-sided:

“And, I was doing well, but they didn’t want to adapt to me. So we’re prepared to adapt to them, but they’re not prepared to adapt to me. And they don’t have to. Why should they?” (Sonya, Australia)

- **You are part of them.** Integration into the local culture, being *part of their community* was also considered to be important:

“...you are part of them, you are part of their community, you work here, it’s not like you can close a curtain...” (Adri, South Africa)

For some participants, however, it came as a shock that the Dutch society does not *accept* international people, but instead merely *tolerates* them:

“But for me, starting work actually demolished one of the basic understandings I had about Holland as a country that accepts international people. And sort of doesn’t necessarily try to adapt, but tolerates them in the society.” (Rina, Romania)

- **Integrate, learn the language, get a job.** Many participants were under the impression that they *didn’t have a choice* and were expected to *integrate* fully into Dutch culture:

“I think when I first came, I thought that I didn’t have a choice and I expected that I would integrate....learn the language, get a job. And I thought that was going to take place in about 18 months or a year or two years at the absolute most.” (Sue, UK)

- **I didn’t want to integrate completely.** Fully integrating would mean losing *aspects* of one’s own culture and identity. Despite efforts at fully integrating, one will also never truly *belong* in the local culture, which is why the international community fulfils an important supporting function:

“...First you really want to integrate, and then you come to this after 4.5 years, obviously because we’re the same now...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

4.2.5.4 Affinity 4: Language

Language was associated with the ability to communicate, make oneself understood, and to understand the language of the host country. It is both a challenge and a support factor, as summarised in Table 4.7 (below).

Table 4.7 Language

Affinity 4: Language	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Language (X4) <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 10px auto; width: 200px;">I don't have to use my Dutch</div>	
Learning Dutch is hard! ☹️----- To learn the language at a decent level Language – not necessary for everyday life, but to communicate with family/friends <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 10px auto; width: 200px;">My Dutch is still not good enough.</div>	Learning the language Speaking English In the beginning do not only meet up with people from own country
Communication----- <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #f4a460; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 10px auto; width: 200px;">They expected that I would speak fluent Dutch after a few weeks.</div>	Communication

- My Dutch is still not good enough.** Learning Dutch is essential for understanding the culture and finding a job that is in line with one's experience and abilities. However, for the majority of participants, the length of time it took to learn Dutch at a professional level came as a surprise. Many participants had unrealistic expectations about the length of time it would take to learn the language in order to find a *job* at a reasonable level:

“My Dutch is still not good enough.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- They expected that I would speak fluent Dutch after a few weeks.** Apart from their own expectations of learning the language as part of the integration process, participants also found themselves having to deal with the often unrealistic expectations of work colleagues who expected them to master the language within a very short time. This posed a double challenge: firstly, having

to deal with their own feelings of isolation and *frustration* due to not being able to master the language within the expected time frame; and secondly, having to deal with the reactions of work colleagues who did not provide sufficient support in helping them master the language and expected them to become fluent *after a few weeks*:

“...but then they expected that I would speak fluent Dutch after a few weeks.” (Annabelle, Romania)

- **I don't have to use my Dutch.** Working in an international company where English is the main language does provide an alternative for those participants who are not able to work in the local language, but again this is a benefit with a downside. On the one hand, one can freely express oneself in a common language, but, on the other hand, there is no opportunity to practise the local language:

“...I work in...an Israeli company here in Utrecht. So I don't have to use my Dutch, which is not that great...” (Inbal, Israel)

4.2.5.5 Affinity 5: Family

Family is broadly defined to include spouses, partners, children, parents and extended family (family-in-law), as well as significant others, such as friends, in support networks in the home and host country, as reflected in the summary in Table 4.8 (overleaf).

Table 4.8 Family

Affinity 5: Family	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
<p>To support my daughter (9 years old when we came here) in her adjustment and integration process</p> <p>Being a mother in Holland</p> <p>Challenge: To <u>stay</u> here when my heart was pulling me home! (to put family first - ahead of self)</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: 150px; text-align: center;"> When are you coming back? </div> <div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; width: 150px; text-align: center;"> Not seeing them on a regular basis, it's difficult. </div> </div>	<p>Going home regularly</p> <p>Trips home to UK (2 or 3 each year) to see family and friends and to see the hills!</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;"> We always have somebody to fall back on . </div> <p>My family & my husband's family</p> <p>My boyfriend</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 10px 0; text-align: center;"> It doesn't make our separation so great. </div> <p>Supporting husband</p> <p>Having the support of my husband and his love</p> <p>My sister</p> <p>My children (Motivation)</p> <p>My mother</p> <p>My family at home</p> <p>Soul food</p> <p>Support and understanding</p> <p>Jesus / my beliefs / my faith</p> <p>Love (X3)</p>

- We always have someone to fall back on.** *Family* was a crucial source of support and provided the unspoken comfort that if things go wrong in the host country, there is a safety net to fall back on. Friends and family also serve as a source of reinforcement of one's choices and provide the motivation to persevere in the host country, despite the challenges that come with adjustment: the knowledge that *mommy and daddy* would provide unconditional support, even if one were to be unsuccessful in the host country and return to the home country, served a significant *support* function:

"...They're always there and the door will always stay open to accept you...if you fail here, whether it is relationship, career, or whatever, and you decide to pack up your things and...move back...and just go back to mommy and daddy and they will accept you with their arms wide open – help you pick up the broken pieces from basic..." (Inbal, Israel)

- **When are you coming back?** The choice to expatriate affected not only the participants, but also their significant others, who remained in the home country. The family in the home country also had to deal with their own sense of loss of a loved one, which places additional pressure on participants to go *back* home. Parents who found it hard to see their *kids* and *grandkids* leave could place a significant emotional burden on an SIE family:

“My parents, I mean they’re waiting for me...But sometimes I feel like when I talk to them, and in the tone of their voice, it’s like: ‘When are you coming back?...Come on, stop with this crap.’” (Inbal, Israel)

- **He was very supportive of me.** Support from family also extends to the support and understanding received from one’s *partner/husband*; which could pose a downside if the partner/husband is in a familiar environment and the female partner/wife is the one doing the most of the adjusting (either because the partner/husband is a local in the host country, or because he is in the host country on a transfer for his job as an expatriate or SIE):

“He went into work, he worked in English, he was still respected, he was a senior manager, he had a promotion, and he was having a fantastic life!...I was on my own, with my child, trying to get her to adjust, trying to adjust myself...it just felt to me at the time because I was so miserable, that he was ok. And he was very loving. He was very supportive of me in every way he could be...I was left the one...I was the one who was trying to integrate and learn the language, do all these practical things, and support my child...”
(Sue, UK)

- **It doesn’t make our separation so great.** *Home-sickness* is significantly moderated by regular visits home, social media, Skype, and other forms of modern technology that enhance connectedness with loved ones. For participants who were working long hours in their home countries, living in the Netherlands actually provided them with *more* quality time with their family in their home countries than when they were actually living in the same country:

“I would be homesick if it wasn’t for Skype...It doesn’t make our separation so great. It really feels like we can connect almost any time and we can see each other and respond to each other.” (Bonita, USA)

- **Not seeing them on a regular basis, it’s difficult.** For others, the lack of physical, face-to-face contact was still a barrier, despite the aid of modern technology:

“...for me not seeing them on a regular basis, it’s difficult. I talk to them on the phone every day, but it’s not the same. It’s the physical touching.” (Inbal, Israel)

- **Being a parent.** Being a *parent* means that family also includes one’s children. A heated debate arose amongst participants with differing views on working mothers and child-rearing practices. However, despite the different views, all participants agreed that one’s *mindset of being a parent* changes totally in a new country. It is the role of the mother to support her children and spouse in the adjustment process to ensure a smooth transition for them:

“Don’t you find that you have changed your mindset in terms of being a parent here?...Because this is what it is. You change totally...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

“The woman controls the temperature of the house.” (Sonya, Australia)

- **People that you know.** For some participants, the choice to move to the Netherlands in the first place was also related to having family in living there. Adri’s parents moved to the Netherlands when she finished high school. She decided to move with them to pursue her studies in the Netherlands. She ended up staying behind when her parents returned to South Africa. Jay’s decision to take a gap year in the Netherlands was also influenced by the fact that her sister, Michelle, is living and working in the Netherlands:

“...I decided the Netherlands because of my older sister...would be here and I think it’s nicer than going to the UK where there’s not a lot of people that you know.” (Jay, South Africa)

4.2.5.6 Affinity 6: Social Life

Participants were unanimous that social support and re-establishing a social and professional network in the Netherlands was a key factor in the adjustment process as summarised in Table 4.9 (below). Women’s networks and international women’s clubs were sources of information and support, as well as a point of entry into the world of work.

Table 4.9 Social life

Affinity 6: Social life	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
<p style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">How long are you here for?</p> <p style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">You sort of start feeling that there is some distance a little bit growing between the both of you.</p> <p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Only a person that has lived abroad or has lived abroad for a long time can really understand you.</p>	<p>We got a dog and I met people when walking him in the woods (common topic)</p> <p style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Go find a girlfriend first. And you’ll be able to get through everything.</p> <p>Networking 😊</p> <p>Networks of friends/colleagues to help give support</p> <p>Women business organisations</p> <p>Creating a community</p> <p>Contact with YU community</p> <p>Expatriate groups</p> <p>International/Expatriate Groups</p> <p>My dear expatriate friends from all backgrounds/cultures and nationalities have enriched my life as have my Dutch friends</p> <p>Meet Dutch friends</p> <p>My Dutch friends</p> <p>To persevere and make some (close/good) Dutch friends</p> <p>Wanting to “fit in” and feel comfortable with Dutch people.</p> <p>Other expatriate girlfriends.</p> <p>Finding girlfriends</p> <p>New friendships</p> <p>Finding friends and colleagues</p>

Affinity 6: Social life	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
	<p>Old friends</p> <p>Meet people from all ages – “Adoption family”</p> <p>Skype, Facebook etc are game changers</p>

- **Go find a girlfriend first. And you’ll be able to get through everything.** Other expatriate women in the international community are a significant source of support – someone with whom one can *go through life* and with whom one can associate:

“...But to find a girlfriend...’ah, this is great’...we’re doing the same thing...you try to go through life together...I just want to recommend it to anybody that lives here...Go find a girlfriend first. And you’ll be able to get through everything.” (Sonya, Australia)

- **How long are you here for?** The *continuous shuttle* of people in the international community however, means that one should be selective in choosing friends. It is important to have a mixture of both local and international friends, and to find out *how long* potential international friends are planning to remain in the Netherlands:

“...the challenge, though, in the international context that you find yourself in, is the fact that there’s this continuous shuttle...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **Only a person that has lived abroad or has lived abroad for a long time can really understand you.** Having an extensive social network of locals and internationals provides a holistic support structure that can help to fulfil one’s social needs as an SIE:

“They complete each other. Only a person that has lived abroad or has lived abroad for a long time can really understand you...” (Rina, Romania)

- **You sort of start feeling that there is some distance a little bit growing between the both of you.** Through living and working abroad, one’s experiences and perspectives change, which means that the *distance* from one’s *friends* in the home country grows:

“...you sort of start feeling that there is some distance a little bit growing between the both of you...” (Inbal, Israel)

- **It’s a game-changer.** However, the use of social media has been a *game changer* in helping expatriates to maintain their relationships and friendships back home:

“Yeah, I think it’s a game-changer...I went home for the first time...I mean I was so happy to see everyone, but I didn’t feel like I wasn’t going to see them again.” (Bonita, USA)

4.2.5.7 Affinity 7: Work

The choice of the word “work” to label this category, instead of other related concepts such as “career” is quite significant for this group. “Work” is not only associated with professional employment, but also includes voluntary work where one’s skills can be applied in a different form, as can be seen in the summary in Table 4.10 (below).

Table 4.10 Work

Affinity 7: Work	
It doesn't necessarily follow that you can find what you are looking for.	I'm not pretending to be a career woman.
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Lack of appreciation in volunteer work done	To do voluntary work for the International women's club Utrecht – Use of skills
Finding a job that is in my field (not educated in my professional work field)	Helping Others
They have fewer female managers than in the rest of Europe.	Social Contact
	It actually helped me to feel more integrated.
	Work – used network to get work
	Challenging work
	Not feeling only like a mom.
Precious attitude of the Dutch towards qualifications and education levels from other countries (non-acceptance/arrogance)	Great study opportunities
	I don't work in a big company, we own our own.
	Work colleagues
Work colleagues	Having clients – beginning with work process
Work culture	Career Counsellor
Women stay at home and they are housewives	Money

<p>Men culture in companies</p> <p>No support of companies or institution for families (women mainly)</p>	
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- **It actually helped me to feel more integrated.** For the majority of participants in this group, *work* was a very important factor in their adjustment process. *Work* helps them feel more *integrated* and provided a sense of stability:

“That is ‘help’ I wrote that. Because my profession is having clients. But what I meant is that it actually helped me to feel more integrated...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

- **Not feeling only like a mom.** Work and practising one’s profession also relates to one’s sense of self-worth and adds another dimension to one’s life:

“To get out and to get dressed and do make-up and not feeling only like a mom. And that helped me a lot and I like my profession, so it was like I miss it really a lot to continue working.” (Tatiana, Serbia)

- **I’m not pretending to be a career woman.** The option of part-time work provides the opportunity to use one’s skills whilst still being able to take care of one’s *family* and be where one’s *life* is:

“...I want to stay where I am where my house is, where my family is, where my life is. I don’t want to be a career woman. I don’t want to work 50 hours a week. I want to work 2 times a week.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **It doesn’t necessarily follow that you can find what you are looking for.** However, the availability of part-time positions that provide enough challenge is limited. because one is competing with *Dutch women* who are also very *qualified*:

“But yet, if you also make that choice, it doesn’t necessarily follow that you can find what you are looking for...because first of all they are covered by Dutch women who are also...very qualified. So you don’t find, even if you have done the choice, and you know exactly where you want to go, it’s not easy, still.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

Interestingly, “work” did not only help participants feel more integrated into the host society. For some, being confronted with the working culture in the Netherlands actually lead to a sense of disillusionment – their expectations of the work environment in the Netherlands were quite opposite to what they encountered in reality:

- **Starting work actually demolished one of the basic understandings I had about Holland.** For Rina, starting *work* challenged her basic assumptions about the Netherlands as a *country that accepts international people*:

“For me consultancy was new....I was basically the only one who was not speaking Dutch...I take it as a thumb rule that whenever you have someone in the room that doesn’t understand a language; everybody comes to speak the language that everybody speaks....after four days I started working, and four days after that we had a very important business update...to my surprise, that was in Dutch. That was a moment when things really started to fall down and fall apart...for me, starting work actually demolished one of the basic understandings I had about Holland...” (Rina, Romania)

- **They have fewer female managers than in the rest of rest of Europe.** The fact that women were not represented at higher echelons of *management* was the source of some disagreement between participants:

“They have fewer female managers than in the rest of Europe, top managers.” (Tatiana, Serbia)

- **It depends on the field.** The *field* in which one is working seemed to be a determinant of the opportunities afforded to women:

“I really think it depends on the field, because in the science as well... I mean my boss is a professor and she is head of the department. There’s mostly, 80% of people working at the hospital are female.” (Adri, South Africa)

- **Women stay at home and they are housewives here.** A barrier to living and working in the Netherlands is the *culture* around *women* and work, where many women prefer to be *housewives* who take care of their children:

“Actually, I was just thinking, the culture here where, I don’t know if they’re forced to, but women stay at home and they are housewives here. It’s a big deal here.” (Jay, South Africa)

- **I don’t work in a big company, we own our own.** Participants felt that the current Dutch corporate environment makes it very difficult for women to juggle work and home responsibilities. The group held different views about the role of women and their responsibilities as mothers and educators, which gave rise to some disagreement between participants. Sonya, for example, had very strong views about one’s *choice* to go and work for a *male-orientated* company or not, and was of the opinion that it is not the responsibility of corporations to take care of the needs of women who are mothers:

“I don’t work in a big company, we own our own, and that’s our choice...If you look inside yourself, you don’t have to go and work for that company. You really need to look at yourself and your choice and look how this affects you. If you’re married: My husband, my children, my life...you just have to self-examine.” (Sonya, Australia)

- **Either you have a lot of money to spend on childcare, or you’re just stuck.** The culture of women staying at home makes it difficult for women who wish to apply their skills in *part-time* work, due to the cost of *childcare*, which means that one runs into a barrier and becomes *stuck*:

“...when I came I said ok, I’ve been working part-time, and I thought when I go there [Holland] I would just go for a job and my children will be organised, everything will be done... Exactly the contrary. I mean I came here and I realized that the structure of how things are...for a woman – it is impossible for her to just find a job...Either you have a lot of money to spend on childcare, or you’re just stuck. You’re stuck. You can’t do anything...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **We are all women, and we are part of the workforce of this planet.** For Rina, the thought of not leveraging the *knowledge* and *intelligence* of women was troublesome. The way in which the system is structured encourages women to *pull out* of work when they have children:

“...what I see in Holland is that whoever starts with a career, ok, you start with a career...then kids come at around 35...but then you make a choice. You are bound to say I pull out, 3 days I work, consultancy still. I don’t get my promotion in 3 years, I get it in 5, or you just get out completely. And that’s not ok. Because the society and the companies are missing out on knowledge. Are missing on intelligence...” (Rina, Romania)

- **My colleagues started to ignore me.** Apart from the barriers related to part-time work and children, the *man’s culture* in companies also formed a barrier to career advancement:

“...In my company there are mainly 95% men that are working there...And my colleagues started to ignore me, the men colleagues, and to become jealous of me and my success...” (Annabelle, Romania)

- **It was great for someone to guide me about my career.** The role of a *career counsellor* or mentor was considered an important support in finding one’s way in the new country, both in one’s work and one’s personal life. The availability of useful *information* in this regard is particularly important, and having a clear image of one’s identity and what one wants of life are key determinants of one’s future career success:

“In [name of company]everybody has a career counsellor and it really works...I was lucky enough to have a Hungarian as a career counsellor, not only because she was Hungarian, but because she was a foreigner...it was great for someone to guide me about my career. Someone that has been with the company for 15 years, but it’s also a foreigner here. That helped tremendously...” (Rina, Romania)

“I think simply on deciding what you can do, what you can offer, but then find a mentor who has done it and has gone before you and done it, and then hook onto them. So it doesn’t even have to be in career, it can just be getting your kids into school...” (Sonya, Australia)

4.2.5.8 Summary of Findings from IQA Focus group 1

In summary, a common understanding of the different affinities in relation to each other was clarified both implicitly and explicitly during the focus group session.

Shared meaning was created, which provides a platform for creating a system of understanding reality as it was experienced by this group. Table 4.11 (overleaf) provides a summary definition of each affinity that forms part of the system.

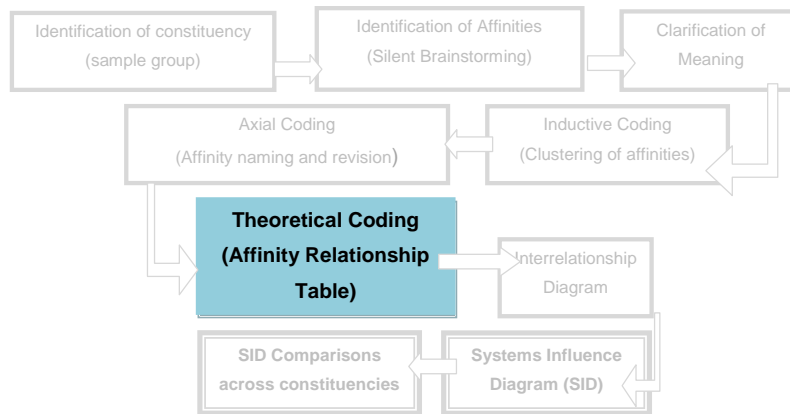
Table 4.11 Summary of definitions of affinities and sub-affinities (24 April 2010)

Affinity	Definition
1. Environment	Aspects related to the direct physical environment (such as location, food, proximity from other expatriates and social networks), and the practicalities of living and working in the Netherlands (such as transport, food, shopping and administrative matters,) as well as aspects outside of the individual's control such as the weather.
2. Identity	Knowledge of oneself and the goals one wishes to achieve for one's life. One's identity is multi-faceted and influenced by social interactions, but also by one's own conscious choice for re-invention. There is a stable core to one's identity that is not prone to change, with outer layers that are influenced by external factors.
3. Culture/cultural difference	The real and perceived conflict in values between basic assumptions held in the home and host country. This applies to social interactions, what is considered to be acceptable behaviour, and the underlying values that are represented by artefacts and products in one's home and host country. One's identity is also influenced by these differences in that one may lose a part of one's identity in the process of integrating new values of the host culture into one's existing repertoire.
4. Language	The ability to make oneself understood and to learn/understand the language of the host country. Language provides a portal into the host culture, but may also be a barrier in professional development due to an insufficient grasp of the language.
5. Family	Family has a broad meaning - it includes spouses, life partners, boyfriends, children, parents and extended family (family-in-law), as well as significant others in the support networks, both in the home and host countries. Family can be a source of support and understanding, or a barrier in the adjustment process (homesickness, having to deal with emotional pressures from family in the home country who want the expatriate to return to the home country).
6. Social life	Participants agreed unanimously that social support and re-establishing a social and professional network in the Netherlands was a major source of support in the adjustment process. Having friends in both the international and local community provides a sense of belonging. Women's networks and international women's clubs are platforms to re-establish a social life, but also provide a point of entry into the world of work.
7. Work	Professional employment, volunteer activities and career development

Affinity	Definition
	activities that provide a sense of satisfaction through enabling a woman to develop her own competencies and skills. Work is a source of social contact, provides challenge, a sense of self-worth and financial freedom (contributing to household finances).

In the next section, the joint experiences of the group are collated into a visual representation of the group’s reality through the development of an SID.

4.2.6 Step 6: Theoretical Coding (24 April 2010)



Participants were provided with a detailed Affinity Relationship Table (ART) which was completed by the different individuals. Through the ART, the participants started to hypothesise about the relationships between different affinities and their relationships to each other. Table 4.12 (overleaf) provides the aggregate ART for the group, with examples of relationships as detailed by participants in the theoretical coding phase.

The goal of an ART is to provide insight into the group’s reality and is especially useful in helping a researcher to reconcile bi-directional or conflicting relationships in the development of the SID. The descriptions in the ART also played a role in zooming in and zooming out of the final system.

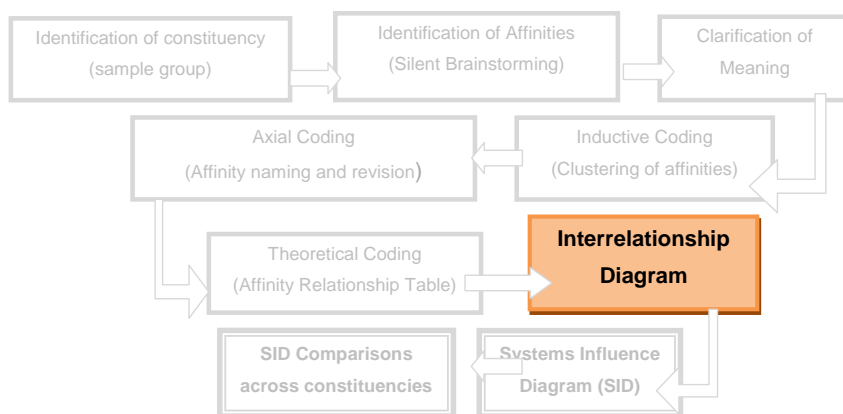
Table 4.12 Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010): aggregate ART

Affinity pair relationship	Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of an IF/THEN statement of relationship
1 > 2	<p><i>My location affects my concept of who I am, but my personal self chose this location.</i></p> <p><i>I think Identity is a belief about yourself. Maybe environment can work as a type of measure for yourself and your identity.</i></p> <p><i>You change your identity depending on possibilities and limitations of your environment.</i></p>
1 < 3	<p><i>The culture here can often define the environment/practical things – food etc.</i></p> <p><i>The culture influences practicalities of life.</i></p> <p><i>Culture can remain the same if you move or change your environment. People will affect your cultural values and thoughts more than your environment.</i></p> <p><i>Culture is interrelated with environment – where you physically are and where you are in your head! ☺</i></p>
1 < 4	<p><i>Language defines practical matters; it is the context for food (experiences).</i></p> <p><i>Language and communication impact getting things done.</i></p> <p><i>Actual place – language of country in or from.</i></p>
1 > 5	<p><i>Location has affected proximity to my family.</i></p> <p><i>Family bonds could place you in a particular environment and environment affects how you feel about your family.</i></p>
1 > 6	<p><i>Location mostly determines who I can socialise with day-to-day.</i></p> <p><i>Possibilities and limitations related to where you are.</i></p>
1 > 7	<p><i>Environment provides me with new opportunities or limits them.</i></p>
2 < 3	<p><i>My (US) Culture helps make up my identity – the new culture requires me to think about myself in different ways.</i></p> <p><i>The new culture challenges my beliefs about who I am.</i></p> <p><i>Own cultural background has direct impact on identity. Culture of your location may change/influence your identity.</i></p>
2 < 4	<p><i>My limitations in Dutch culture (language, not understanding the culture) also limit my social life. But it also helps – it made me find the IWCU [International Women's Contact Utrecht]!</i></p> <p><i>The language can influence your identity...it is a means to help express yourself.</i></p> <p><i>When I can't express myself, I feel like a different person.</i></p> <p><i>Identity – idea of who you are and needs/priorities – influences what language(s) you learn/speak. Language(s) spoken/understood – ability = part of identity.</i></p>
2 < 5	<p><i>My family helps to remind me of my "permanent" identity.</i></p>

Affinity pair relationship	Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of an IF/THEN statement of relationship
	<p><i>My family setting creates some stability/foundation for my identity.</i></p> <p><i>Family background and relationships can shape (or result from) your identity.</i></p>
2 > 6	<p><i>Support from old friends and making new ones reinforce my sense of self.</i></p> <p><i>Social life available to you and one you choose to have make up part of your identity. Your identity leads you to adopt aspects of social life/get involved in particular groups.</i></p>
2 > 7	<p><i>My work forms part of my identity.</i></p> <p><i>Work relates to identity – can provide your social status and give you a social place/niche. Identity can lead to engagement in certain work, e.g. caring person as doctor, nurse or teacher.</i></p>
3 ↔ 4	<p><i>The Dutch language dominates how I perceive Dutch culture.</i></p> <p><i>The cultural differences impact the way language is being used. The language creates cultural differences.</i></p> <p><i>The Dutch language contributes to harsh-feeling culture.</i></p> <p><i>Your cultural background determines mother-tongue and perhaps other languages spoken. Culture of location requires language(s) of you.</i></p>
3 > 5	<p><i>Having Dutch family helps me to understand the culture.</i></p> <p><i>Family life is embedded (usually) within the home culture. If living in another culture, this can alter family life.</i></p>
3 > 6	<p><i>The culture limits my ability to make close Dutch friends.</i></p> <p><i>Cultural origins influence what options are open to you for a social life and what you choose to do – at home and abroad. Social life can take you into new cultures.</i></p>
3 > 7	<p><i>Work is particularly challenging in a different culture.</i></p> <p><i>Cultural setting provides work opportunities and limitations – work can place you in a cultural setting, i.e. by moving you abroad and culture of the organisation.</i></p>
4 < 5	<p><i>Family background relates to what language(s) you speak. Language(s) help you relate to your family.</i></p>
4 > 6	<p><i>Being able to speak Dutch helps me integrate socially.</i></p> <p><i>Language(s) you can communicate in have a direct bearing on the sort of social groups and activities that you can participate in. Wanting to do something social may stimulate you to learn a new language or learning the language can be a social activity too.</i></p>
4 > 7	<p><i>Working in a foreign language is also more challenging but helps to learn the language faster.</i></p> <p><i>Language(s) you speak can result in different types of work. Work can require you to speak certain languages.</i></p>
5 > 6	<p><i>Connections through other family members help increase my social network.</i></p> <p><i>Family is often an integral part of social life – gatherings, etc. – but depends</i></p>

Affinity pair relationship	Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of an IF/THEN statement of relationship
	<i>on people involved. Social life can include family.</i>
5 < 7	<p><i>Work dictates how much time I have available for my family.</i></p> <p><i>Work keeps me away from family.</i></p> <p><i>Family situation can provide opportunities and limitations on sort of work you can do (time, location, motivation). Work you do affects family relationships (time, location, stress, involvement).</i></p>
6 < 7	<p><i>Work provides new social contacts.</i></p> <p><i>Made friends at work.</i></p> <p><i>Work can leave too little time for a social life or can be regarded in part as a social life. Social life can limit time for work – rather do one than the other!</i></p>

4.2.7 Step 7: Interrelationship Diagram (24 April 2010)



Apart from hypothesising about the directions of relationships, participants were also asked to determine the directionality of influence for each possible pairwise relationship between affinities. Table 4.13 (overleaf) details the total number of “votes” cast for each possible relationship between affinities. A total of 196 votes were cast for 63 possible pairwise relationships. The “no relationship” votes were not included in this analysis, and bi-directional relationships were marked as “possible conflicts” in the table. For possible relationships where no votes were cast, a zero value was awarded.

Table 4.13 **Frequencies in affinity pair order (24 April 2010)**

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Notes by participants regarding directionality of relationships
1 > 2	4	
1 < 2	0	
1 ↔ 2	4	
1 > 3	1	
1 < 3	5	
1 ↔ 3	3	
1 > 4	1	
1 < 4	5	
1 ↔ 4	1	
1 > 5	6	
1 < 5	2	
1 ↔ 5	2	
1 > 6	9	
1 < 6	0	
1 ↔ 6	2	
1 > 7	5	
1 < 7	2	
1 ↔ 7	1	
2 > 3	1	
2 < 3	7	
2 ↔ 3	3	
2 > 4	0	
2 < 4	8	
2 ↔ 4	3	First 4>2 then 2<4
2 > 5	1	
2 < 5	6	
2 ↔ 5	2	
2 > 6	5	
2 < 6	6	
2 ↔ 6	1	
2 > 7	3	
2 < 7	3	
2 ↔ 7	3	
3 > 4	2	

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Notes by participants regarding directionality of relationships
3 < 4	2	
3 ↔ 4	3	First 3>4, then 4<3
3 > 5	6	
3 < 5	3	
3 ↔ 5	1	
3 > 6	8	
3 < 6	1	
3 ↔ 6	1	
3 > 7	4	
3 < 7	0	
3 ↔ 7	5	
4 > 5	2	
4 < 5	4	
4 ↔ 5	2	
4 > 6	7	
4 < 6	0	
4 ↔ 6	3	
4 > 7	6	
4 < 7	0	
4 ↔ 7	3	
5 > 6	6	
5 < 6	0	
5 ↔ 6	4	5>6 (more) 5<6 (less)
5 > 7	1	
5 < 7	5	
5 ↔ 7	3	
6 > 7	0	
6 < 7	6	
6 ↔ 7	3	
Total Frequency	196	

4.2.7.1 Pareto Tables and the Min-Max Criterion

Table 4.14 below illustrates the Pareto Table for Focus Group 1 that was hosted on 24 April 2010.

Table 4.14 Pareto Table Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010)

	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency sorted (descending)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage (relation)	Cumulative Percentage (frequency)	Power
1	1 > 6	9	9	1,6	4,6	3,0
2	2 < 4	8	17	3,1	8,7	5,5
3	3 > 6	8	25	4,7	12,8	8,1
4	2 < 3	7	32	6,3	16,3	10,1
5	4 > 6	7	39	7,8	19,9	12,1
6	1 > 5	6	45	9,4	23,0	13,6
7	2 < 5	6	51	10,9	26,0	15,1
8	2 < 6	6	57	12,5	29,1	16,6
9	3 > 5	6	63	14,1	32,1	18,1
10	4 > 7	6	69	15,6	35,2	19,6
11	5 > 6	6	75	17,2	38,3	21,1
12	6 < 7	6	81	18,8	41,3	22,6
13	1 < 3	5	86	20,3	43,9	23,6
14	1 < 4	5	91	21,9	46,4	24,6
15	1 > 7	5	96	23,4	49,0	25,5
16	2 > 6	5	101	25,0	51,5	26,5
17	3 ↔ 7	5	106	26,6	54,1	27,5
18	5 < 7	5	111	28,1	56,6	28,5
19	1 > 2	4	115	29,7	58,7	29,0
20	1 ↔ 2	4	119	31,3	60,7	29,5
21	3 > 7	4	123	32,8	62,8	29,9
22	4 < 5	4	127	34,4	64,8	30,4
23	5 ↔ 6	4	131	35,9	66,8	30,9
24	1 ↔ 3	3	134	37,5	68,4	30,9
25	2 ↔ 3	3	137	39,1	69,9	30,8
26	2 ↔ 4	3	140	40,6	71,4	30,8
27	2 > 7	3	143	42,2	73,0	30,8
28	2 < 7	3	146	43,8	74,5	30,7
29	2 ↔ 7	3	149	45,3	76,0	30,7

	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency sorted (descending)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage (relation)	Cumulative Percentage (frequency)	Power
30	3 ↔ 4	3	152	46,9	77,6	30,7
31	3 < 5	3	155	48,4	79,1	30,6
32	4 ↔ 6	3	158	50,0	80,6	30,6
33	4 ↔ 7	3	161	51,6	82,1	30,6
34	5 ↔ 7	3	164	53,1	83,7	30,5
35	6 ↔ 7	3	167	54,7	85,2	30,5
36	1 < 5	2	169	56,3	86,2	30,0
37	1 ↔ 5	2	171	57,8	87,2	29,4
38	1 ↔ 6	2	173	59,4	88,3	28,9
39	1 < 7	2	175	60,9	89,3	28,3
40	2 ↔ 5	2	177	62,5	90,3	27,8
41	3 > 4	2	179	64,1	91,3	27,3
42	3 < 4	2	181	65,6	92,3	26,7
43	4 > 5	2	183	67,2	93,4	26,2
44	4 ↔ 5	2	185	68,8	94,4	25,6
45	1 > 3	1	186	70,3	94,9	24,6
46	1 > 4	1	187	71,9	95,4	23,5
47	1 ↔ 4	1	188	73,4	95,9	22,5
48	1 ↔ 7	1	189	75,0	96,4	21,4
49	2 > 3	1	190	76,6	96,9	20,4
50	2 > 5	1	191	78,1	97,4	19,3
51	2 ↔ 6	1	192	79,7	98,0	18,3
52	3 ↔ 5	1	193	81,3	98,5	17,2
53	3 < 6	1	194	82,8	99,0	16,2
54	3 ↔ 6	1	195	84,4	99,5	15,1
55	5 > 7	1	196	85,9	100,0	14,1
56	1 < 2	0	196	87,5	100,0	12,5
57	1 < 6	0	196	89,1	100,0	10,9
58	2 > 4	0	196	90,6	100,0	9,4
59	3 < 7	0	196	92,2	100,0	7,8
60	4 < 6	0	196	93,8	100,0	6,3
61	4 < 7	0	196	95,3	100,0	4,7
62	5 < 6	0	196	96,9	100,0	3,1
63	6 > 7	0	196	98,4	100,0	1,6

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency sorted (descending)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage (relation)	Cumulative Percentage (frequency)	Power
Total Frequency	196	Equal Total Frequency	Equals 100%	Equals 100%	Power = E-D

In the case of this study, the first 13 relationships (20.3% of the total) account for 43.9% of the variance in the system, and the first 32 (50% of the total) account for 80.6% of the variance in the system. Figure 4.1 (below) illustrates the variance accounted for by each succeeding relationship and Figure 4.2 (below) contains the power analysis for the system.

Figure 4.1 Focus Group 1: maximizing variance

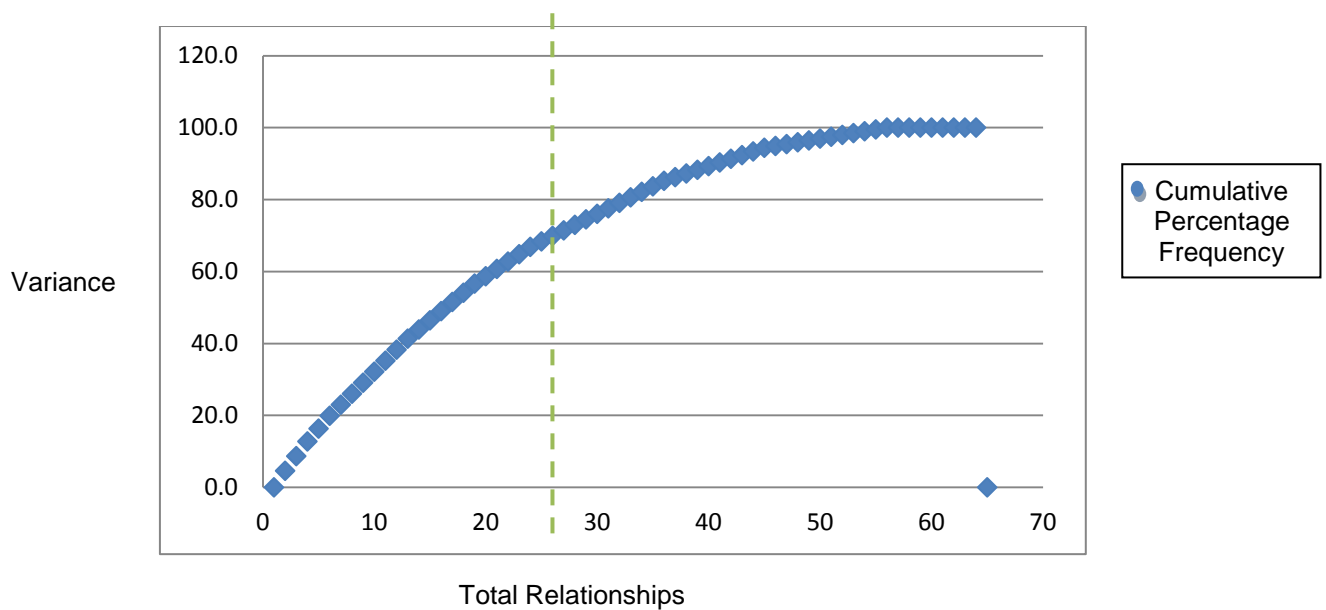
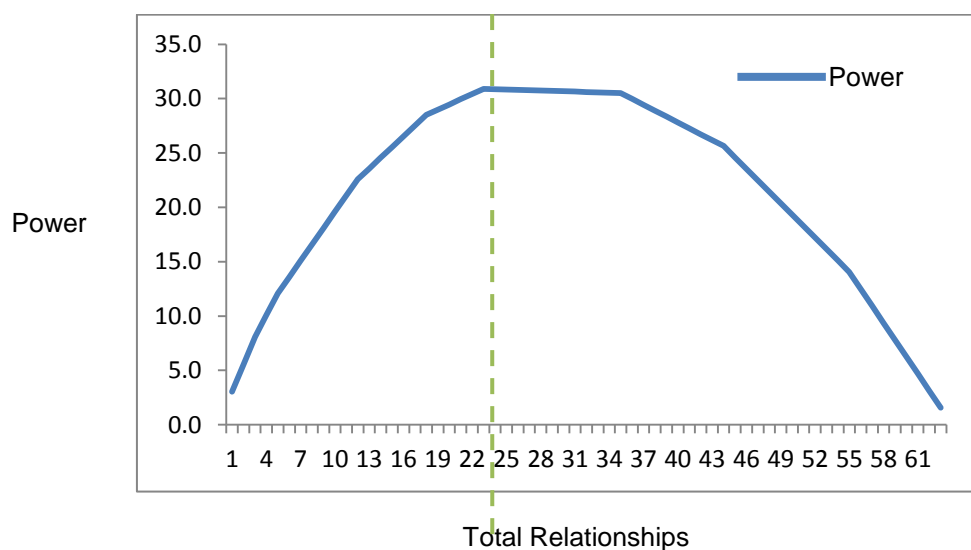


Figure 4.2 Focus Group 1: power analysis



Power reaches a maximum at 22 relationships, which accounts for 64.8% of the total variation in the system. Thus, in order to develop a representative system of the group's reality that is both parsimonious (using the simplest model available) *and* accounts for the largest amount of variance in the system, 22 relationships would be a defensible choice for inclusion in the group IRD (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:160).

In order to account for potential conflicts due to bi-directional relationships identified by participants, the frequency table was investigated for potential conflicts, as illustrated in Table 4.15 (below). Potential conflicts are marked by a question mark and illustrate the potential presence of a recursion or a feedback loop within the system, or the presence of a mediating effect between affinities that are not directly identified. These affinities were set aside for reconciliation in drawing up the SID.

Table 4.15 Possible conflicting relationships identified by Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010)

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Conflict?	Reason for conflict
1 > 6	9		
2 < 4	8		
3 > 6	8		
2 < 3	7		
4 > 6	7		
1 > 5	6		
2 < 5	6		
2 < 6	6	?	2↔6 = 1 vote AND 2>6 = 5 votes
3 > 5	6		
4 > 7	6		
5 > 6	6	?	5↔6 = 4 votes AND note by participants 5>6 more, 5<6 less
6 < 7	6		
1 < 3	5		1↔3 = 3 votes
1 < 4	5		
1 > 7	5		
3 > 7	4	?	3 ↔ 7 = 5 votes
5 < 7	5	?	5↔7 = 3 votes AND 5>7 = 1 vote

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Conflict?	Reason for conflict
1 > 2	4	?	1 ↔ 2 = 4 votes
4 < 5	4	?	4 ↔ 5 = 2 votes AND 4 > 5 = 2 votes
2 > 7	3	?	2 < 7 = 3 votes AND 2 ↔ 7 = 3 votes
3 > 4	2	?	3 ↔ 4 = 3 votes AND 5 < 3 = 2 votes AND note by participant First 3 > 4, then 4 < 3

These conflicts were addressed in the final SID. Meanwhile, however, the majority vote as indicated in the frequency table was used to determine the initial directions of relationships in the system. In the case where no majority vote was apparent, the relationship that appears first in the conflict table was used to determine the initial direction of the relationship in order to arrive at an initial, unreconciled SID.

4.2.7.2 Interrelationship Diagram

Table 4.16 (below) contains the unsorted IRD for Focus Group 1 and Table 4.17 (overleaf) presents the sorted IRD in descending order of delta (Δ) values.

Table 4.16 Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010): unsorted tabular IRD

Tabular IRD										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	OUT	IN	Δ
1		↑	←	←	↑	↑	↑	4	2	2
2	←		←	←	←	←	↑	1	5	-4
3	↑	↑		↑	↑	↑	↑	6	0	6
4	↑	↑	←		←	↑	↑	4	2	2
5	←	↑	←	↑		↑	←	3	3	0
6	←	↑	←	←	←		←	1	5	-4
7	←	←	←	←	↑	↑		2	4	-2

Table 4.17 Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010): sorted tabular IRD

Tabular IRD – sorted in descending order of Δ										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	OUT	IN	Δ
3	↑	↑		↑	↑	↑	↑	6	0	6
1		↑	←	←	↑	↑	↑	4	2	2
4	↑	↑	←		←	↑	↑	4	2	2
5	←	↑	←	↑		↑	←	3	3	0
7	←	←	←	←	↑	↑		2	4	-2
2	←		←	←	←	←	↑	1	5	-4
6	←	↑	←	←	←		←	1	5	-4

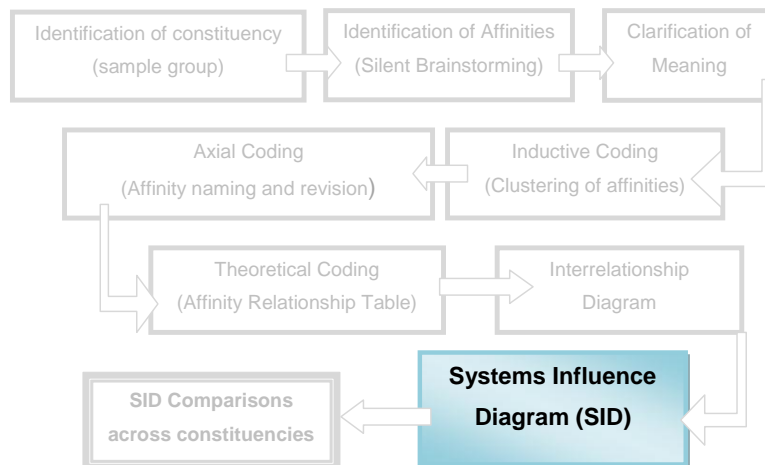
The delta values in the SID help a researcher to identify the relative position of each affinity in the final system (see Section 3.4.7.7. for an explanation of how drivers are assigned in the system).

The tentative SID assignments for this focus group, in line with the guidelines suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:174), are illustrated in Table 4.18 (below).

Table 4.18 Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010): tentative assignment of affinities for SID

Tentative SID assignments	
3. Culture/Cultural Difference	Primary Driver
1. Environment	Secondary Driver
4. Language	Secondary Driver
2. Identity	Secondary Outcome
6. Social Life	Secondary Outcome
7. Work	Secondary Outcome
5. Family	Circular/Pivot

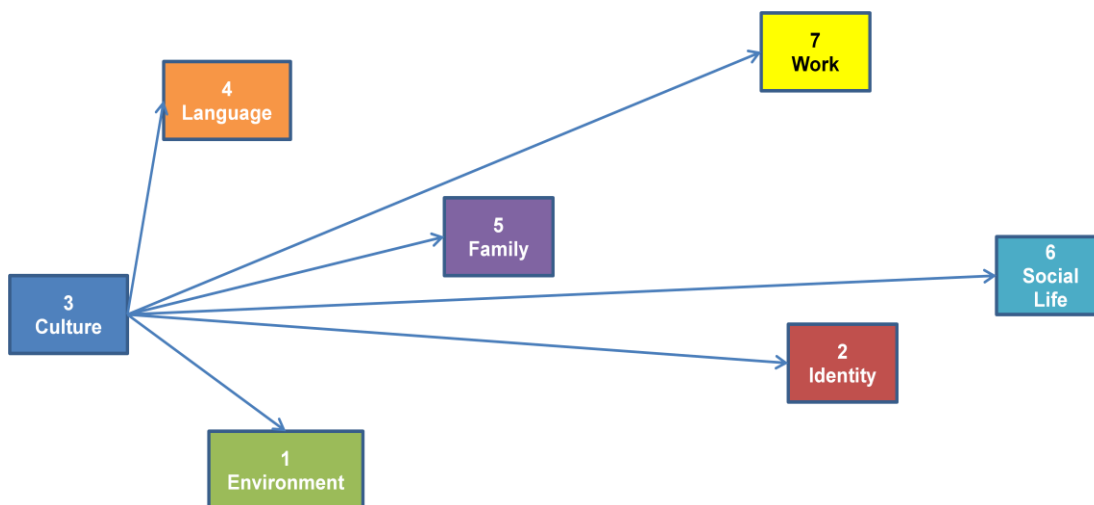
4.2.8 Step 8: Systems Influence Diagram (SID) (24 April 2010)



4.2.8.1 Primary driver: Culture/cultural differences

Culture (3) drives the system (see Diagram 4.1, below) and influences all the other elements of the system.

Diagram 4.1 Culture



These were participants' responses regarding "Culture" in relation to the elements of the system:

1. Environment

- "The culture here can often define the environment/practical things – food etc."
- "The culture influences practicalities of life."

- *“Culture can remain the same if you move or change your environment. People will affect your cultural values and thoughts more than your environment.”*
- *“Culture is interrelated with environment – where you physically are and where you are in your head! 😊”*

2. Identity

- *“My (US) culture helps make up my identity – the new culture requires me to think about myself in different ways.”*
- *“The new culture challenges my beliefs about who I am.”*
- *“Own cultural background has direct impact on identity.”*
- *“Culture of your location may change/influence your identity.”*

4 Language

- *“The cultural differences impact the way language is being used. The language creates cultural differences.”*
- *“Your cultural background determines mother-tongue and perhaps other languages spoken.”*
- *“Culture of location requires language(s) of you.”*

5 Family

- *“Having Dutch family helps me to understand the culture.”*
- *“Family life is embedded (usually) within the home culture. If living in another culture, this can alter family life.”*

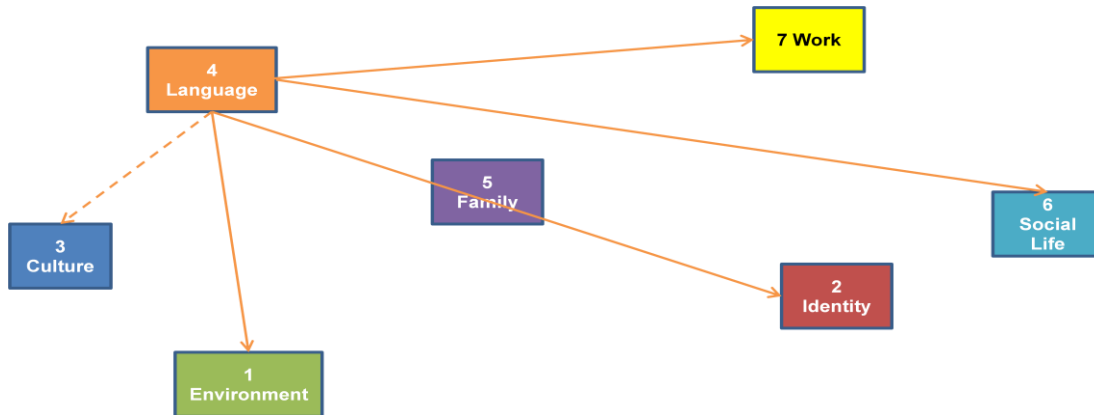
6 Social life

- *“The culture limits my ability to make close Dutch friends.”*
- *“Cultural origins influence what options are open to you for a social life and what you choose to do – at home and abroad. Social life can take you into new cultures.”*

4.2.8.2 Secondary Driver: Language

Language (4) is a secondary driver in the system (see Diagram 4.2, overleaf) and influences many other elements of the system. There may be a potential conflict in terms of the direction of the relationship between Culture (3) and Language (4), therefore a dotted line indicates the potential recursion or feedback loop.

Diagram 4.2 Language



Participants' responses about the relationship between these affinities were as follows:

1 Environment

- *“Language defines practical matters; it is the context for food (experiences).”*
- *“Language and communication impact getting things done.”*
- *“Actual place – language of country in or from.”*

2 Identity

- *“My limitations in Dutch culture (language; not understanding the culture) also limits my social life. But it also helps – it made me find the IWCU [International Women’s Contact Utrecht]!”*
- *“The language can influence your identity...it is a means to help express yourself.”*
- *“When I can’t express myself, I feel like a different person.”*
- *“Identity – idea of who you are and needs/priorities – influences what language(s) you learn/speak. Language(s) spoken/understood – ability = part of identity.”*

3 Culture

- “The Dutch language dominates how I perceive Dutch culture.”
- “The Dutch language contributes to harsh feeling culture.”

6 Social life

- “Being able to speak Dutch helps me integrate socially.”
- “Language(s) you can communicate in have a direct bearing on the sort of social groups and activities that you can participate in. Wanting to do something social may stimulate you to learn a new language or learning the language can be a social activity too.”

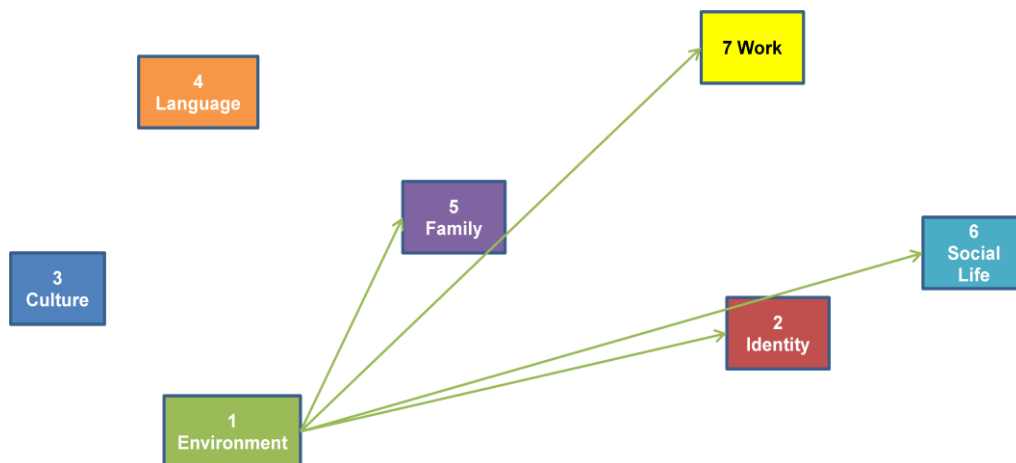
7 Work

- “Working in a foreign language is also more challenging but helps to learn the language faster.”
- “Language(s) you speak can result in different types of work. Work can require you to speak certain languages.”

4.2.8.3 Secondary Driver: Environment

Environment (1) is a secondary driver in the system (see Diagram 4.3, below) and influences many other elements of the system.

Diagram 4.3 Environment



Participants’ responses about the relationship between these affinities are as follows:

2 Identity

- *“My location affects my concept of who I am, but my personal self chose this location.”*
- *“I think Identity is a belief about yourself. Maybe environment can work as a type of measure for yourself and your identity.”*
- *“You change your identity depending on possibilities and limitations of your environment.”*

4 Family

- *“Location has affected proximity to my family.”*
- *“Family bonds could place you in a particular environment and environment affects how you feel about your family.”*

5 Social life

- *“Location mostly determines who I can socialize with day-to-day.”*
- *“Possibilities and limitations related to where you are.”*

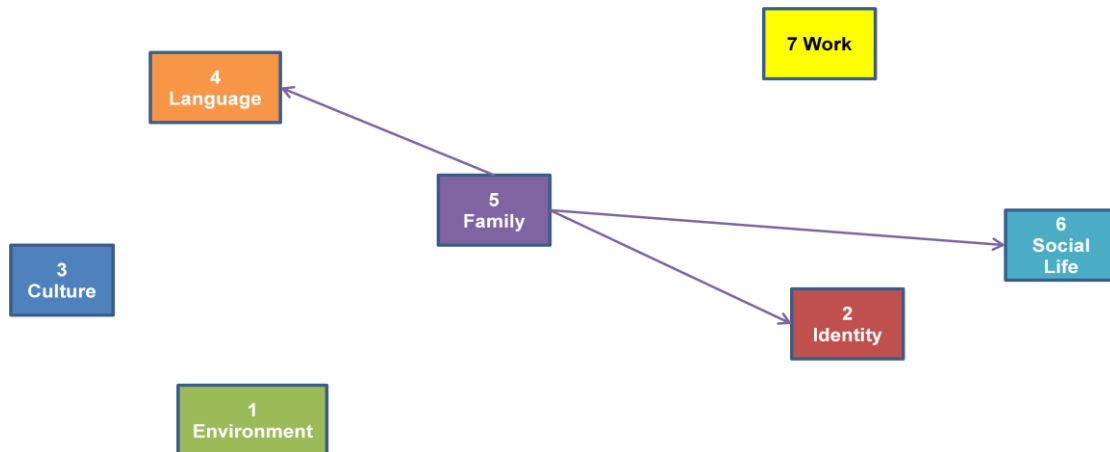
6 Work

- *“Environment provides me with new opportunities or limits them.”*

4.2.8.4 Circular/Pivot: Family

Family (5) is a circular/pivot in the system which is influenced by various aspects of the system and also influences various aspects of the system (see Diagram 4.4, overleaf).

Diagram 4.4 Family



Participants’ responses about the relationship between these affinities are as follows:

2 Identity

- *“My family helps to remind me of my ‘permanent’ identity.”*
- *“My family setting creates some stability/foundation for my identity.”*
- *“Family background and relationships can shape (or result from) your identity.”*

4 Language

- *“Family background relates to what language(s) you speak. Language(s) help you relate to your family.”*

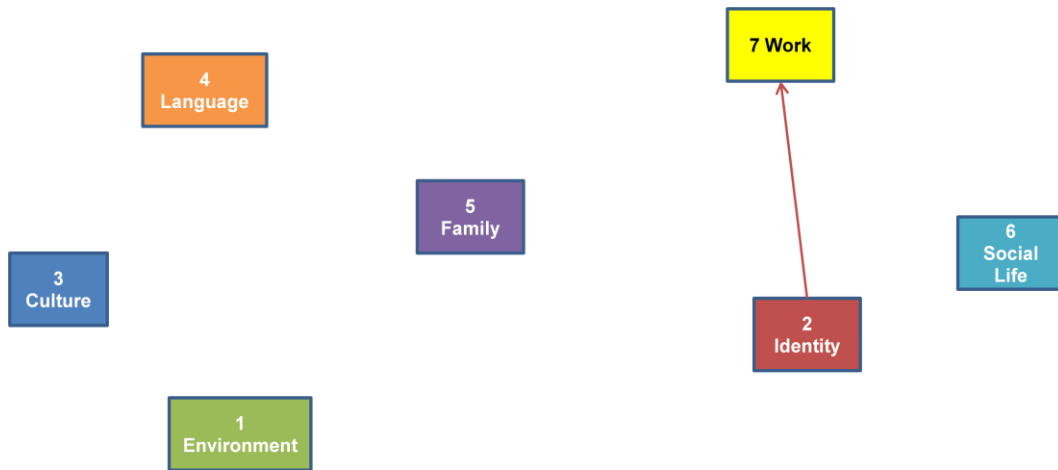
6 Social life

- *“Connections through other family members help increase my social network.”*
- *“Family is often and integral part of social life – gatherings etc. – but depends on people involved. Social life can include family.”*

4.2.8.5 Secondary outcome: Identity

Identity (2) is a secondary outcome in the system (see Diagram 4.5, below) and is influenced by many other elements of the system and only influences one element (Work).

Diagram 4.5 Identity



Participants’ responses about the relationship between these affinities are as follows:

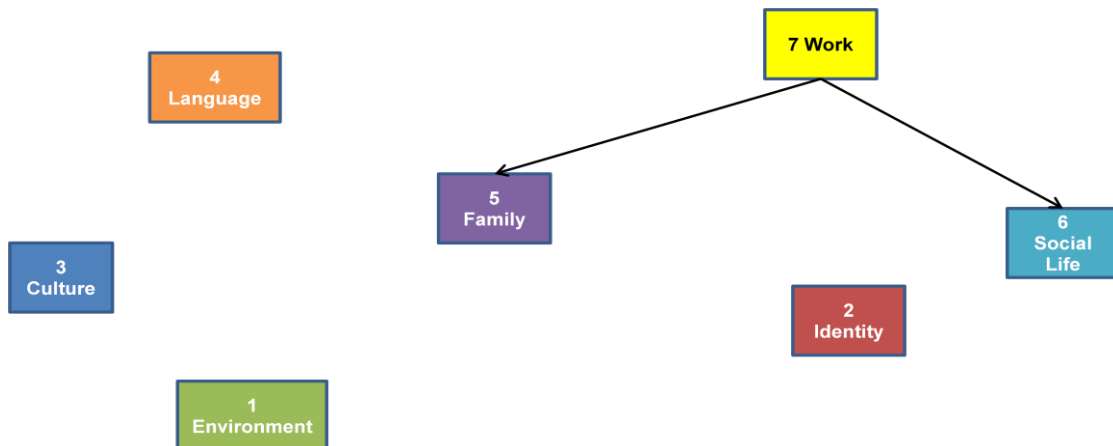
7 Work

- *“My work forms part of my identity.”*
- *“Work relates to identity – can provide your social status and give you a social place/niche. Identity can lead to engagement in certain work, e.g. caring person as doctor, nurse or teacher.”*

4.2.8.6 Primary Outcome: Work

Work (7) is a primary outcome in the system and is influenced by many other elements of the system (see Diagram 4.6, below). *Work* influences two other elements, namely *Family* (5) and *Social life* (6).

Diagram 4.6 Work



Participants' responses about the relationship between these affinities are as follows:

4 Family

- *“Work dictates how much time I have available for my family.”*
- *“Work keeps me away from family.”*
- *“Family situation can provide opportunities and limitations on sort of work you can do (time, location, motivation). Work you do affects family relationships (time, location, stress, involvement).”*

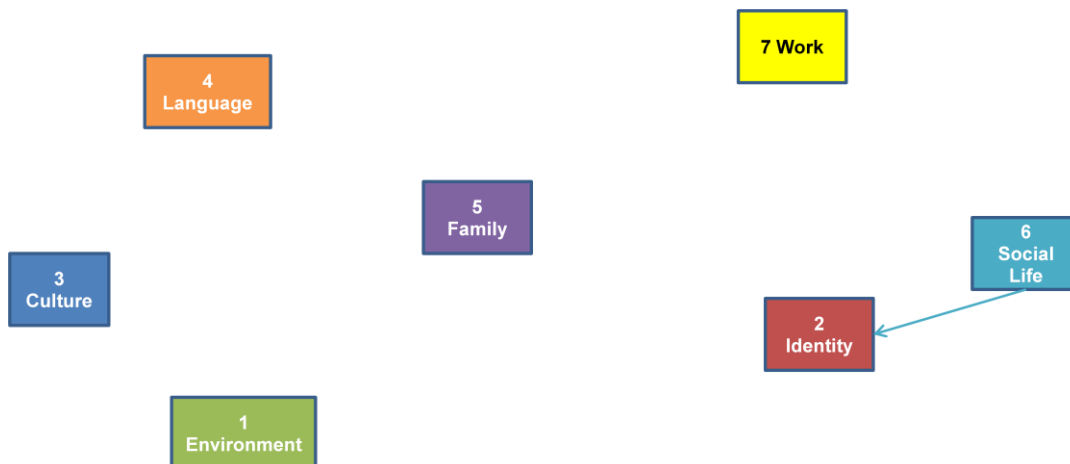
5 Social life

- *“Work provides new social contacts.”*
- *“Made friends at work.”*
- *“Work can leave too little time for a social life or can be regarded in part as a social life. Social life can limit time for work – rather do one than the other!”*

4.2.8.7 Primary outcome: Social life

Social life (6) is a primary outcome in the system (see Diagram 4.7 below). It is influenced by many other elements of the system, but only influences one other element (Identity). There is a potential conflict in the system in terms of the direction of this relationship, which could indicate a recursion or feedback loop. Despite the majority vote that determines the relationship 6→2, the votes and descriptions by participants point in the opposite direction.

Diagram 4.7 Social life



Participants’ responses about the relationship between these affinities are as follows:

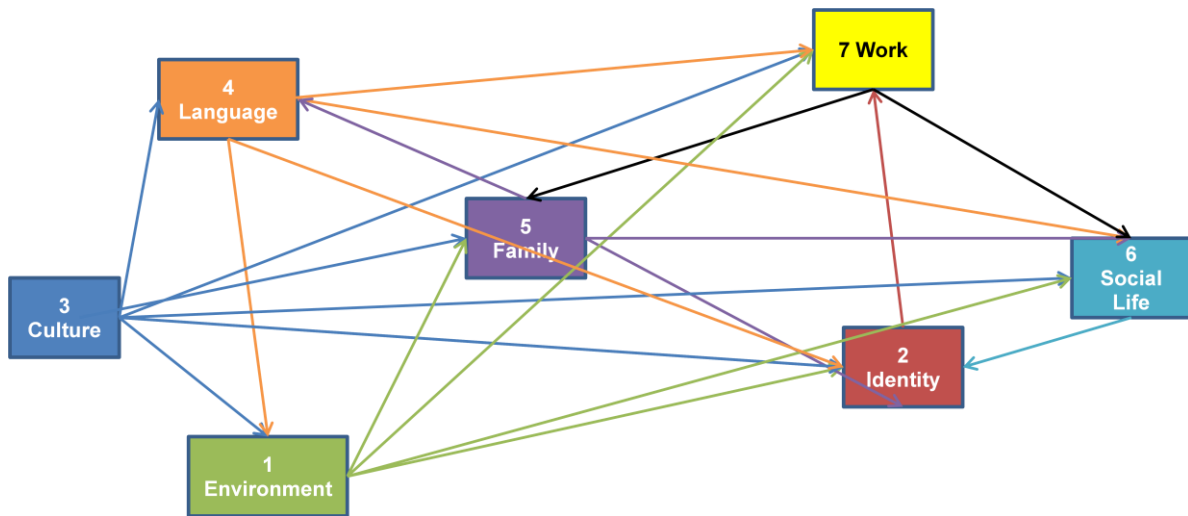
2 Identity

- “Support from old friends and making new ones reinforces my sense of self.”
- “Social life available to you and one you choose to have makes up part of your identity.”
- “Your identity leads you to adopt aspects of social life/get involved in particular groups.”

4.2.8.8 Cluttered SID: Focus Group 1

The first version of the SID contains every possible relationship within the system. The system is saturated and represents all links identified in the IRD. Diagram 4.8 (below) represents the cluttered SID for Focus Group 1.

Diagram 4.8 Cluttered SID for Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010)



This cluttered diagram is very complex and rich in detail, offering a very comprehensive overview of the system. This complex illustration may, however, be confusing and difficult to interpret due to the large number of connections between affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004: 176). In order to create a more understandable representation of the system, an uncluttered (“clean”) SID is created.

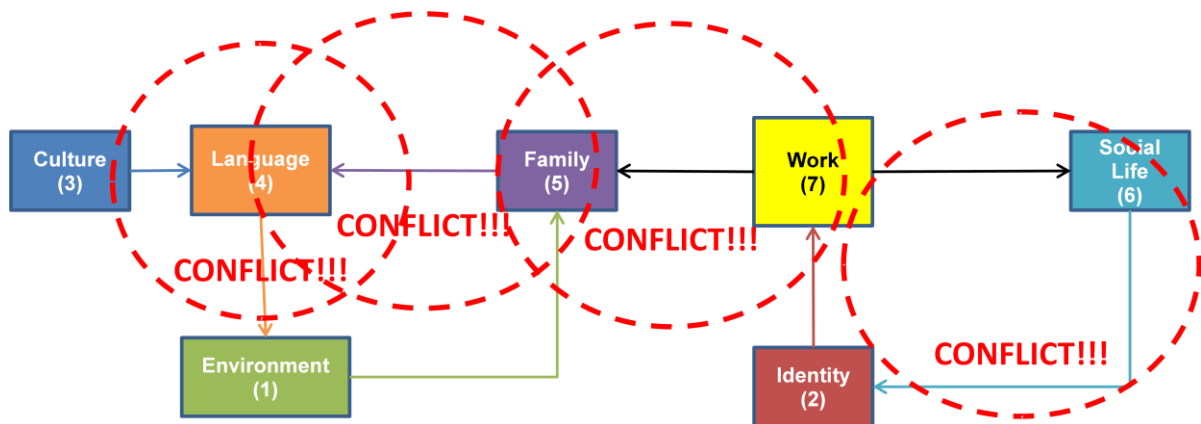
4.2.8.9 Uncluttered (“clean”) SID: Focus Group 1

The protocol for arriving at the “clean” SID can be found in Appendix 7. Diagram 4.9 (overleaf) represents the uncluttered, “clean” SID for the focus group hosted on 24 April 2010.

The “clean” SID represents a reconciled version of the cluttered SID by removing all redundant links on the one hand (for the sake of parsimony), whilst maintaining a system that represents the greatest level of variation. Redundant links are those links that represent direct pathways between affinities. The same pathway could also be reached via another affinity, which would simplify the system. Diagram 4.9 (below) represents the uncluttered, “clean” SID for the focus group hosted on 24 April 2010, illustrating points where potential conflicts may exist in the system.

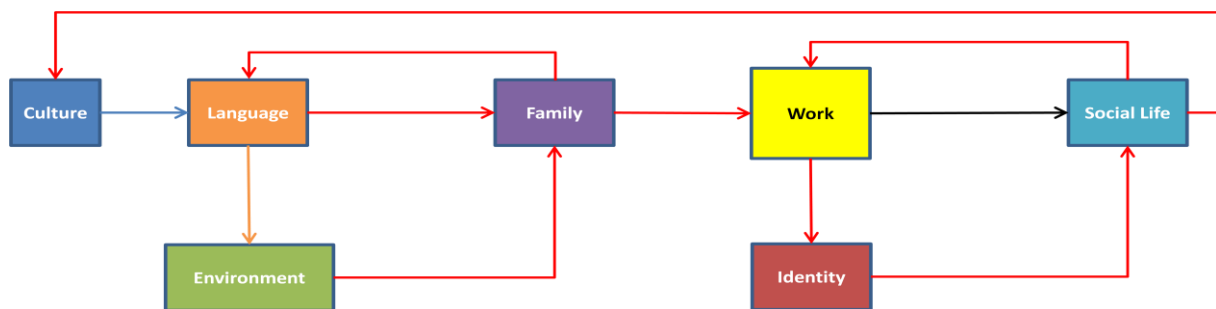
As expected, the uncluttered SID proved problematic because the directional influences of the system and its potential feedback loops were not logical and were in conflict with each other (see Diagram 4.9, below). In order to reconcile these conflicts, Table 4.15 was re-visited. Key conflicts between Affinities 2-6, 5-6 1-3, 3-7, 5-7, 1-2, 4-5, 2-7 and 3-4 gave rise to a distorted system as reflected by the unreconciled SID.

Diagram 4.9 Uncluttered SID for Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010)



In order to account for these conflicts, a feedback loop was built into the system to account for the mediating effect of various affinities on each other, as can be seen in Diagram 4.10 (overleaf).

Diagram 4.10 Focus Group 1 (24 April 2010): “Clean” SID with affinity labels and potential conflicts reconciled



The feedback loops are discussed in the next section.

4.2.9 A tour through the system: Focus Group 1

Diagram 4.10 (above) represents the final “clean” SID for the focus group hosted on 24 April 2010. This diagram illustrates the elements related to the group’s thoughts, motivations and actions in terms of adaptation, acculturation and adjustment to living and working in the Netherlands.

The adjustment process for this group could be compared to a journey through a maze of choices. The maze starts with culture and ends with an integrated social life. The system illustrates a pathway where each element in the system influences the next. A positive or negative perception or experience of an affinity will influence the experience of the next affinity.

The journey through the maze begins with culture. Culture and Cultural differences are the catalysts for the adjustment, acculturation and adaptation experience. Culture influences and is influenced by Language: language not only provides a window to deeper understanding of the culture, but the actual sound of the language and use of certain words influences how participants perceive a culture. The culture of the host country determines the language that a person is expected to speak, and the culture that one grows up in influences one’s mother tongue. Thus, in entering the maze, participants felt that the first choice forced upon them was to integrate fully into the host culture by learning the language and underlying values of the host culture. However, many participants indicated that this decision did not necessarily prove to be very wise, as they soon began to realize that there were aspects of their own cultures that they did not want to sacrifice.

Language also influences one's ability to relate to, and support one's family. For participants with children, the choice for the primary language of education was also a consideration. For some, the choice for a Dutch school formed a language barrier that made it impossible for them to be deeply involved with their children's school activities. Whilst for others, a pure Dutch environment affected the ability of their children to express themselves and develop their identities effectively, which created yet another turning point in the maze if they opted for an international school. Language also influences one's ability to communicate with family and significant others from the host culture. Through the language, one can make friends with locals and gain access to social networks.

Having family members in the host culture (as is often the case with women with local partners) also provides insights into the host culture and language. However, living in another culture with one's own family also alters the cultural values held by one's family. This can consequently lead to a sense of culture shock in the extended family in the home country, who may not fully understand these changing values in their loved ones.

The environment forms a pivot that continuously influences language, family, and almost all other aspects of the system. The Environment provides the context for interactions and determines proximity to family in the home country, as well as proximity to work and the international community. Being physically located in a small town that is far away from large cities may lead to isolation, due to an SIE's inability to understand the language and/or culture of the local community. Choosing one's location as part of the journey through the maze may thus lead to unexpected turns. Choosing a picturesque environment that may seem attractive on the surface in terms of its beauty, restfulness and natural features may actually feel like a dead-end when one becomes emotionally isolated.

Family fulfils an important role in the journey through the maze. Not only does one's family provide a permanent foundation for one's identity, but family also fulfils a social support role and is also a source of motivation: it is the woman who *"controls the temperature of the house"* and who is responsible for making the learning experience worthwhile for her children. Family also provides a number of choices, for example, the choice to work is significantly influenced by one's caring

responsibilities at home. Cultural values that define what a good mother should do, both in the home and host culture, are key shapers of the choices available to women who wish to work, or opt out of work. If the culture of the host country is very male-driven, there may be very few choices available for women who wish to pursue their careers. Interestingly, participants reported a few ideological conflicts about the influence of family and work on each other, which points to the fact that culture is deeply embedded as a moderating factor in the choices that people feel they have for growing.

“Work” forms the next major decision-point in the journey through the maze. Participants indicated that the work culture, language barriers, the environment and family all significantly influenced their choices to work and the paths to take along this route. Work not only dictates the amount of time that a person has available for her family, but also helps to shape her identity. Work gives meaning to one’s life and reinforces one’s sense of belonging, provides social status as a source of identity, and also exposes one to new social networks and possible new friendships.

Identity forms a pivot around which work and social life are continuously in interaction with each other. One’s identity is influenced by one’s culture, but is also challenged by the new culture that one is exposed to. One’s social acquaintances (friends), both in the home and host countries, help to reinforce one’s sense of self. Identity in the journey through the maze points to a major choice to reinvent the self by questioning existing beliefs, values, assumptions and ways of life. Through this process, the maze provides options to remain the same, to maintain some aspects of the self, or to completely re-invent the self.

At the end of the maze, one is rewarded with a social life that reinforces one’s identity and provides a network of supporting relationships in both the home and host country in different spheres of life, both at work and at home.

Thus, through immersion in the host culture, participants are confronted with their own cultural values in relation to those in the host country. By navigating their way through a maze of different choices in terms of learning the language, choosing their location, supporting their families, finding suitable work options and re-inventing themselves, they are able to arrive at a point of social integration where

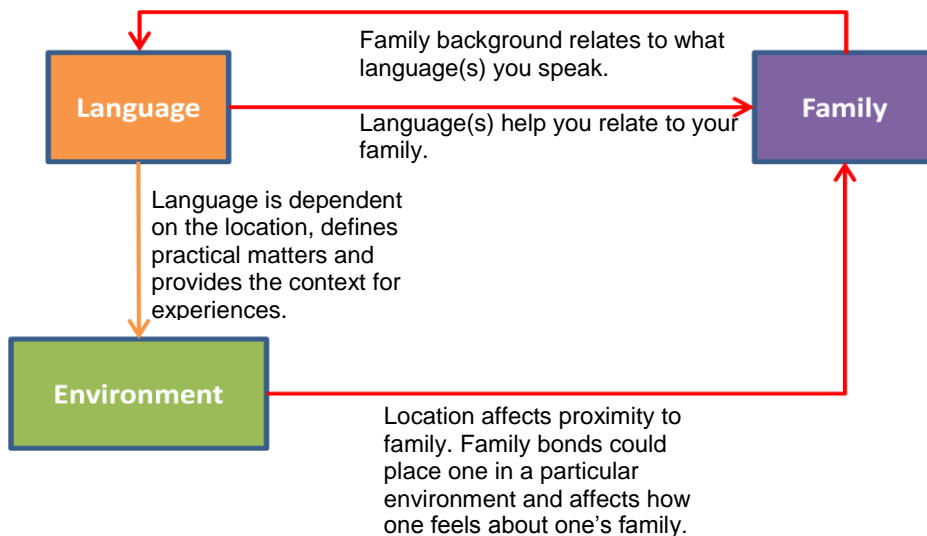
they are able to generate social support in different spheres of life. Although the maze seems to provide options for different paths, these paths may not always be optional, as daily life, unexpected circumstances, the reactions of others and unexpected events may force the direction of one’s choice, so that choosing is no longer a form of freedom.

The feedback loops in the system are discussed in the next section on “feedback loops and zooming”.

4.2.10 Feedback loops and zooming: Focus Group 1

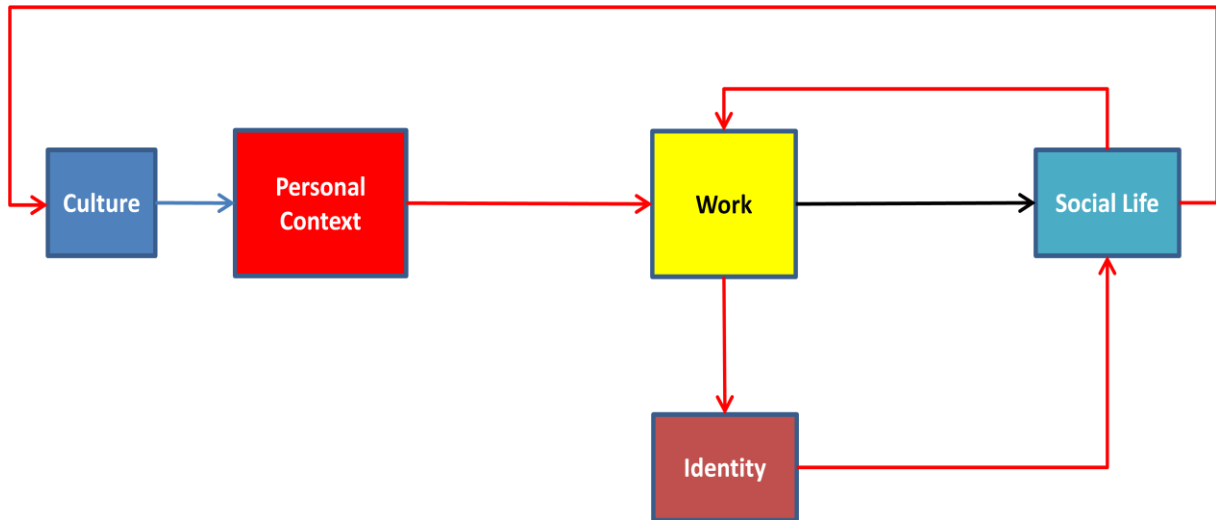
Upon closer inspection of the SID, it appears that Language, Family, and Environment form a feedback loop where these affinities form a sub-system in the overall system. The theoretical codes presented by participants about the relationships between these affinities were re-visited (see Diagram 4.11, below). These three affinities could be combined into a super-affinity called “Personal Context”.

Diagram 4.11 Zooming into the system: Language, Family, Environment



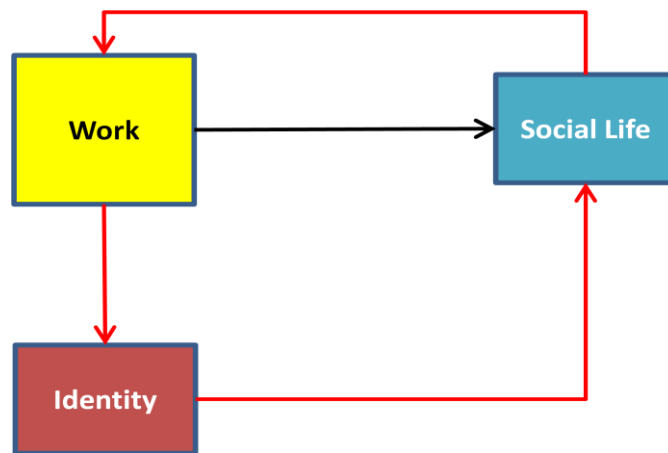
If one then replaces these affinities with the super-affinity Personal Context, the system would look like the one represented in Diagram 4.12 (overleaf).

Diagram 4.12 Zooming out of the system – inserting super-affinity “Personal Context”



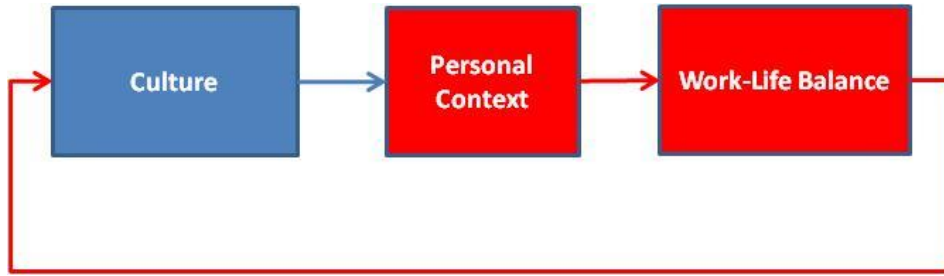
There is also a second feedback loop in the system, namely Work, Social Life and Identity. These affinities were also inspected again (see Diagram 4.13, overleaf). These three affinities can be combined to form a sub-system represented by the super-affinity “Work-Life Balance”.

Diagram 4.13 Zooming into the system: Work, Social Life, Identity



If one then replaces these three affinities with the super-affinity “Work-Life Balance”, the final, simplified system can be represented by Diagram 4.14 (overleaf).

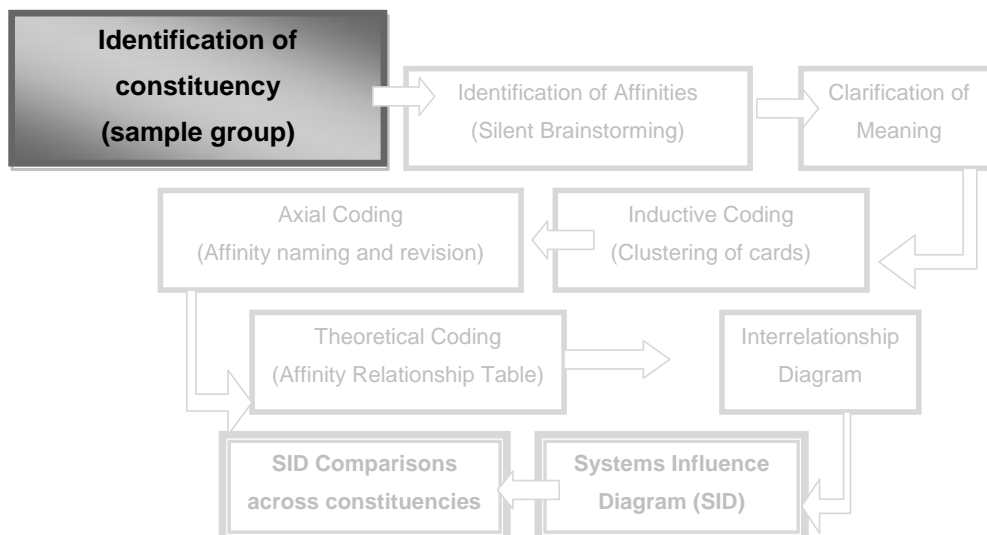
Diagram 4.14 Zooming out of the system – inserting super-affinity “Work-Life Balance”



This final system represents a simple recursive system that illustrates the continuous interaction between Culture, Personal Context and Work-Life Balance during the journey through a maze of choices.

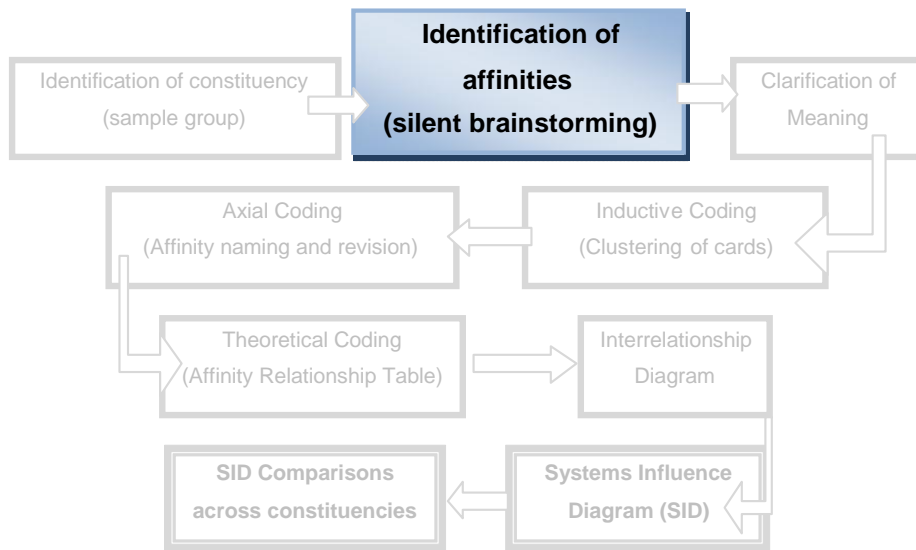
4.3 IQA FOCUS GROUP 2 (12 JUNE 2010)

4.3.1 Step 1: Identifying the constituency (12 June 2010)



As was mentioned in Section 3.4.6, nine women participated in this focus group. Two of the participants, Tracy and Laura, were invited by me to participate in the session and support facilitation and logistics.

4.3.2 Step 2: Identification of affinities (silent brainstorming) (12 June 2010)



A total of 83 cards were generated by the group during the silent brainstorming process (see Appendix 4). Photo 4.5 (below) illustrates the silent brainstorming process, and Photo 4.6 (overleaf) illustrates the cards that were shuffled and taped on the wall in rows and columns. Table 4.19 (overleaf) shows the cards that were generated during the silent brainstorming process in alphabetical order.

Photo 4.5 The silent brainstorming process for Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)



Photo 4.6 Cards from silent brainstorming for Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)



Table 4.19 Examples of cards generated during the silent brainstorming process (12 June 2010)

<p>Attempting to speak Dutch and having the Dutch respond back in English</p> <p>Bias (work: not here permanent - "in development")</p> <p>Biggest barrier is language</p> <p>Biking is bliss!</p> <p>Difference in a woman's role in society</p> <p>Differences in career development possibilities</p> <p>Differences in Culture</p> <p>Different communication styles: Direct (Dutch) Semi-Direct (Me)</p> <p>Different society dynamics</p> <p>Discrimination (directly expressed):</p> <p>Dutch bureaucracy is crazy and annoying sometimes</p> <p>Easy to live here</p> <p>Easy to travel around the world</p> <p>Excellent work environment</p> <p>Expat community only</p> <p>Express feelings</p> <p>Family</p> <p>Good mentality of life</p> <p>Hard to make Dutch friends</p> <p>Having international experience</p> <p>Hidden "tolerance" as foreigner</p> <p>Holland is a double-sided coin</p> <p>Impossible to become Dutch</p> <p>Lack of network in areas of interest/education</p>
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Language

Living more spontaneous life

Miss family and friends but also you get your own “family” here

Often have the feeling that I need to be 10 times better to be promoted

Speaking language (Dutch)

Taxes (I’m clueless)

Time to figure out the systems (damn KPN!)

Too much talk about nothing

Understanding my own culture and respecting it

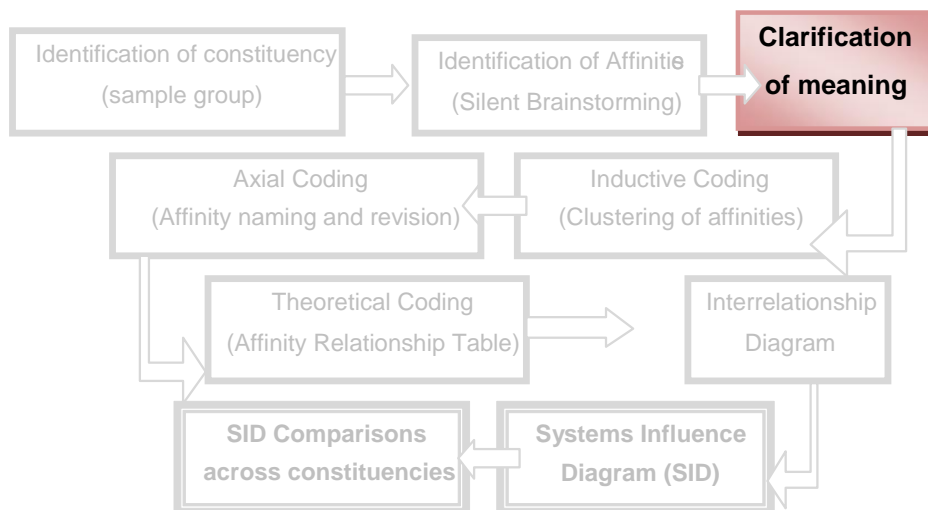
Very easy to make friends (International Environment)

When you break through the exterior, Dutch are lovely, warm and helpful

Work-life balance: work hard 9-6, then home/family time

You are alone here

4.3.3 Step 3: Clarification of meaning (12 June 2010)



As with the first focus group, it was decided to discuss a random selection of cards during the clarification of meaning process. The IQA findings from the focus group’s process of clarification of meaning and sense-making are set out in Table 20 (overleaf). Examples of the cards from the silent brainstorm that were explicitly defined by participants are printed in black. Those cards which were touched upon implicitly through the natural flow of conversational topics and were later identified in further analysis of the focus group transcript are illustrated in red. Additional themes that were discussed by participants and identified during the focus group transcript analysis are indicated in blue. My own comments and notes are presented in green. The keywords relating to the silent brainstorm card were

underlined in participant's quotes for ease of reading (see Appendix 6 for a full overview of this process).

Table 4.20 Examples of clarification of meaning (12 June 2010)

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
Miss cultural life from home (e.g. theatre)	<p>“...the <u>cultural life</u> here is not totally open to me; it’s mostly because of the language...I have the feeling that I cannot find information about it, and probably it comes from the language as well. I’ve found here a <u>beautiful cultural life</u> but I’m only open to a part of it...” (Gina, Romania)</p>
Discovering excellent cultural life	<p>“From my own experience with respect to <u>theatre</u>, I think you can find also lots of English-speaking performances and concerts and so on...<u>there is a lot in this regard</u>, especially in the Randstad area.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>“...there is a <u>beautiful and excellent cultural life</u> which I can benefit from. So it’s a plus and a minus. I see it as a plus and a minus.” (Gina, Romania)</p>
Main barrier language	<p>“...I spent a lot of time to study. I’ve spent some time to improve my conversation, of course the <u>Dutch accent</u> is Russian. But still in business life, I speak fluent Dutch, but I still feel that people would start saying ‘<u>We don’t understand you, your pronunciation is a little bit not clear...</u>’ and you always get it in your face.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“...I’ve heard a number of people say that they’ve had responses, by trying just because of the <u>accent</u>...I think that can be quite a <u>barrier</u> for people coming in. It’s not so much the <u>quality of the language</u>, it’s the how it comes out...” (Laura, Canada)</p> <p>“I tried to learn <u>Dutch</u>. I graciously failed. I tried for one year. It’s <u>very hard</u>...” (Gina, Romania)</p>
Biking is Bliss	<p>“...if I’m <u>biking</u> back home, just maybe like a ride in the countryside or on a road where there’s no more other bikers....But I came here and it’s like traffic signs and traffic lights and all. <u>It’s a totally new experience</u>. But I <u>love it</u>; I don’t think I can go without it anymore.” (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>“<u>Going on the back of your boyfriend’s bike is so much fun!</u> And now I have to learn to jump on and jump off and they tell me that’s very Dutch.” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“It’s also a <u>way of embracing like the hosting culture</u> you are living in...So it’s also easy to <u>understand</u> them much better because for them <u>everything is about the bikes</u> and they don’t see life with no bikes so it’s also a way to understand...” (Margaret, Spain)</p>
Good mentality of life	<p>“I’ve found in this <u>way that people are</u> a bit more, though it’s actually busy, a busy working environment and a busy life, but people actually are not so bothered about having a house and a mortgage for 30 years. The <u>working mentality</u> here is still kind of ok...” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>“Yeah, <u>showing off is not the main purpose of life</u> here.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
Eating at restaurants – in San	<p>“...it’s <u>expensive</u>, you go out and you basically have to give them your</p>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
<p>Francisco it was a form of entertainment, in Holland it was a recipe for frustration.</p>	<p>money because they forget you are even there. The <u>food is less than par</u> in most instances...it's a form of <u>entertainment that I used to enjoy</u> and when I try to do that here, and it just makes me want to go back home and eat at my own home and cook – it's cheaper, cleaner..." (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p>"The <u>service seems quite relaxed.</u>" (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Time to figure out the systems – damn KPN!</p>	<p>"But in terms of if you want service... I'd have to say that's why I put that little thing about the <u>KPN</u>. I was like, aaah come on, just think with me and <u>get my service organised</u>. And I couldn't, I had a really hard time sort of saying, just do it? Like why does it take a month and a half, three months and I have to call six times to have something... And sort of the <u>frustration</u> from I want it to be timely and I want it to be done and I want you to think with me." (Laura, Canada)</p> <p>"Any time you set up like, you know, your <u>utilities</u> or things like that, <u>something goes wrong</u>. You know, it's, nothing is simple, you always have to call them back, they always have to come over again and reset something...or, you know, check in your new box. Or your telephone stops working...it's just, <u>nothing ever really runs... smoothly.</u>" (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p>"But I agree with that. You really have to make <u>initiation</u>, you cannot just...they will say you wait, and then you really wait, then you will <u>disappointed.</u>" (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>
<p>Getting my point across (e.g. medical system)</p>	<p>"If you don't really do it and the same goes with the doctors. If you want to have some check-up that is not really necessary, you have to <u>ask the doctor for it</u>. <u>You have to here, initiate</u>, you have to yourself say "ok, I want this, and this, and this..." And then if you're a bit sure and you know clearly what you want, then there is a bigger chance they will [unintelligible]." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"This is a <u>very funny system</u> in the world, I think. In the Netherlands." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>
<p>Dutch "coldness" can be tough</p>	<p>"I actually meant this...<u>coldness</u> as in...it doesn't have to do with weather, it has to do with <u>people</u>...here, me and Margaret have left...three times we've actually left a place and we drank our beer outside, finished it and left...Because we felt so completely <u>out of place</u>. We were the only people speaking English in the place, which of course immediately put us in the thing of being the foreigner...And maybe it's a big difference to Ireland [Sandra's previous assignment], but it was something that, it's just very <u>hard to deal with</u>..." (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>"...I don't think to me that well, they're <u>cold</u>. But more it's when it comes...is the <u>directness</u>. When they're so <u>direct</u>. They just don't have problem sometimes. That's what I feel like...And something that you learn, like that they are like this and sometimes I think it stopped bothering me."</p>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
	(Margaret, Spain)
<i>Too much talk about nothing</i>	<i>“But I think also, I haven’t experienced that in the business environment. Where, I think maybe it’s because they do get to know you a little bit more than...there is like this <u>talk about nothing</u>, but I feel it’s not applicable to my business environment because it’s very, you know... it’s very international.” (Bonnie, USA)</i>
<i>Not solution-oriented</i>	<i>I thought...the not <u>solution-oriented</u> I feel is more <u>non-business related</u>. I feel like when you go somewhere and you ask at a shop...you know, I asked for “can I buy this here” and she said: “Oh, that’s not possible”. But ok, well, where do I buy this at? You always have to ask the next question to get your answer and they will only respond to what you ask.” (Bonnie, USA)</i>
<i>Difference in a woman’s role in society</i>	<i>“I came from a <u>society</u> [Russia] where <u>women play a great role</u>, especially historically. I think women played, if you’re a manager of a company its fine. Here, first of all it is more like a <u>men’s society</u>...” (Anushka, Russia)</i> <i>“...even if the rules to put women in the business life regarding some percentage of women; it already shows that <u>women don’t play a great role</u> because they use that woman somewhere else.” (Anushka, Russia)</i> <i>“I think the way it is being done here is very <u>practical</u>, women can have a <u>part-time work</u>. They are staying at home; they can <u>stay home with their kids</u>, but not long-term. So it’s up to them. So I mean the <u>system</u> is set up in such a way that women can normally participate in the working environment.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i>
<i>Boys’ club</i>	<i>“I think yeah, to some extent there is... you know I’m one of the <u>only women</u> in the finance department in my office and there’s only two that are not...administrative assistants. The rest, everybody else, is in admin. And there will be e-mails going around, and it’s kinda like the <u>boys’ club</u> sometimes at the office, and my name will be in the e-mail, but it will be addressed to “Gentlemen”... I don’t mind, but it is kinda that this is the “boys club” and you know, you sit there and sometimes you hear these jokes and think ‘o God’, you know...[giggles] <u>incredibly inappropriate</u> and they usually refer to HR and it’s like ‘hahahaha’ you know, we’re the men.” (Bonnie, USA)</i> <i>“...And indeed because it’s finance, It’s <u>Dutch boys</u>. So I often felt that there is a discrimination there...” (Gina, Romania)</i>
<i>I often have the feeling that I need to be 10 X better to be promoted</i>	<i>“Maybe it’s increased by the fact that I am a woman, but I never thought about it before, because I try to think that I am equal and that because I’m in a men’s world, I’m a woman, now I reached a good position...but since I came here, I...not struggled, because it was something that came very easily, but when it’s about <u>promoting</u>...and you are like ‘oh but... you come here and it’s like, it’s already a prize that you are here’. And I’m like, no it’s</i>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
	<p><i>not a prize that I am here. I'm here because I'm good, I'm here because you chose me, so if you want to offer me a grow, you should give me support...As much as you would support...Dutch nationals..."</i> (Gina, Romania)</p> <p><i>"That's why you have to <u>execute</u>. That's my personal experience. I also come from a men's world. It is an international environment but it is turning more Dutch now, more orientated, so because of that kind of Dutch community that they are creating right now, <u>I have to prove myself ten times more</u>. But at the same time I'm female, but you have to execute, that's what I learned. If you don't fight for it, not really necessarily fighting but making sure, huh...'hey, I'm here amongst all the others'."</i> (Monika, Slovakia)</p> <p><i>"I want to point out something, because these two comments might look like frustration comments, but <u>I've been promoted</u> this year, and I am on the <u>talent list</u> so they are doing things for me, but at a <u>certain extent</u>."</i> (Gina, Romania)</p>
<p><i>Work-life balance – Work from nine to five and then have home and family time</i></p>	<p><i>"...some of them, they would just say ok <u>nine to five</u> and then <u>no more overtime</u>...I think they also protect the <u>family life</u> in a way."</i> (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p><i>"...I really like that part of the <u>work-life balance</u> because I came from the US where...I would work from eight till ten at night, and you know, feel bad to go to lunch break or dinner break...your personal life suffers tremendously at the same time...when I came here, it was <u>nine to five</u> and it was 'oh and give us your <u>holiday schedule</u> in advance'...but then there's also that <u>separation</u> at the same time. You know, it's 'Ok now I'm going home to MY family'. So it is a blessing and a...it's the two-sided coin again."</i> (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p><i>"The <u>working mentality</u> here is still kind of ok. People still like to <u>work 9 till 5</u>, of course sometimes they have to stay longer but they don't mind to <u>work part-time</u>, they are really trying to find time also for their <u>private life</u>, not only everything being busy with getting properties and work-work-work, but try to enjoy life also and in different ways."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
<p><i>Poor family life</i></p>	<p><i>"This is from my experience, but this is more related to the <u>family</u>, not like a system in the country or conditions, but more <u>the way how the family is</u>. What I'm used to of course from my culture, the families are more warm and more open, it's a bit more like ok, big families, people are meeting always, this kind of thing. And <u>here it's not so much the family</u>. They always keep the <u>small family</u> or it's not so much really like, ok, it's not so much the focus on the family...Actually, also they have it in the Dutch language I think they have two words for it: '<u>Gezin</u>' and '<u>Familie</u>'."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>

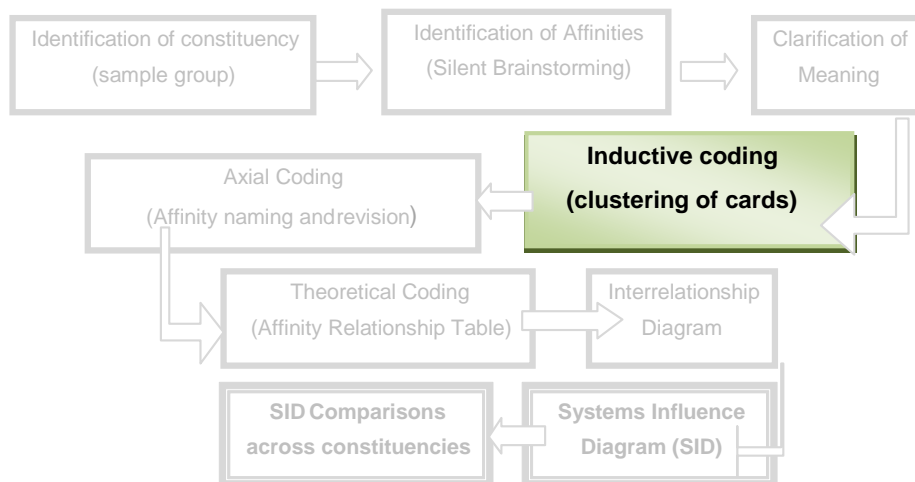
Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
	<p>“But you <u>can’t count on your family</u>....They would <u>never offer you some help</u>. It stays at the surface with the facts, and then ‘see you next time’.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“... I think the <u>family life isn’t poorer, it’s just closer, like a smaller...</u>” (Sandra, Germany)</p>
<p><i>I miss home, but I am missing the international part when I’m back home</i></p>	<p>“...like I’ve been jumping through a few countries now, so sometimes I feel like oh I really want to <u>go back to Spain and settle down</u> there and have my roots there and all...But I know [sighs], <u>when I’m there, you can see how time has passed by and people have evolved in a different way that you have</u>. And you also kind of see how the <u>international part is in you now</u>, and you can see things that people can’t see...and then you kind of don’t understand them the same way you used to understand them. I know it’s a bit of a <u>contradictory feeling</u>.” (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p><i>Expat Community only</i></p>	<p>“It’s just that I sometimes have the impression, well; it’s actually a fact that I just live in this <u>expat bubble</u>...I feel so, so like <u>left behind</u> because before I would just like get the letter – ‘oh you are cordially invited’...I feel a bit, like, <u>‘foreigner’ living in</u>...You know? And that’s what I meant by <u>expat community only</u>. Because I’m always around expats.” (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p><i>Understanding my own culture and respecting it</i></p>	<p>“Yeah, it’s not me but I started to <u>respect Russian culture</u> sufficiently more when I started living here. I became sufficiently more Russian nationalist.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“Because you <u>realise what you miss</u>...Before I was one of the complaining Germans, and now I’m thinking ‘people you just really have to realize that the things that are good. And you know, don’t complain all the time’.” (Sandra, Germany)</p>
<p><i>Discrimination</i></p>	<p>“Well, I don’t know, personally I don’t have any experience of being <u>discriminated [against]</u> here because of my origin, where I’m coming from, or my age or being a woman or whatever...And with respect, I think, yeah, when I first came to here, everyone was saying that Dutch people are...they accept foreigners. I think they do accept them from my experience, but they are not open for them. And I think there is the difference. They accept them, but then at a certain point there is the wall and that’s it...Like they accept...when they meet you they greet you, they are nice and everything, they are also interested in asking this and this, but from my experience it is always a bit difficult to get really close to Dutch people.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>“...I did experience it a couple of times that I’ve been told <u>“you are a woman; we’re not going to accept you for a job.”</u> (Anushka, Russia)</p>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
<p><i>Hard to make Dutch friends</i></p>	<p><i>“...Dutch people are not very much culture-oriented also. Some parts of society, but even if you even meet the <u>friends</u>, it is my feeling, you <u>speak always about facts</u>, it’s terrible. You speak only about facts...You never go deeply in your feelings, you can’t discuss anything. It’s only your country people to whom you can really talk.” (Anushka, Russia)</i></p> <p><i>“...<u>I couldn’t get too many Dutch friends</u>. So I don’t have a Dutch environment that I’m living in; I’m living in this <u>international environment</u>. My boyfriend is Canadian, all my friends are English speakers, so I’m not helped by that.” (Gina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“I probably have, <u>my Dutch friends I can count on one hand</u>. But I’m trying to like meet them every two weeks and just speak Dutch when we go for a beer for two or three hours and that already helps.” (Sandra, Germany)</i></p>
<p><i>Having Dutch friends is a little hard (language and cultural barrier)</i></p>	<p><i>“What Dutch people consider a <u>friendship</u>, you know what Dutch people consider a friendship, for me this is <u>not still the real friendship</u>... Sometimes what they describe as a friendship...it’s <u>superficial</u>. That’s from my experience.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p>
<p><i>When you break through the exterior, Dutch are lovely, warm and helpful</i></p>	<p><i>“...I was just alarmed at the <u>generosity and the genuine interest in your well-being</u>. So I think up until that point I did feel this kind of <u>cold feeling</u> from them, but then this one instance just kind of changed that for me. That there really is the <u>capability for compassion once you get to know them</u>. <u>When it matters, they come through</u>.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p>
<p><i>Bias (work: not here permanently - "in development")</i></p>	<p><i>“Foreigners were more based in a...<u>non-permanent contract</u>. So we have to prove ourselves. That was my mentality at least. I had to prove myself that I was there...oh yeah, but if you need to stay, of course you stay and everything that would be nice for the company.” (Margaret, Spain)</i></p>
<p><i>Different communication styles: Direct (Dutch) Semi-Direct (Me)</i></p>	<p><i>“If you give them more flexibility, then you are lucky if they will do it the way you want directly. You have to just directly put your...say ok, this and this and this, <u>be directly straight</u>. That works more here.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
<i>Dutch do not really know how to praise</i>	<i>“Because I feel that in Romania if you do good things, <u>people praise you</u> and...see you and say ‘ok, this is a person we have to grow’. Here it’s indeed...I actually told my boss, ok, you want me to prove you? Give me one year and you give me everything you want me to prove, and then I put it on paper at the end of the year. And he said ‘jajajaja, you actually did it’. Ja, I actually did it! And I’m doing this since I came here. And just because I don’t say ‘me, me, me, me!’ and put my hand and...uh...<u>show off...like</u> when a hen lays an egg...’oh, this is what I did!’...” (Gina, Romania)</i>
<i>Easier to be happy when you know people here already when you get here</i>	<i>“I’ve had a little bit more <u>support</u> than probably any of you have had with coming here, in terms of having <u>family here</u>.” (Laura, Canada)</i>
<i>Missing spontaneous life, fun</i>	<i>“Because I for instance come from a different background, so I’m used to being a little bit more <u>spontaneous</u>, a little bit more open. I always think it is culture.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i> <i>“I’m used to it being <u>more open, more spontaneous</u> and here it is more a bit closed.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i>
<i>Dutch bureaucracy is crazy and annoying sometimes</i>	<i>“Maybe one thing should be the whole, the general organisation of society here...everything is very <u>bureaucracy</u> and all of the <u>rules and regulations</u>...” (Sandra, Germany)</i>
<i>Holland is a double-sided coin</i>	<i>For me <u>Holland is a double-sided coin</u>...I think it comes even from religion, because from one side they show that they are simple, but at the same look at their houses, ja, normal houses – it’s very big...windows. First three months I really couldn’t bear it...but then again when you come to house, it is still very closed. You never come very close to Dutch people. So it’s always double coin.” (Anushka, Russia)</i> <i>“So in the <u>double coin</u>, it depends on what you’re looking for and it depends on what you want.” (Laura, Canada)</i>
<i>Post-expatriation career</i>	<i>“...here in the Netherlands I’m trying to somehow <u>develop my career in finance</u>, but not really with high success.” (Anushka, Russia)</i> <i>“I’m a finance manager for [name of company], so it’s essentially a huge <u>promotion</u> for me <u>from what I was doing in the States</u>...” (Bonnie, USA)</i>
<i>Pre-expatriation career</i>	<i>“When I was in Hong Kong I studied Social Work for my Bachelor’s Degree. I studied the child development for my Master’s Degree. So I have been, all my life worked for the Hong Kong government...they kept on posting me, so my last six years in Hong Kong I was a <u>probation officer</u>. To supervise the juvenile criminals. And then I also, I was a welfare officer. I mainly looked after some orphans until they reached 18 years old. And also I take care of some case for...abused wife and also abused children. So I</i>

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
	<p><i>have to manage their life and...arrange what is the welfare plan.</i>" (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p><i>"...from my working experience, I've been working all the time that I'm here <u>Help Desk Service Industry.</u>"</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>"...my education is a PhD in <u>Civil Engineering.</u>...And then I got a <u>financial background.</u>"</i> (Anushka, Russia)</p>
Reason for expatriation	<p><i>"...I came to Holland...<u>because of Margaret.</u>...Margaret decided to go to Amsterdam. And then at some point me and my boyfriend decided that we wanted to leave Ireland and have some better weather..."</i> (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p><i>"...I came here for <u>work.</u>...they offered me a new position in the head-office in Amsterdam so I moved here because...my work moved here. And...I had a lot of friends living in the Netherlands."</i> (Gina, Romania)</p> <p><i>"The reason why I came here is because outside of Holland I met a <u>Dutch guy</u> at the time so we decided to come to Holland."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>"I came here because I married a <u>Dutch man.</u>"</i> (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>

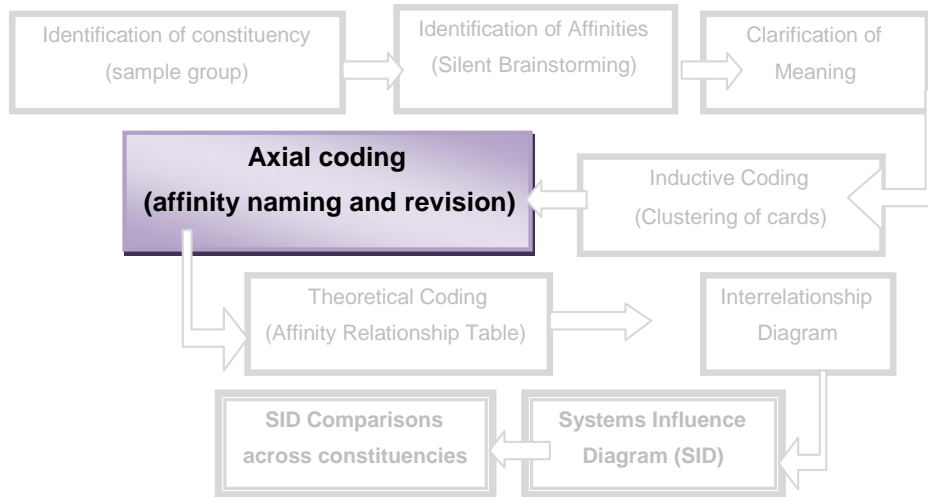
4.3.4 Step 4: Inductive coding (12 June 2010)



Once the clarification of meaning process was completed, participants were asked to review all the cards on the wall and were invited to silently start moving the cards into groups and themes. During this process, a number of conversations occurred outside of the main discussion, during which participants discussed the meanings of different cards further. These conversations were also transcribed insofar they were intelligible on the video-tape.

After the inductive coding process, participants were asked to begin naming, re-organising and refining categories, as described in Section 3.4.7.4.

4.3.5 Step 5: Axial coding (affinity naming and revision) (12 June 2010)



Once a clear set of categories (affinities) had been identified, participants were challenged to refine the meaning of these affinities further to ensure that everyone was on the same page and that cards were placed under the correct headings. We started with the affinity labelled “Society”, which was strongly related to the “Dutch System” of doing things and was considered to be separate from “Culture”. Halfway through the discussion, however, lunch arrived and we decided first to take a break from trying to define the affinities. In view of our time constraints, I decided not to engage the group in further definitions of the affinities, as the initial idea was to conduct follow-up IQA interviews to classify information further. Furthermore, at this point in the session, I noticed that the description of affinities was causing the group to become de-motivated. They had been working hard to arrive at these categories and they did not want to discuss them further.

Unfortunately, follow-up interviews were not possible, partly due to the fact that some participants had already moved on to a next host country and had no more time available for this study, and partly due to the fact that respondents did not respond to my e-mail requests for follow-up. Hence, a similar process of affinity description was followed as for the first focus group – referring to focus group transcripts and the silent brainstorming cards.

Five main affinities with sub-affinities were identified by the group and were randomly numbered for ease of reference (see Photo 4.7, below).

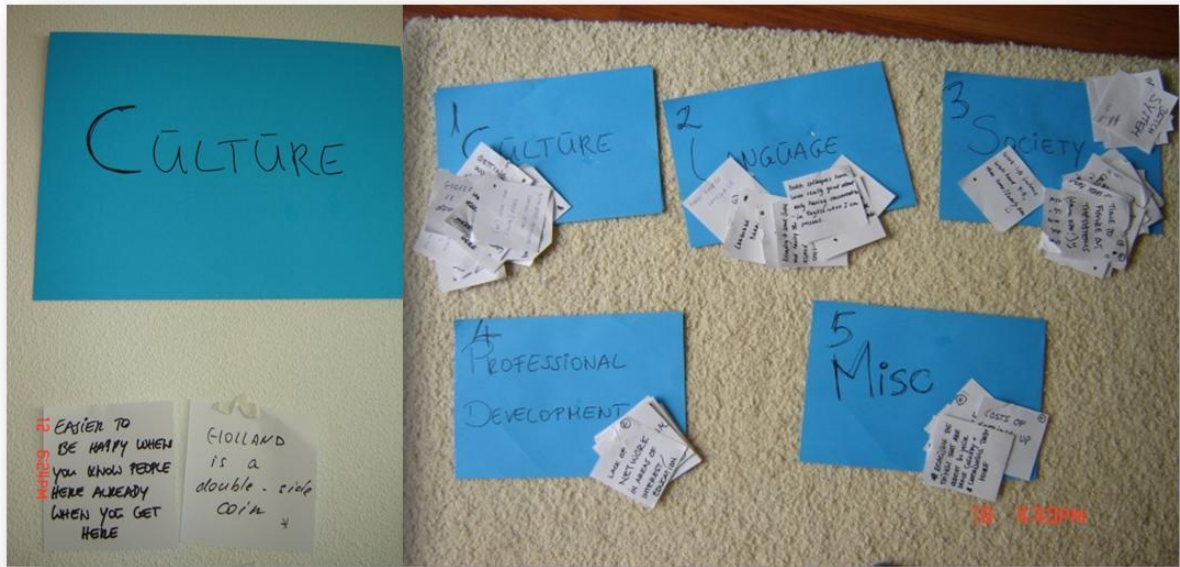


Photo 4.7 Main affinities and axial coding for Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)

These affinities are discussed in greater detail in the next section in order to establish a clear definition of participants' understanding of affinities in question. Table 4.21 (below) provides an overview of the main affinities and sub-affinities identified by the group.

Table 4.21 Summary of affinities and sub-affinities: Focus Group 2

Affinity	Sub-affinity
1. Culture	<i>General Dutch Culture</i>
2. Language	
3. Society	<i>Dutch System</i>
4. Professional Development	
5. Miscellaneous	

4.3.5.1 Affinity 1: Culture

“Culture” was a difficult affinity for participants to define, because they felt that it overlapped strongly with “Society/Dutch System”. After some deliberation, it was decided to sub-divide the affinity into two sub-affinities, “General” and “Dutch Culture”. Table 4.22 (below) details the output of the coded cards for this affinity.

Table 4.22 Culture

Affinity 1: Culture	
General/Dutch Culture	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Affinity 1.1: General	
<p>Missing home food</p> <p>Eating at restaurants. In San Francisco, it was a form of entertainment, in Holland it is a recipe for frustration.</p> <p>Miss cultural life from home (eg. theatre)</p>	<p>Culinary heaven</p> <p>Organic food</p> <p>Discovering excellent cultural life</p> <p>Great leisure time/cultural offer</p>
Affinity 1.2: Dutch Culture	
<p>Holland is a double-sided coin</p> <p>-</p> <p>Too much talk about nothing</p> <p>Impossible to become Dutch</p> <p>Differences in culture</p> <p>Attempting to make plans with friends, but it needs to be 3 weeks in advance</p> <p>Dutch “coldness” can be tough</p>	<p>Holland is a double-sided coin</p> <p>Understanding my own culture and respecting it</p> <p>Get introduced to new culture/way of living</p> <p>Easier to be happy when you know people here already when you get here</p>

The things to do.

Dutch culture and how we can adapt ourselves.

They forget you are even there

I don't belong here, I'm not supposed to be here.

I've found a beautiful cultural life but I'm only open to a part of it.

There is so much out there.

It depends on what you are looking for.

For me Holland is a double-sided coin.

You speak only about facts.

I started to respect Russian culture sufficiently more when I started living here.

It can be a bit dangerous.

I'm going home to MY family.

Simply a changed point of view.

Dutch directness can be shocking sometimes	When you break through the exterior, Dutch are lovely, warm and helpful
Different communication styles: Direct (Dutch) Semi-Direct (Me)	Good mentality of life
Getting my point across (e.g. medical system)	Biking is bliss!
Express feelings	
Asking any question and having a Dutch person respond with “It’s not possible” – not solution-oriented	

- **Dutch culture and how we can adapt ourselves.** *Culture* was defined as specifically related to the *Dutch* culture and how participants adapt themselves to the culture:

“I understand culture as the Dutch culture and how we can adapt ourselves.”
(Anushka, Russia)

- **The things to do.** However, it also included things to do as well as aspects of the broader society:

“I thought we had culture more as the things to do, because otherwise I’d say it would be society.” (Sandra, Germany)

Participants agreed to distinguish between *Culture* and *Society* on the basis that *Culture* refers to an “*informal structure*” (Anushka, Russia); whereas *Society* is a *formal* structure under which government resorts.

4.3.5.1.1 Affinity 1.1: General

- **They forget you are even there.** For some participants, adjusting to forms of *entertainment that was enjoyable in their home countries, proved to be a source of frustration* and lead to a feeling that *Dutch* people were being treated better than they because they speak *English*:

“...it’s expensive, you go out and you basically have to give them your money because they forget you are even there....it’s a form of entertainment that I used to enjoy and when I try to do that here, and it just makes me want to go back home and eat at my own home and cook – it’s cheaper,

cleaner...it's a very frustrating experience...the Dutch people get served more promptly." (Bonnie, USA)

- **I don't belong here, I'm not supposed to be here.** Speaking *English* when going out to bars and cafes also lead to a sense of feeling *out of place* and being labeled as a *foreigner* which also lead locals to treat participants as if they were *not supposed to be* there:

"...we felt so completely out of place. We were the only people speaking English in the place, which of course immediately put us in the thing of being the foreigner...I'm sorry I'm actually, I feel I don't belong here, I'm not supposed to be here, we just go." (Sandra, Germany)

- **You expect that you have to wait.** One way of dealing with the general *cultural difference* in terms of service levels is adjusting one's expectations:

"And here you expect that you have to wait. You have to wait quite a long time and the waiters and waitresses are also 'I'm coming.' But the 'I'm coming' may be another 15 to 20, even 30 minutes in Netherlands. So I think it's different. Really cultural difference." (Tracy, Hong Kong)

In the Netherlands, people go to *restaurants to communicate*, which would explain why the service levels are so *relaxed* in comparison to other cultures.

"And the reason for it is that people come to restaurants to communicate. So they give you opportunity to sit and wait and talk." (Anushka, Russia)

"The service seems quite relaxed." (Margaret, Spain)

- **I've found here a beautiful cultural life but I'm only open to a part of it.** Participating in the *cultural life* is considered a positive aspect of living in the Netherlands, however for some participants, the *language* formed a barrier that made participants feel left *alone*.

"...I think it also is linked to the language. I feel I'm not...the cultural life here is not totally open to me; it's mostly because of the language...I have the feeling that I cannot find information about it, and probably it comes from the

language as well...there are events that probably are not so open in the media and I feel like I'm kinda left alone." (Gina, Romania)

Other participants experienced the opposite however:

- **There is so much out there.** For many participants, a positive aspect of the *cultural life* in the Netherlands is the abundance of *English* alternatives, albeit *touristy*. In many other countries, cultural aspects would only be available in the *local* language.

"...you can find also lots of English-speaking performances and concerts and so on. So even if you don't speak really fluent Dutch you can still go to theatre and cinema in English. Because there is a lot in this regard, especially in the Randstad area. We go there really often." (Lana, Czech Republic)

4.3.5.1.2 Affinity 1.2: Dutch Culture

- **For me Holland is a double-sided coin.** A key theme that emerged during the discussion of this affinity is the *double-sidedness* of the culture, which surfaces seems to sprout from *religion*, and influences *friendships*, *democracy*, and the sense that although the culture seems *open*, one can *never become very close to Dutch people*:

"For me Holland is a double-sided coin...I think it comes even from religion, because from one side they show that they are simple, but at the same look at their houses, ja, normal houses – it's very big eh... windows...but then again when you come to [the] house, it is still very closed. You never come very close to Dutch people. So it's always double coin. Very often." (Anushka, Russia)

- **It depends on what you're looking for.** This *double coin* can be experienced in restaurants:

"In Ottawa where I grew up, there was a Dutch cafe run by Dutch people and the students really liked to go there because you could spend an hour on one cup of coffee and nobody bothered you and said you need to spend

more, right? So in the double coin, it depends on what you're looking for and it depends on what you want." (Laura, Canada)

- **I'm going home to MY family.** The double coin can also be seen in the separation between *work* and *family* life:

"You can go home in the evening. But then when I think when you are single, you want to also try and interact with your colleagues after work. I mean that's a very US kind of mentality. You go for a drink or whatever...uhm...but then there's also that separation at the same time. You know, it's 'Ok now I'm going home to MY family'. So it is a blessing and a...it's the two-sided coin again." (Bonnie, USA)

- **I started to respect Russian culture sufficiently more when I started living here.** For many participants, living in the Netherlands has helped them *respect* and *appreciate* their own cultures more by realizing the *good* things about their *own* cultures:

"Yeah, it's not me but I started to respect Russian culture sufficiently more when I started living here. I became sufficiently more Russian nationalist." (Anushka, Russia)

"Because you realize what you miss...Before I was one of the complaining Germans, and now I'm thinking 'people you just really have to realize that the things that are good. And you know, don't complain all the time'." (Sandra, Germany)

- **It can be a bit dangerous.** However, a *danger* of *appreciating* one's own culture whilst living *abroad* is that one may begin to *complain* and become unwilling to *connect with the host society* without being able to *embrace* the *good things from the new country*:

"Yeah, but that can be, also like a bit dangerous...of course it is nice just to realize the good things from your own country, but also picking up the good things from the new country so in the end you can get a balance because...I don't like people when they just go and say 'oh because in my country we do it that way...oh, that would never happen in my country...' and it's like,

yeah, but just take it or leave it! I mean, that's the way it is, either you embrace it, or you just go back home..." (Margaret, Spain)

- **Simply a changed point of view.** Adapting to *Dutch culture* requires a *changed point of view* where one may have *more values* through living in the international environment:

"Simply a changed point of view...you have value for what you had and what you have now....You're somewhere in the middle area finally..." (Anushka, Russia)

"Yeah, the value, you have more values and you see them." (Sandra, Germany)

- **You speak only about facts.** Building close relationships with locals in the Netherlands is very hard because of the *communication* style – there is a lot of *speaking about facts* instead of feelings, which creates a sense of a *tough exterior* and *superficial friendships*:

"I would split up the communication here in Holland in private life and business life...People here are speaking only about facts [gestures with her hands] and finally after hours of talking you have nothing...You never go deeply in your feelings, you can't discuss anything..." (Anushka, Russia)

"...what they describe as a friendship...it's superficial...Like they accept...when they meet you they greet you, they are nice and everything, they are also interested in asking this and this, but from my experience it is always a bit difficult to get really close to Dutch people." (Lana, Czech Republic)

However, Bonnie's experience after breaking up with her boyfriend also provided her with new insights into the depth of relationships in the Netherlands:

- **There really is the capability for compassion once you get to know them.** For Bonnie, the *generosity, compassion* and *general interest in her well-being* after her *separation* from her *partner*, coming from her company changed her perception of the Dutch culture as being *cold* and distant:

“I used to think that, until my more recent experience of my separation with my partner. The CFO at my office, who is a Dutch man, saw me at the office, going ‘what, you look horrible, what’s going on?’ ...And he’s paying for corporate housing, they got me a company car, they’re now saying without giving me the money, to go and start your life over again. I was just alarmed at the generosity and the genuine interest in your well-being...there really is the capability for compassion once you get to know them. When it matters, they come through.” (Bonnie, USA)

- **For them everything is about the bikes and they don’t see life with no bikes so it’s also a way to understand.** *Biking* was associated with *understanding* and *embracing* the *culture*. Through understanding the role of bikes as an integral part of the social conscience, one can gain a glimpse of the underlying culture of the Netherlands:

“I think Holland is about biking. And boats. It’s water and bikes. It’s a pity if you don’t bike through Holland because on the bike you discover a completely different Holland. If you don’t bike through Holland you really miss a lot. Secondly, it’s a practical, fast way of getting where you’d like to get.” (Lana, Czech Republic)

“It’s also a way of embracing...the hosting culture...So it’s also easy to understand them much better because for them everything is about the bikes and they don’t see life with no bikes so it’s also a way to understand...” (Margaret, Spain)

4.3.5.2 Affinity 2: Language

Language was considered a key component of the adjustment process, fulfilling multiple roles as a barrier or as a support. Table 4.23 (overleaf) summarises the cards that were associated with “Language”.

Table 4.23 Language

Affinity 2: Language	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Main barrier: Language Not writing in the language Language Speaking language (Dutch) Language barrier Language barrier in daily life Biggest barrier is language I just live in this expat bubble because I don't speak the language Pressure to be great at Dutch quickly because of being German Attempting to speak Dutch and having the Dutch respond back in English Sometimes lack of Dutch input to understand better	Learning Dutch is essential to be able to connect with Dutch culture Dutch colleagues have been really good about only having conversations in English when I am present There is a sort of impatience. There is so much English that it's hard sometimes to learn Dutch.

- **There is so much English that it's hard sometimes to learn Dutch.** The abundance of *English* makes it *hard to learn Dutch* because people *talk back* in *English* when they hear an *accent*:

"My observation from a lot of people is that there is so much English that it's hard sometimes to learn Dutch." (Laura, Canada)

"...if you do speak Dutch to people, and they hear accent, they talk back English. So you try hard..." (Monika, Slovakia)

- **There is a sort of impatience.** Trying to *speak Dutch* is not easy and it takes time to learn the language. There is a sense of *impatience* from colleagues who start off speaking in *English* to their non-native colleagues and then after a *certain time*, there is an expectation that the expatriate colleague will be *fluent* in the language:

"...there is a sort of impatience...and there is a sort of oh, she doesn't speak well enough, so let's speak English. And then for me it's easy – I say ok, if you want to speak English, I want to speak English, so..." (Gina, Romania)

“...you always speak English-English but then after certain time they say: ‘Ok, you’ve been here for some time, so you should speak Dutch’...” (Lana, Czech Republic)

- **I just live in this expat bubble because I don’t speak the language.** Through mastering the language, one could gain access to *locals*, social networks, important information and gain deeper insight into the customs and culture of the host country:

“...I live in this expat bubble and I don’t know anything sometimes around it. But I’m starting to get more contact with not Dutch people, but like people who have been here for longer... sometimes it’s really difficult just to know what is going around...I feel a bit, like, ‘foreigner’ living in...Because I’m always around expats.” (Margaret, Spain)

- **It also has to do with the accent.** For many group members, their efforts at learning the language were thwarted by reactions from locals. Despite efforts to learn the language, improve *pronunciation* and learning to speak *fluently*, different *accents* were still a barrier to communication:

“...The Dutch have a hard time understanding your...accent...It’s not so much the quality of the language, it’s the how it comes out...” (Laura, Canada)

“...the Dutch accent is Russian. But still in business life, I speak fluent Dutch, but I still feel that people would start saying ‘We don’t understand you, your pronunciation is a little bit not clear...’ and you always get it in your face.” (Anushka, Russia)

4.3.5.3 Affinity 3: Society

Inside the society we can put the culture as a sub-theme. The group found it hard to define Society because it seemed to overlap with the concept of “Culture”.

“Inside the society we can put the culture as a sub-theme because I think they are kind of, they meet each other, they overlap each other and it isn’t easy to distinguish.” (Margaret, Spain)

- **This society is formalized kind of culture and culture is a little bit informal.**
Society was considered to be the formalised way of life in the host country, and the informal rules for behaviour:

“This society is formalized kind of culture and culture is a little bit informal. So both is culture, one is informal structure and one is formal.” (Anushka, Russia)

After some deliberation, a sub-affinity, Dutch System, was added to the main affinity. Table 4.24 (below) provides an overview of the final sorting of cards that reside under this affinity.

Table 4.24 Society: Dutch system

Affinity 3: Society Dutch System	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
<p>Missing spontaneous life, fun</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Are we going to live to work or are we working to live.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">It's more like a men's society</p> <p>Poor family life</p> <p>Miss family and friends.....</p> <p>Different society dynamics</p> <p>Difference in a woman's role in society</p> <p>Every life turns around only your own well-being</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Here it's not so much the family.</p> <p>Expat community only</p> <p>You are alone here</p> <p>Sundays...what do you do with yourself?</p> <p>Having Dutch friends is a little hard (language and cultural barrier)</p> <p>Hard to make Dutch friends</p> <p>Hidden "tolerance" as foreigner</p> <p>Less and less openness toward immigrants</p> <p>German<->Dutch in Football (But not only...)</p> <p>Being German on 'Bevrijdingsdag' is a horrible feeling</p> <p>Dutch bureaucracy is crazy and annoying sometimes</p>	<p>Living more spontaneous life</p> <p>Starting "single life" is not as difficult as I thought</p> <p>Easy to live here</p> <p>Do not need to drive</p> <p>Family</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The working mentality here is still kind of ok.</p> <p>.....but also you get your own "family" here</p> <p>Work-life balance: work hard 9-6, then home/family time</p> <p>People are creative, great atmosphere living in Amsterdam</p> <p>People in Amsterdam seem very content and satisfied with their lives</p> <p>People are more open-minded and free</p> <p>Very easy to make friends (International Environment)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The system is set up in such a way that women can normally participate in the working environment.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I try to think that I am equal.</p>

This society is formalized kind of culture and culture is a little bit informal.

Inside the society we can put the culture as a sub-theme.

I don't expect anything else.

<p>Time to figure out the systems (damn KPN!) Taxes (I'm clueless)</p>	
<p>It's so much bureaucracy, there's no room for being human.</p>	

- **The working mentality here is still kind of ok.** The *mentality* of life in the Netherlands where people are still trying to *enjoy life in different ways* was considered to be a key aspect of Dutch culture to which many of the participants from Eastern Europe were very strongly attracted. The egalitarian structure of the Dutch society in which there are no large gaps between different classes was considered a strong support factor in adjusting to life in the Netherlands. The culture in the Netherlands is also *more open-minded and free* because it is less status-driven (people are not *showing off* all the time):

"...The working mentality here is still kind of ok. People still like to work 9 till 5, of course sometimes they have to stay longer but they don't mind to work part-time, they are really trying to find time also for their private life, not only everything being busy with getting properties and work-work-work, but try to enjoy life also and in different ways." (Lana, Czech Republic)

"...they're more open-minded and free because I think it's like the Dutch society is not more about showing off..." (Gina, Romania)

- **Are we going to live to work or we are working to live.** Not all participants considered the mentality of life in the Netherlands as positive. Anushka argued that *you need to be born here to enjoy it*:

"...are we going to live to work or we are working to live?...In Eastern companies in Soviet Union you live to work. And here it's other way around...you need to be born here to enjoy it. Otherwise it costs years first to understand and then trying to adjust." (Anushka, Russia)

- **It is more like a men's society.** The *role of women in society* was considered to be a barrier for women who wish to advance in the Netherlands:

"...I came from a society [Russia] where women play a great role, especially historically. I think women played, if you're a manager of a company its fine. Here, first of all it is more like a men's society. Sufficiently more men

[unintelligible] than women....I did experience it a couple of times that I've been told 'you are a woman; we're not going to accept you for a job.'...women don't play a great role because they use that woman somewhere else..." (Anushka, Russia)

- **I'm a woman, so I'm a little bit odd and awkward in a multitude of men.** Being a woman in certain *business* sectors in the Netherlands means that one may be a minority and surrounded by a *boys' club*:

"It's also what business are you in...in Finance, there are mostly men. In my country [Romania] in finance there are mostly women. There I'm one of the many, here I am a percentage...I'm a woman, so I'm a little bit odd and awkward in a multitude of men." (Gina, Romania)

"...I'm one of the only women in the finance department in my office and there's only two that are not administrative assistants. The rest, everybody else, is in admin...it is kinda that this is the 'boys club'...you know, we're the men." (Bonnie, USA)

However, not all participants agreed on this point.

- **The system is set up in such a way that women can normally participate in the working environment.** The way the *system* is set up, is very *practical* for women who wish to pursue *part-time work* in order to *stay home with their kids* in the short term:

"I think the way it is being done here is very practical, women can have a part-time work. They are staying at home; they can stay home with their kids, but not long-term...But I also have lots of women who are in management positions." (Lana, Czech Republic)

- **I try to think that I am equal.** Participants indicated that they felt *discrimination* by *Dutch boys* based on the fact that they are *foreigners* and *women*. *Dutch nationals* also seemed to receive more *support* than their expatriate counterparts:

"...I try to think that I am equal and that because I'm in a men's world, I'm a woman, now I reached a good position...but when it's about promoting...and

you are like ‘oh but... you come here and it’s like, it’s already a prize that you are here’. And I’m like, no it’s not a prize that I am here. I’m here because I’m good, I’m here because you chose me, so if you want to offer me a grow, you should give me support...I often felt that there is a discrimination there...I came here via the company and they said ‘oh, but it’s already something that you achieved to come here’. No, I achieved to come here because I was good enough to come here...” (Gina, Romania)

- **Here it’s not so much the family.** For participants from more family-oriented cultures, it was a challenge to adapt to the way *how the family is* in the Netherlands. One cannot *count* on one’s family:

“...And here it’s not so much the family. They always keep the small family or it’s not so much really like, ok, it’s not so much the focus on the family.”
(Lana, Czech Republic)

“But you can’t count on your family. Because for example, my husband has about 50 relatives. We see them twice a year, maybe 3 times a year.”
(Anushka, Russia)

Sandra comes from a more individualistic culture and had an opposite experience of the family life in the Netherlands:

“...I think the family life isn’t poorer, it’s just closer, like a smaller...” (Sandra, Germany)

- **I couldn’t get too many Dutch friends.** Finding friends in the *international environment* is fairly easy, but making *Dutch friends* proved harder – on the surface Dutch society seems open, but the way in which friendships are formed and the general discourse around ‘foreigners’ provides additional barriers to forming deep relationships with the locals:

“For me also it was influenced by the fact that I couldn’t get too many Dutch friends. So I don’t have a Dutch environment that I’m living in; I’m living in this international environment. My boyfriend is Canadian, all my friends are English speakers, so I’m not helped by that.” (Gina, Romania)

“...You never come very close to Dutch people.” (Anushka, Russia)

4.3.5.3.1 Affinity 3.1: Dutch System

The Dutch System was described as the “*general organisation of society here...everything is very bureaucracy and all of the rules and regulations...*” (Sandra, Germany)

- **It’s so much bureaucracy, there’s no room for being human.** The Dutch system is created by government and consequently cascaded down to society in the form of formal structures, rules and regulations. The general practicalities of life, such as getting connected to the internet or obtaining a driver’s license, are influenced by the way in which the formal system is structured. This structure was considered both a hindrance and a help:

“...getting a driver’s license was probably one of the most frustrating experiences of my life!...it’s so much bureaucracy and, and, by the book, and this is law and there’s no room for being human.” (Bonnie, USA)

“I find it a blessing, I’m sorry! [Giggles] I’m coming from a country where if you want something, you probably queue for three hours to get a paper...here I take a number and they call my number and I just sit nicely waiting in the air-conditioned room. I’m coming from a different experience.” (Gina, Romania)

- **I don’t expect anything else.** One way of *adapting* to the system is through changing one’s expectations and realising that things are different than in one’s home country:

“...once you know that it’s going to be like four weeks, you can say, ok, to install my phone it takes two weeks. So I don’t expect anything else to take less than that...I know already that ‘right now’ it’s not possible – it’s a way that I’m adapting.” (Gina, Romania)

4.3.5.4 Affinity 4: Professional Development

Professional Development refers to the opportunities available for women to pursue their careers in the Netherlands, as well as the potential barriers that hinder such development. Table 4.25 below provides an overview of the cards that were sorted under this category.

Table 4.25 Professional Development

Foreigners were more based in a temporary contract.

4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Lack of network in areas of interest/education Finding work that pays (enough) based on education Differences in career development possibilities Often have the feeling that I need to be 10 times better to be promoted I often felt there is a discrimination.	Opportunities for better education Job market good upon arrival Setting up your business is challenging but really worth it when starts working Having international experience Excellent work environment Informal (no titles etc) Hey, I'm here amongst all the others.
Dutch do not really know how to praise "Niet voldoen aan bedrijfcultuur" (Do not comply with company culture) Bias work: Not here permanent ('in development') Discrimination (directly expressed): -Age -Country of origin -Sex	

- I often felt there is a discrimination.** Participants indicated that they felt *discrimination* by *Dutch boys* based on the fact that they are *foreigners* and *women*. *Dutch nationals* also seemed to receive more *support* than their expatriate counterparts:

"...Because that's what I see. It's more Dutch nationals. And indeed because it's finance, it's Dutch boys. So I often felt that there is a discrimination there...I came here via the company and they said 'oh, but it's already something that you achieved to come here'. No, I achieved to come here because I was good enough to come here. So if you said that the first time, why not groom me as much as you groom the others?" (Gina, Romania)

"...One was Australian, finance director of a big recruiting agency. He invited me and told me immediately: 'You know, I never met such an animal as the Soviet Union people, so I'd like to see you in person.'...It was...its one example, its one person. He was finance manager of a very big international

recruitment company. The second example...I do remember I asked about discrimination and he told: 'you know, I can talk to you openly/honestly, but I'll provide you one example. Just now I had a position, and I had 3 candidates. One was excellent; he was from the Turkish region an honest and nice candidate. The second was French, more or less acceptable, and the last was Dutch and he was absolutely unacceptable. It was an international company. Who do you think they chose for the job? They took the Dutch person.' It was again a story which was told to me by recruiters. I don't like to continue, there are a lot of stories, but I can provide them."
(Anushka, Russia)

- **Hey, I'm here amongst all the others.** In order to develop one's career, it is important to deal with differences in the working *culture* and making sure one's efforts are seen – to *execute*:

"That's why you have to execute...I have to prove myself ten times more. But at the same time I'm female, but you have to execute, that's what I learned. If you don't fight for it, not really necessarily fighting but making sure, huh...'hey, I'm here amongst all the others'." (Lana, Czech Republic)

- **Foreigners were more based in a non-permanent contract.** Participants experienced a form of bias in terms of their employment *contracts*. *Foreigners* are expected to *leave* soon and are thus expected to *prove* themselves.

"I think that's a bias...I happened to want a job recently and the reason why I was not given that job is like 'Yeah, but you're a foreigner and you're probably not going to be here forever. Or maybe you are going to leave in one or two years'..." (Gina, Romania)

"...Foreigners were more based in a...non-permanent contract. So we have to prove ourselves..." (Margaret, Spain)

Educational background and training seemed to have a formative influence on the career opportunities available to some of the participants in the group. This was particularly true for fields where legal systems and understanding of the local culture played a role. Tracy and Laura, for example, both have a background in

Social Work, but neither of them is able to continue this profession without significant re-schooling in the Netherlands.

4.3.5.5 Affinity 5: Miscellaneous* (Lifestyle)

This affinity was used as a “dump” category – participants didn’t *know what to do* with the category and left it as an option not to *do anything* with it.

“For the miscellaneous I don’t know what we’re going to do...” (Sandra, Germany)

“Or we don’t do anything with that.” (Tracy, Hong Kong)

The cards that were placed in this category could probably fit into other categories or be labelled differently, but due to time constraints, were left under this label (see Table 4.26, overleaf). Practical matters such as finding housing and relocation costs serve as barriers in the adjustment process. Related to the concept of housing is the notion of “home” – missing one’s home country and culture (home sickness) and at the same time yearning for the international aspects when one is home. Thus a positive aspect of living abroad is that it helps one to appreciate the culture of one’s home country more. Ease of international travel and the centrality of the Netherlands as a location are also considered to be positive aspects of the international lifestyle.

***Researcher's note:**

Considering the fact that “Miscellaneous” was a “dump category” which does not make much sense in and of itself, there are two options for dealing with this affinity. The first option would be to change the label for the affinity, based on inspection of the cards and axial codes from the silent brainstorming. In this case, the word “Lifestyle” could be used to name the affinity. The second option would be to re-shuffle the cards from this affinity into the existing affinities and to delete this category. This is a very tempting option, but for the sake of completeness, it was decided to retain this affinity and only make a decision about deleting the affinity once the final SID has been created.

Table 4.26 Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)

Affinity 5: Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)	
Challenges/Negatives	Support/Helps/Positives
Finding affordable housing Costs of setting up a new home	Easy to travel around the world
Missing home, but I am missing the international part when I'm back home	Realizing that things are great in your home country and then cherishing them more

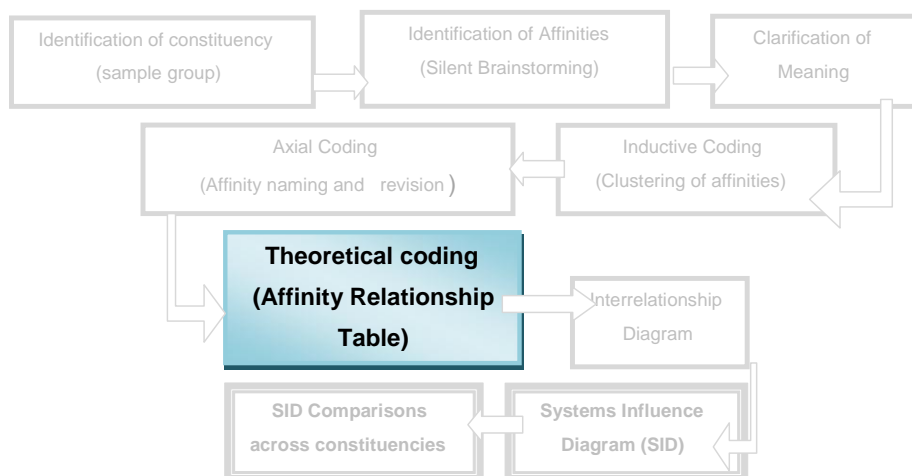
A common thread that ran through the focus group discussion was the idea of a “double-sided coin”: participants continually emphasised that their experience was not only positive or negative, but that each part of the experience was both positive *and* negative at the same time. As with the first group, a common understanding and shared system of meaning was created for the group. Table 4.27 (overleaf) provides a summary definition of each affinity that forms part of the system:

Table 4.27 Summary of definitions of affinities and sub-affinities (12 June 2010)

Affinity	Definition
1. Culture	The artefacts, products, norms, values and basic assumptions held by members of the home and host country. Culture in general refers to the surface aspects of the culture, such as theatre and performing arts, whilst Dutch culture reflects the underlying norms and values of the local culture in comparison to one’s own basic assumptions and cultural values.
2. Language	The ability to make oneself understood and to learn/understand the language of the host country. Language provides insight into the host culture and inability to speak/understand the language may lead to isolation from locals. Speaking the local language with an accent may also lead to negative responses from locals.
3. Society	The lifestyle, attitudes and informal, unwritten rules for interactions between members living and working in a country or region.
4. Professional Development	Activities related to developing and growing one’s career. Through executing strategic choices and making sure one’s efforts are recognised, career growth and personal satisfaction can be accomplished.
5. Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)	Various aspects related to lifestyle and moving to another country including housing, ease of travel and re-discovering one’s cultural identity through incorporating aspects of home culture and the international environment into one’s repertoire.

In the next section, the joint experiences of the group are collated into a visual representation of the group’s reality in the form of an SID.

4.3.6 Step 6: Theoretical coding (12 June 2010)



The same process of presenting the group’s reality was used as for Focus Group 1. Table 4.28 (overleaf) sets out the aggregate ART for the group.

Table 4.28 Focus Group 12 June 2010: Aggregate Affinity Relationship Table

Affinity Pair Relationship	Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of an IF/THEN statement of relationship
1 > 2	<p>Culture has an influence on every aspect, local culture interferes in all areas.</p> <p>Integration if not being able to speak the language will not be able to understand the culture.</p> <p>The language develops from culture, ways of doing things. If I know the cultural norms, I may hear the language differently – “You are a different animal”- If I would better understand/master the language I would have more access to the culture.</p> <p>Language is the spoken expression of culture, so it is directly influenced/related.</p> <p>If you understand the language, then you have more of an opportunity and interact with the culture.</p> <p>Culture influences the language structure, and other way around.</p>
1 < 2	<p>Knowing the language helps understand fully the culture.</p> <p>If I don't speak the language, I can never fully experience the culture.</p>
1 < 3	<p>If there are rules/traditions, people will live by them and act accordingly.</p>
1 > 3	<p>If you understand the culture, then you integrate better into society.</p>
1 ↔ 3	<p>If I understand the culture I could easily adapt to society.</p> <p>(Same as 1>3 above – note by RVDB)</p>
1 < 4	<p>The Dutch culture being open to foreigners, allowing to basically to succeed in what you actually like to do, this is not only for a work.</p>
1 > 4	<p>Understanding the culture, then you are better able to develop working relationships which help your Professional Development.</p> <p>Knowing the culture helped me in my personal development (I had to “fight” for it).</p>
2 < 3	<p>If I don't speak the language, I will have trouble understanding the system.</p>
2 > 3	<p>Knowing the language helps the adaptation to society.</p>
2 > 4	<p>If I am having trouble understanding the system, I don't get too far in my</p>

Affinity Pair	Example of the relationship either in natural language or in the form of an IF/THEN statement of relationship
	career. Knowing the language gives more personal development opportunities.
2 > 5	Knowing the language helps with housing.
3 > 4	If I don't speak the language, I don't get as far in my career.
3 ↔ 4	Being adapted to society helps me networking / and vice versa.
3 > 5	Understanding how society is structured helps with housing for example.
4 < > 5	Not very viable options under miscellaneous that would generate relationship

4.3.7 Step 7: Interrelationship Diagram (12 June 2010)

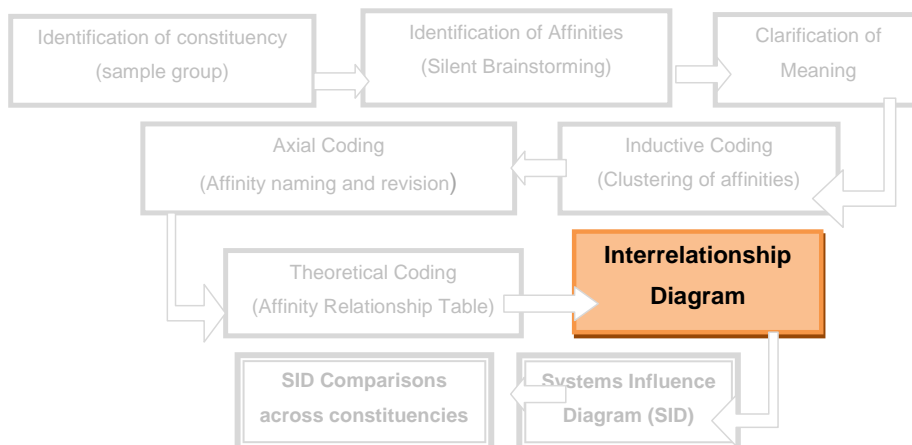


Table 4.29 (overleaf) shows the total number of “votes” cast for each possible relationship between affinities. A total of 64 votes were cast for 30 possible pairwise relationships.

Table 4.29 **Frequencies in affinity pair order (12 June 2010)**

Affinity Pair Relationship	Frequency
1 > 2	2
1 < 2	3
1 ↔ 2	3
1 > 3	4
1 < 3	1
1 ↔ 3	1
1 > 4	8
1 < 4	0
1 ↔ 4	0
1 > 5	5
1 < 5	0
1 ↔ 5	1
2 > 3	3
2 < 3	3
2 ↔ 3	1
2 > 4	8
2 < 4	0
2 ↔ 4	0
2 > 5	5
2 < 5	0
2 ↔ 5	1
3 > 4	7
3 < 4	0
3 ↔ 4	1
3 > 5	2
3 < 5	2
3 ↔ 5	1
4 > 5	2
4 < 5	0
4 ↔ 5	0
Total frequency	64

The bi-directional relationships illustrate the possibility of conflicts in the system and are highlighted in RED for further analysis and reconciliation in the next section. The “no relationship” votes were not included in this table. For relationships where no votes were cast, a zero value was awarded.

4.3.7.1 Pareto Tables and the Min-Max Criterion

Table 4.30 (below) illustrates the Pareto table for Focus Group 2 (hosted on 12 June 2010).

Table 4.30 Pareto table Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)

	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency sorted (descending)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage (relation)	Cumulative percentage (frequency)	Power
1	1 > 2	2	2	3,1	3,1	0,0
2	1 < 2	3	3	6,3	7,8	1,6
3	1 ↔ 2	3	3	9,4	12,5	3,1
4	1 > 3	4	4	12,5	18,8	6,3
5	1 < 3	1	1	15,6	20,3	4,7
6	1 ↔ 3	1	1	18,8	21,9	3,1
7	1 > 4	8	8	21,9	34,4	12,5
8	1 < 4	0	0	25,0	34,4	9,4
9	1 ↔ 4	0	0	28,1	34,4	6,3
10	1 > 5	5	5	31,3	42,2	10,9
11	1 < 5	0	0	34,4	42,2	7,8
12	1 ↔ 5	1	1	37,5	43,8	6,3
13	2 > 3	3	3	40,6	48,4	7,8
14	2 < 3	3	3	43,8	53,1	9,4
15	2 ↔ 3	1	1	46,9	54,7	7,8
16	2 > 4	8	8	50,0	67,2	17,2
17	2 < 4	0	0	53,1	67,2	14,1
18	2 ↔ 4	0	0	56,3	67,2	10,9
19	2 > 5	5	5	59,4	75,0	15,6
20	2 < 5	0	0	62,5	75,0	12,5
21	2 ↔ 5	1	1	65,6	76,6	10,9
22	3 > 4	7	7	68,8	87,5	18,8
23	3 < 4	0	0	71,9	87,5	15,6
24	3 ↔ 4	1	1	75,0	89,1	14,1
25	3 > 5	2	2	78,1	92,2	14,1
26	3 < 5	2	2	81,3	95,3	14,1
27	3 ↔ 5	1	1	84,4	96,9	12,5
28	4 > 5	2	2	87,5	100,0	12,5
29	4 < 5	0	0	90,6	100,0	9,4

	Affinity pair relationship	Frequency sorted (descending)	Cumulative frequency	Cumulative percentage (relation)	Cumulative percentage (frequency)	Power
30	4 ↔ 5	0	0	93,8	100,0	6,3
	Total Frequency	64	Equal Total Frequency	Equals 100%	Equals 100%	Power = E-D

In the case of this study, the first seven relationships (21.9% of the total) account for 34.4% of the variance in the system, and the first 22 relationships (68.8% of the total) account for 87.5% of the variance in the system. Power reaches a maximum at 22 relationships, which accounts for 18.8% of the total variation in the system. Thus, in order to develop a representative system of the group's reality that is both parsimonious (thus using the simplest model available) *and* accounts for the largest amount of variance in the system, the first 22 relationships in the system were sufficient for representing the group's reality. Figure 4.3 (below) illustrates the variance accounted for by each succeeding relationship and Figure 4.4 (overleaf) contains the power analysis for the system.

Figure 4.3 Focus Group 2: maximizing variance

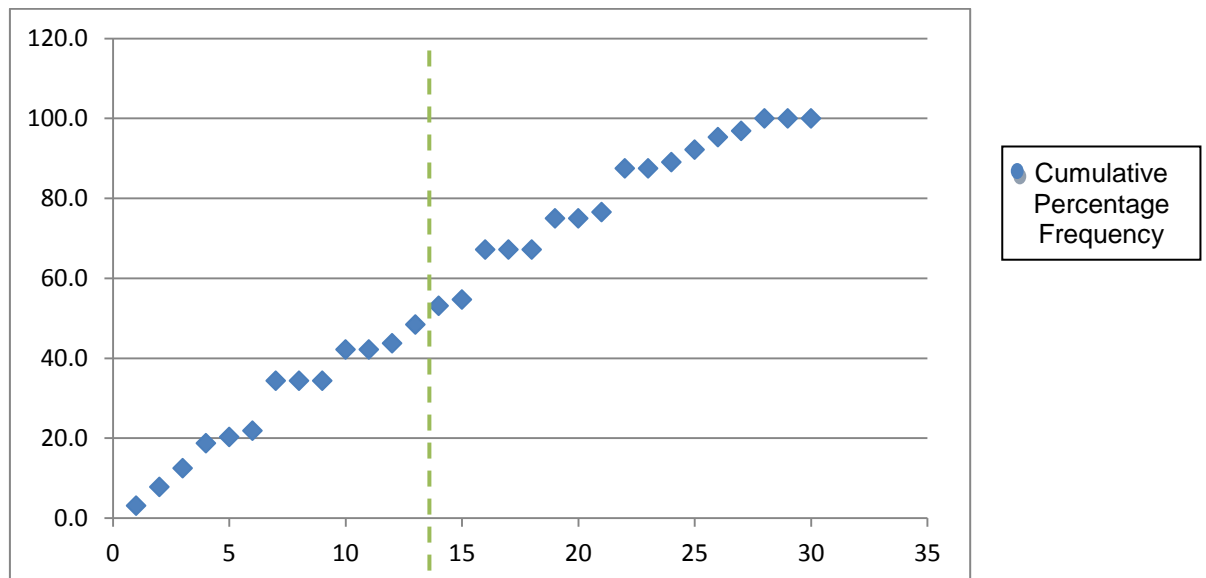
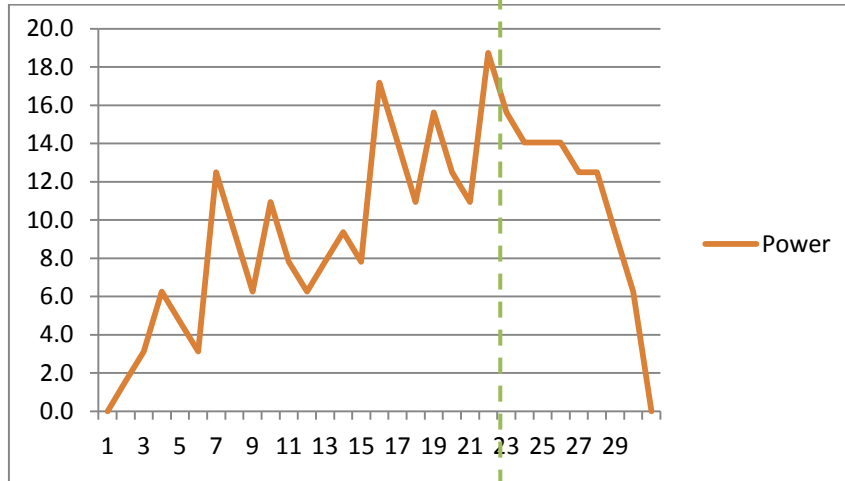


Figure 4.4 Focus Group 2: power analysis



In order to account for potential conflicts due to bi-directional relationships identified by participants, the frequency table was investigated for potential conflicts, as illustrated in Table 4.31 (below). Potential conflicts are marked by a question mark and may indicate the presence of a potential feedback loop in the system or another intervening variable that was unaccounted for. These affinities were set aside for reconciliation in drawing up the SID.

Table 4.31 Possible conflicting relationships identified by Focus Group 2 (12 June 2012)

Affinity pair relationship	Frequency	Conflict?	Reason for conflict
1 > 4	8		
2 > 4	8		
3 > 4	7		
1 > 5	5	?	1 ↔ 5 = 1 vote
2 > 5	5	?	2 ↔ 5 = 1 vote
1 > 3	4		1 < 3 = 1 vote AND 1 ↔ 3 = 1 vote
1 < 2	3	?	1 > 2 = 2 votes AND 1 ↔ 2 = 3 votes
2 > 3	3	?	2 < 3 = 3 votes AND 2 ↔ 3 = 1 vote
3 > 5	2	?	3 < 5 = 2 votes AND 3 ↔ 5 = 1 vote

4.3.7.2 Interrelationship Diagram

Table 4.32 (below) contains the unsorted IRD for Focus Group 2, and Table 4.33 (below) presents the sorted IRD in descending order of delta (Δ) values.

Table 4.32 Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010): unsorted tabular IRD

Tabular IRD								
	1	2	3	4	5	OUT	IN	Δ
1		←	↑	↑	↑	3	1	2
2	↑		↑	↑	↑	4	0	4
3	←	←		↑	↑	2	2	0
4	←	←	←		↑	1	3	-2
5	←	←	←	←		0	4	-4

Table 4.33 Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010): sorted tabular IRD

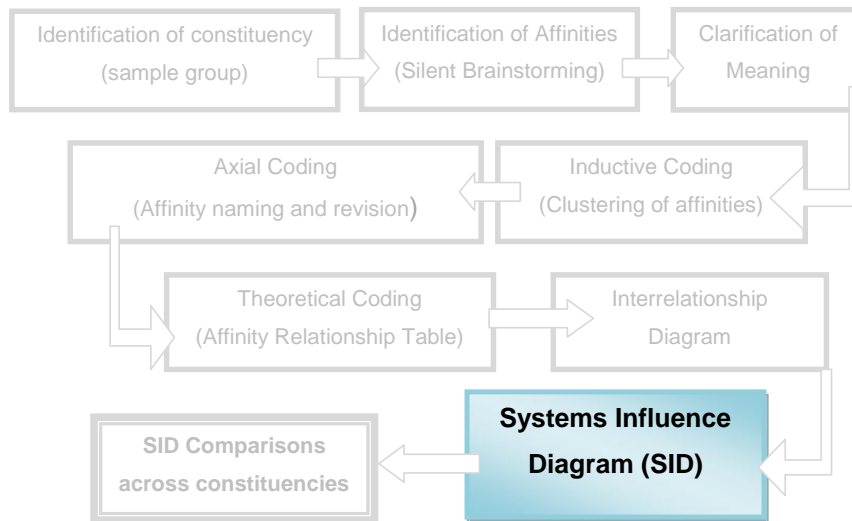
Tabular IRD – Sorted in Descending Order of Δ								
	1	2	3	4	5	OUT	IN	Δ
2	↑		↑	↑	↑	4	0	4
1		←	↑	↑	↑	3	1	2
3	←	←		↑	↑	2	2	0
4	←	←	←		↑	1	3	-2
5	←	←	←	←		0	4	-4

Table 4.34 (below) illustrates the tentative SID assignments based on the delta values calculated for the Ins and Outs of the system. These values provide a guideline for the positioning of affinities within the system.

Table 4.34 Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010): tentative assignment of affinities for SID

Tentative SID assignments	
2 Language	Primary Driver
1. Culture	Secondary Driver
3. Society	Circular/Pivot
5. Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)	Primary Outcome
4. Professional Development	Secondary Outcome

4.3.8 Step 8: SID (12 June 2010)

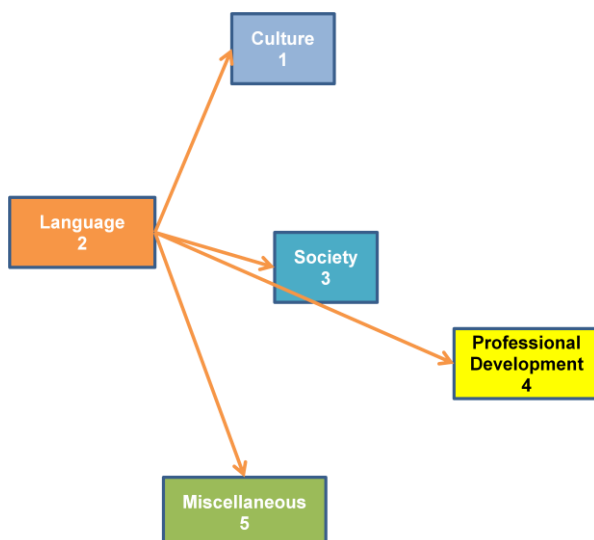


As for Focus Group 1, (see Section 4.2.8), the protocol suggested by Northcutt and McCoy (2004:178) was used to draw the SID for Focus Group 2.

4.3.8.1 Primary Driver: Language

Language (2) drives the system (see Diagram 4.15, below) and influences all the other elements of the system.

Diagram 4.15 Language



These were participants' responses regarding "Language" in relation to the elements of the system:

1. Culture

- *“Knowing the language helps understand the culture fully.”*
- *“If I don’t speak the language, I can never fully experience the culture.”*

3. Society

- *“Knowing the language helps the adaptation to society.”*

4. Professional Development

- *“If I am having trouble understanding the system, I don’t get too far in my career.”*
- *“Knowing the language gives more personal development opportunities.”*

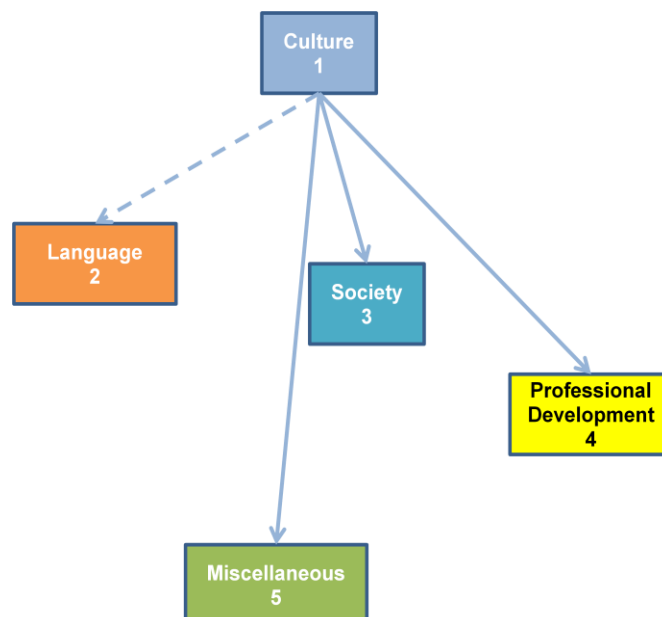
5. Miscellaneous

- *“Knowing the language helps with housing.”*

4.3.8.2 Secondary Driver: Culture

Culture (1) is a secondary driver (see Diagram 4.16, below) and influences many other elements of the system. However, there may be a conflict between 3-1 and 1-3, as there seem to be an equal number of votes for both directional influences (see Table 4.31, above). This means that *Culture* (1) could potentially also be a primary driver in the system.

Diagram 4.16 Culture



Participants' responses of "Culture" in relation to the elements of the system were the following:

2. Language

- *"Culture has an influence on every aspect, local culture interferes in all areas."*
- *"Integration if not being able to speak the language will not be able to understand the culture."*
- *"The language develops from culture, ways of doing things."*
- *"If I know the cultural norms, I may hear the language differently – 'You are a different animal' – If I would better understand/master the language I would have more access to the culture."*
- *"Language is the spoken expression of culture, so it is directly influenced/related."*
- *"If you understand the language, then you have more of an opportunity and interact with the culture."*
- *"Culture influences the language structure, and other way around."*

3. Society

- *"If you understand the culture, then you integrate better into society."*
- *"If I understand the culture I could easily adapt to society."*

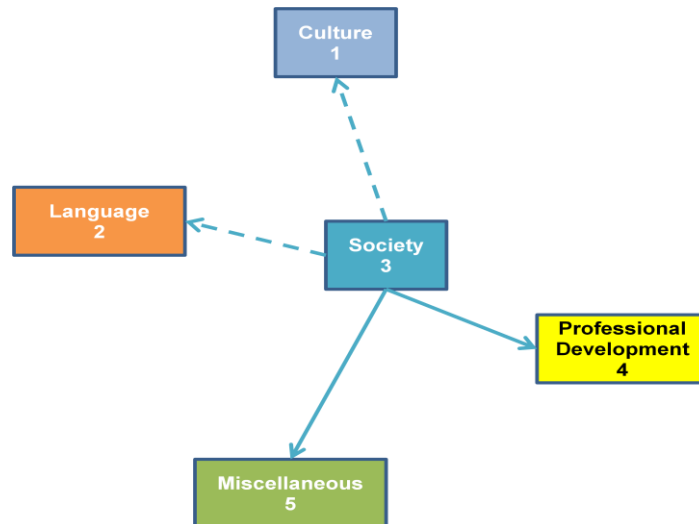
4. Professional Development

- *"Understanding the culture, then you are better able to develop working relationships which help your Professional Development."*
- *"Knowing the culture helped me in my personal development (I had to 'fight' for it)."*

4.3.8.3 Circular/Pivot: Society

Society (3) is a pivot or circular that influences many aspects in the system and is also influenced by many aspects of the system (see Diagram 4.17, overleaf). A possible conflict or feedback loop may cause a conflict in the system between 3-1 and 1-3 as well as 3-2 and 2-3 (see Table 4.31, in the previous section).

Diagram 4.17 Society



These were the participants’ responses regarding “Society” in relation to the elements of the system:

1. Culture

- *“If there are rules/traditions, people will live by them and act accordingly.”*

2. Language

- *“If I don’t speak the language, I will have trouble understanding the system.”*

4. Professional Development

- *“If I don’t speak the language, I don’t get as far in my career.”*

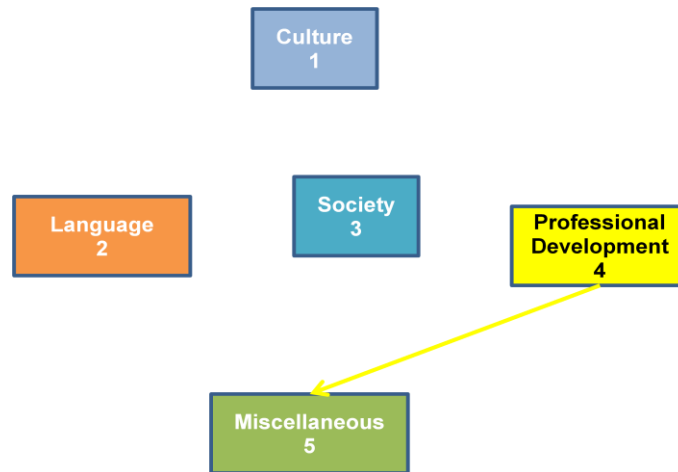
5. Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)

- *“Understanding how society is structured helps with housing for example.”*

4.3.8.4 Secondary outcome: Professional Development

Professional Development (4) is a secondary outcome of the system. It is influenced by many other elements in the system, but only influences one other element in the system, namely Miscellaneous (5) (see Diagram 4.18, overleaf).

Diagram 4.18 Professional Development



Participants' responses regarding "Professional Development" in relation to the elements of the system were the following:

1. Culture

- *"The Dutch culture being open to foreigners, allowing to basically to succeed in what you actually like to do, this is not only for a work."*

3. Society

- *"Being adapted to society helps me networking / and vice versa."*

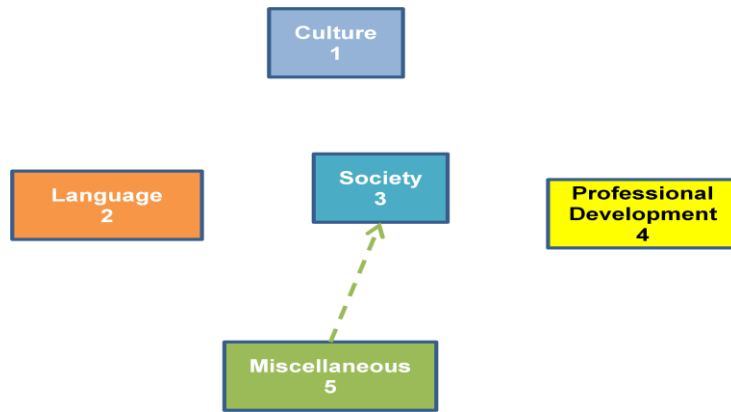
5. Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)

- *"Not very viable options under miscellaneous that would generate relationship."*

4.3.8.5 Primary outcome: Miscellaneous (Lifestyle)

Miscellaneous (Lifestyle) (5) is the primary outcome in the system. It is influenced by all other elements of the system, but does not influence any other elements of the system (see Diagram 4.19, overleaf). However, based on the equal number of votes for 3-5 and 5-3, a possible feedback loop or recursion may exist in the system which could lead to conflict in determining the final SID.

Diagram 4.19 Miscellaneous



This was a participant’s response regarding “Professional Development” in relation to the elements of the system:

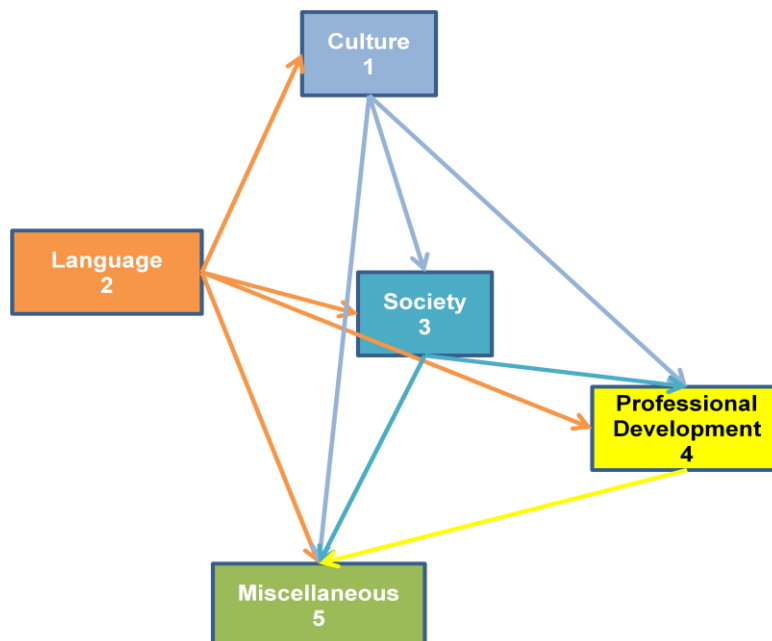
2. Language

- “Knowing the language helps with housing.”

4.3.8.6 Cluttered SID: Focus Group 2

The first version of the SID contains every possible relationship within the system. The system is saturated and represents all links identified in the IRD. Diagram 4.20 (below) represents the cluttered SID for Focus Group 2.

Diagram 4.20 Cluttered SID for Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)

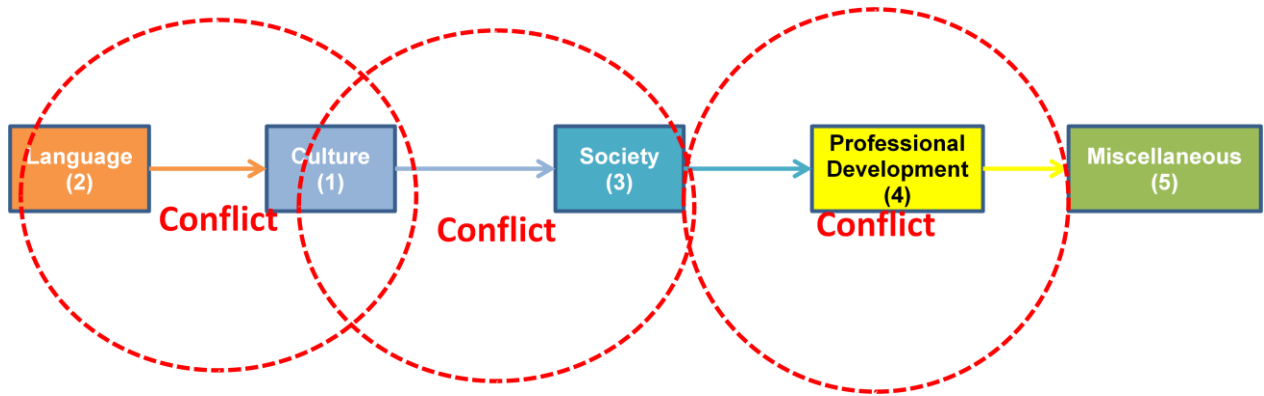


This cluttered diagram is very complex and rich in detail, offering a very comprehensive overview of the system. This complex illustration may, however, be confusing and difficult to interpret due to the relatively large number of connections between affinities (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004: 176). In order to create a more understandable representation of the system, an uncluttered (“clean”) SID is created.

4.3.8.7 Uncluttered (“clean”) SID: Focus Group 2

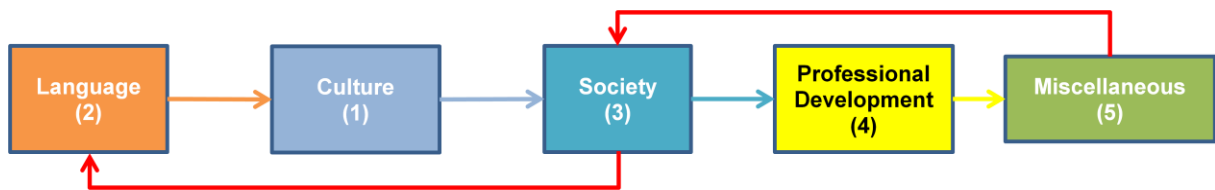
The “clean” SID represents a reconciled version of the cluttered SID by removing all redundant links on the one hand (for the sake of parsimony), whilst maintaining a system that represents the greatest level of variation. Redundant links are those links that represent direct pathways between affinities. The same pathway could also be reached via another affinity, which would simplify the system. (The protocol for arriving at the “clean” SID can be found in Appendix 8.) Diagram 4.21 (overleaf) represents the uncluttered, “clean” SID for the focus group hosted on 12 June 2010, illustrating points where potential conflicts may exist in the system, as discussed in the previous section.

Diagram 4.21 Cluttered SID for Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)



In order to reconcile these conflicts, Table 4.31, which shows conflicts, was revisited, as well as participants' theoretical coding of relationships. Feedback loops were created to account for the effects of intervening variables, as illustrated in Diagram 4.22 (below).

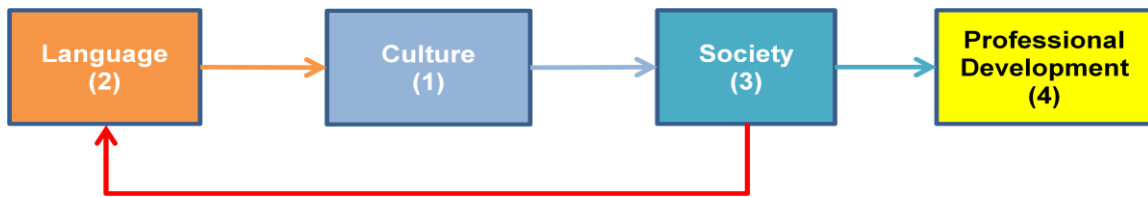
Diagram 4.22 Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010): "Clean" SID with affinity labels and potential conflicts reconciled



***Researcher's note:**

As can be seen from Diagram 4.22 above, the final affinity in the system, Miscellaneous/ Lifestyle, feeds back into Society and Language, causing a double-feedback loop in the system. This affinity does not seem to make logical sense as a final outcome in the final SID. The cards that resort under this affinity could also be classified under the affinities of "Language", "Culture" and "Society". Hence, it was decided to remove "Miscellaneous" from the final SID. Diagram 4.23 (overleaf) contains the final SID that was used for further analysis and zooming.

Diagram 4.23 Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010): Final “clean” SID with affinity labels, removing Miscellaneous from the system



4.3.9 A tour through the system: Focus Group 2

Diagram 4.23 (above) represents the final “clean” SID for the focus group hosted on 12 June 2010. This diagram illustrates the group’s reality in terms of adaptation, acculturation and adjustment to living and working in the Netherlands.

Participants used the metaphor of a double-sided coin to explain the adjustment process. The adjustment process could be described a series of coin flips that result in either heads or tails, starting with Language and ending with Professional Development. The different elements of the system are interrelated and participants’ perceptions of the side on which the coin lands (positive or negative) has an influence on the way in which other elements of the system are perceived. Thus a kind of domino-effect occurs where a change in one element may nudge a series of coins to start flipping in different directions.

The gamble begins with language. The language helps one to understand the local culture better and provides a lens through which one can begin to grasp the culture. However, language also evolves from the culture and the ability to master the language provides opportunities to interact with the culture. Depending on one’s gambling skills, learning the local language can be tough. The upside of the coin is that one can get by with only a minimal amount of Dutch, because many Dutch people speak English, or switch to English when they hear a foreign accent. The downside, however, is that there is so much English around that one may not feel pushed to learn the language and may consequently remain excluded from the local culture and may be unable to make good friends in the local community. Furthermore, the gamble is that one’s work colleagues, who may be understanding and accommodating at first, may become impatient with one’s lack of language ability after some time has passed.

The second gamble between choice and chance lies with culture. Culture implies the cultural values held by members of the host country, as well as one's own cultural values, but also includes the surface-level artefacts and products of a culture. The ability to understand the rules and traditions that people live by is important, because such understanding provides essential clues for understanding and respecting the host culture. However, the host culture is itself a double-sided coin: one side of the coin seems open and inviting, but the other side is closed and distant. This means that one may be continuously flipping from one side to the other of this confusing coin. Understanding the culture is essential for integrating into society and developing professionally. However, again, the other side of the gamble is the danger that one may no longer "fit in" in one's home country. Thus, too many new cultural values, although they may expand one's horizons, also hold the downside that one may never be able to return to one's "home" unchanged, or that one may never feel at home again anywhere in the world.

Society as a system is influenced by the language and culture of a country, in this case by those of the host country. In the gamble with the system, language may prove a major barrier for understanding the system, and one may find oneself losing face. Conversely, by understanding the language and the culture, one may be able to re-frame one's expectations of the system better and consequently navigate successfully through the bureaucracy and rules to make sure one's voice is heard.

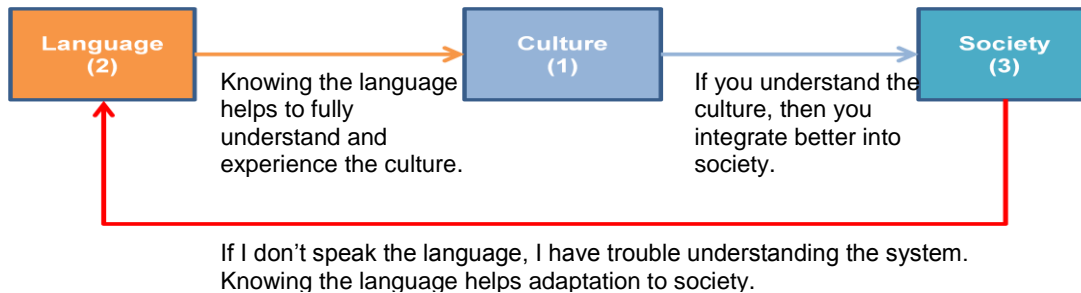
The outcome of the system is professional development, which is influenced by all other aspects of the system. Participants clearly indicated that professional development is influenced both positively and negatively by other elements in the system. Some aspects of professional development can be influenced by managing one's own expectations and perceptions, but these are in turn affected by the broader society, culture and language. Not all aspects of professional development are controllable, and there is a fine balance between the influence of the individual's free will and the gamble implicit in the double-sided coin.

The feedback loops in the system are discussed in the next section.

4.3.10 Feedback loops and zooming: Focus Group 2

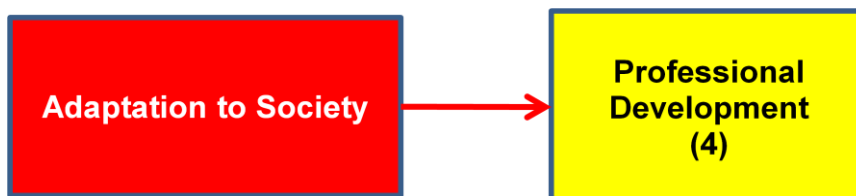
As mentioned in the previous section, there are two feedback loops in the system created for Focus Group 2. Language, Culture and Society form the first feedback loop in the system. When zooming into the system, the axial codes for these affinities indicate that they form part of a larger supra-affinity, “Adaptation to Society” (see Diagram 4.24, below).

Diagram 4.24 Zooming into the system: Language, Culture, Society



If one then replaces the feedback loop of Language, Culture and Society with the super-affinity of “Adaptation to Society”, the system would look like the one represented in Diagram 4.25 (below).

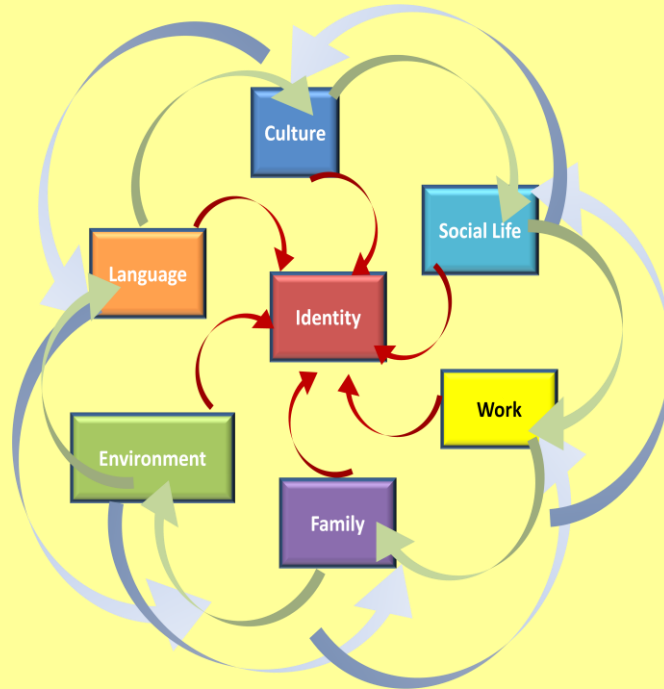
Diagram 4.25 Zooming out of the system – inserting super-affinity “Adaptation to Society”



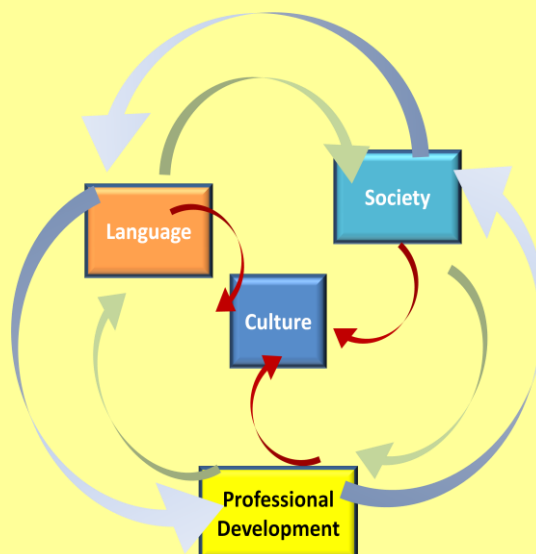
This final system is a simple system with no feedback loops – it is a helicopter view of participants’ adjustment experiences at the highest level.

***Researcher's note:**

The IQA protocol for drawing the two final SID's for Focus Groups 1 and 2 resulted in fairly linear systems that do not seem to account for the developmental nature of adjustment, acculturation and adaptation. Hence, it was decided to re-visit the illustrations of the final systems in order to visually illustrate the interconnectedness of the system as a whole. Thus, if we would draw Focus Group 1's final SID as a circular system through which different choices affect the course of the journey, we would see that Identity forms the central pivot of the system, whilst the other elements of the system form building blocks to the adjustment process:



Focus Group 2 developed a higher-order system with fewer affinities which could potentially indicate the presence of sub-systems that are represented in the SID of Focus Group 1:



4.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter reported the results of two IQA focus groups that were hosted on 24 April 2010 and 12 June 2010 in the Netherlands. Through an intensive IQA analysis following the guidelines described by Northcutt and McCoy (2004), it was possible to gain deeper insight into the systemic realities constructed by the two groups. These realities were consequently represented through the use of systems influence diagrams. Both groups developed similar group realities, with Culture and Language as the main drivers for the systems, and with “Work” and “Professional Development” as the key outcomes for both systems. For Focus Group 1, “choice” emerged as a guiding theme throughout the journey, and the metaphor of a maze of choice, where choice may also become a trap, was used to illustrate the journey through the system. For Focus Group 2, the image of a “double-sided coin” emerged as a theme throughout the journey, and the metaphor of a gambler flipping coins and taking chances was used to illustrate the journey through the system. The two resultant systems can also be represented by means of a three-dimensional flow-diagram that illustrates the interconnectedness and developmental nature of various aspects of the adjustment process.

Chapter 5 provides a detailed comparison of the two systems and links the findings from the analysis to the review of extant knowledge in order to develop a conceptual model for understanding the role of CQ in the adjustment, adaptation and acculturation of SIE women.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCHER'S INTERPRETATION AND KEY FINDINGS



Photo 5.1 Presenting a paper the annual meeting of EURAM, Talinn, June 2011

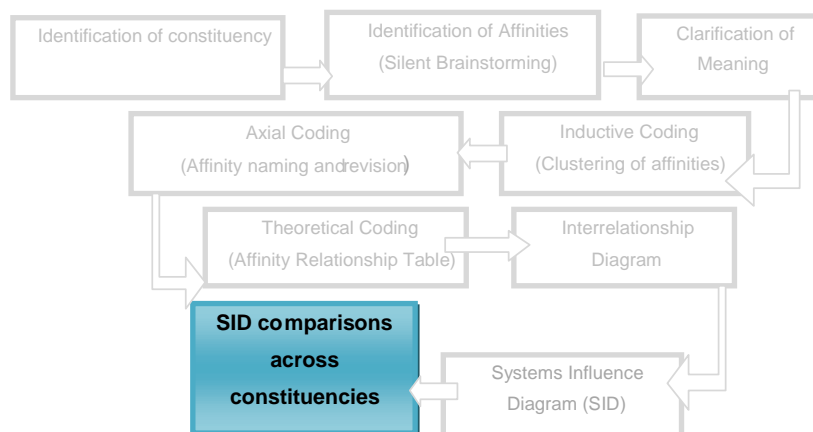
5.1 INTRODUCTION

The further one goes, the less one knows.

(Lao-tzu)

The previous chapter provided a detailed analysis of the findings from the IQA process conducted with the two focus groups. However, Chapter 4 only provided an account of the participants' own interpretations of reality. No existing theories were linked to either of the two systems developed, and no comparisons were drawn between the two groups. This chapter seeks to construct a new model for understanding the role of CQ in the adjustment of SIE women. Factual findings from the review of extant knowledge will be synthesised with findings from the IQA focus groups. This chapter starts with a comparison between the two groups' realities as presented in the previous chapter, followed by a detailed analysis and interpretation of the findings as linked to key themes in the extant body of knowledge in a discussion of the findings.

5.2 SID COMPARISONS ACROSS CONSITUENCIES



The last phase of the IQA research design is to compare the SIDs of different constituencies in order to work towards the development of theoretical models and hypotheses for further research.

This section provides a “birds-eye” view of the experiences of the two groups in order to highlight common themes that emerged from the reality of the two groups. This section will provide a ‘birds-eye view’ of the experiences of the two groups in order to highlight common themes that emerged from the reality of the two groups.

5.2.1 Comparing the Main Affinities and their Definitions

The two focus groups identified seemingly similar affinities to describe their experiences of living and working in the Netherlands. However, it should be borne in mind that Northcutt and McCoy (2004:245) warn that affinities in two systems may have different meanings based on their *structural features* or their *dialectic* properties (representing dynamic, interrelated polarities within the system), or at a scalar level. As a first step in comparing the two systems, it is thus important to recognise the similarities and differences between the conceptual definitions used by the two groups. Northcutt and McCoy (2004:349) describe this kind of comparison as a comparison of the “timbre” that comprises each affinity.

As a first step towards getting a feel for the key themes and any potential overlap between the two groups, a keyword analysis was conducted, using the qualitative analysis software package QSR Nvivo 9. Each focus group transcript, together with the corresponding brainstorm cards, was used to develop simple cloud diagrams of the group’s experiences. Table 5.1 provides an overview of the keywords that were mentioned by both groups during the silent brainstorming process. In view of the need for parsimony, only the first 49 words are illustrated in Table 4.24, as these were the keywords with the highest frequencies.

Table 5.1 Combined affinities for Focus Groups 1 and 2

Word	Count	Weighted percentage (%)	Similar words
support	43	2,51	helped, helpful, helping, helps, keeping, lives, living, support, supporting, tolerance
Dutch	35	2,98	Dutch
friends	35	2,21	friends, support, supporting
challenges	25	2,13	challenge, challenges, challenging
culture	24	2,04	cultural, culture, cultures
positives	23	1,53	attitude, located, location, perspective, positives, setting, sided, situation
being	21	1,22	being, costs, equality, lives, living, organic, organised
family	17	1,40	families, family, housing

Word	Count	Weighted percentage (%)	Similar words
finding	16	0,90	chance, determination, discovering, feeling, feelings, finding, getting, rules
language	15	1,28	Language
having	14	0,87	acceptance, experience, getting, giving, having, letting, taking
direct	14	0,81	direct, directly, directness, organic, organisation, organisations, organised, point, taking
negatives	12	1,02	Negatives
differences	10	0,85	difference, differences, different
society	10	0,85	companies, company, society
organised	10	0,54	administration, established, organic, organisation, organisations, organised, system, systems
people	9	0,77	People
community	9	0,71	communicate, communication, community, nationalities
education	9	0,60	developing, development, development', educated, education
learning	9	0,47	determination, discovering, learn, learning, study, taking
adjust	8	0,50	adapt, adjust, adjustment, conform, familiar, setting
beginning	8	0,41	beginning, first, getting, origin, start, starting, starts
feeling	8	0,35	beliefs, experience, feeling, feelings, looking
going	8	0,30	going, start, starting, starts, travel, travelling, turns, working
location	8	0,28	local, located, location, setting, situation
living	8	0,22	experience, going, lives, living
about	7	0,60	about, around
understanding	7	0,51	clear, realizing, reasonable, understand, understanding
country	7	0,50	areas, countries, country, nationalities
field	7	0,40	areas, field, plain, study, theatre
development	7	0,23	break, developing, development, development, getting, origin
weather	6	0,51	Weather
great	6	0,45	expectations, great
international	6	0,45	international, nationalities
missing	6	0,45	missing, wanting
practical	6	0,45	commitment, practical, practicalities, skills, useful
other	6	0,44	other, others, separated
better	6	0,37	advance, better, break
become	6	0,28	become, becoming, decent, getting, going, turns
setting	6	0,27	backgrounds, circles, determination, local, setting
barrier	5	0,43	Barrier
colleagues	5	0,43	Colleagues
identity	5	0,43	Identity
expat	5	0,38	expat, expatriate
English	5	0,34	English, sided
level	5	0,31	equality, level, levels, point
advance	5	0,26	advance, process, promoted
break	5	0,10	break, discovering, giving, going, separated

Diagram 5.2 Cloud diagram for keywords identified by Focus Group 2 (12 June 2010)

about across advance affordable alone already amsterdam annoying arrival asking atmosphere
 attempting balance **barrier** based because become bedrijfcultuur **being** better
 bevrijdingsdag biggest biking bliss bureaucracy business career **challenges** cherishing clueless
 coldness colleagues **communication** comply connect content **conversations** **country** crazy
 creative culinary **culture** daily development **different** difficult **direct**
 discovering discrimination double drive **Dutch** dynamics easier eating
 education English enough entertainmnet environment essential every excellent expat
 express **family** feeling finding **friends** general **german** getting **great**
 having **helps** Holland housing international introduced
language living missing **negatives** oriented origin **people**
positives possibilities realizing really respond **society**
 sometimes speak spontaneous styles **support system** turns woman

For the first group topics such as the “challenge” of living and working in the Netherlands, combined with adjustment to the culture, the language (Dutch), family, friends, support and identity are key issues that drive the experience of living and working in the Netherlands. Interestingly, similar words emerged for the second group as key drivers, but the importance and frequency of the words are reversed in some cases. The Dutch culture and language, for example, seems to be highlighted more strongly for this group. Although they also seem to experience challenges, the “positives” occur more than the “negatives”, and it seems that the focus for this group is also much more on the “helps” in the process.

All in all, from the simple cloud diagrams, it seems that although the two groups had very similar experiences of the adjustment process, but that the first group seemed to focus more on the challenges of the adjustment experience than the second group. Although the positives seem to be highlighted for both groups (more than the negatives), the focus of the adjustment experience was slightly different for the two groups. Diagram 5.3 (overleaf) illustrates the cloud diagram for the

provides an overview of the main affinities identified by the two groups with a comparison of the definitions used to explain each affinity.

Table 5.2 Combined affinities for Focus Groups 1 and 2

Focus Group 1: 24 April 2012	Focus Group 2: 12 June 2012	Comparison of affinities
Environment Food Weather Location Practical Things	Miscellaneous/ Lifestyle	<p>The affinities of “Environment” and “Miscellaneous” seem comparable with each other because they both have to do with the centrality of location and living in Europe (e.g. “Europe no boundaries” and “Easy to travel around the world”). However, <i>housing</i> and <i>missing home</i> were also categorised under “Miscellaneous” by Focus Group 2, and Focus Group 1 associated <i>missing friends</i> and <i>homesickness</i> with “Identity” and more specifically “Loneliness”. Furthermore, <i>practicalities of life</i>, and dealing with <i>bureaucracy</i> were considered aspects of the <i>Environment</i> by Focus Group 1, while Focus Group 2 classified these matters under “Society” and the “Dutch System”.</p>
Culture/Cultural Differences	Culture General Dutch Culture	<p>For Focus Group 1, “Culture” and “Cultural Differences” were related to <i>behaviour, norms and values, relationships, directness, integration into one’s local community</i> and the <i>advance planning culture</i> in the Netherlands. For Focus Group 2, this affinity was related to forms of <i>entertainment</i> that participants missed from their own countries, <i>food, Dutch directness, and planning in advance</i>. Thus, from a conceptual point of view, participants from both groups seemed to attach a similar meaning to the concept of culture, but Focus Group 2 placed a stronger emphasis on the surface aspects of culture and one’s own national culture.</p>
Language	Language	<p>For both groups, “Language” was a key affinity that relates to the positives and negatives of learning the language in order to <i>communicate</i> and understand the local culture better. The impatience of locals for foreigners to learn the language was also highlighted by both groups. For both groups, learning the language was considered a challenge. Even though language was considered useful for immersion into the culture, the prevalence of <i>English</i> alternatives made it difficult to learn the language. In some cases, participants felt <i>harassed</i> when trying to learn the language.</p>
Social Life	Society Dutch System	<p>For Focus Group 1, “Social Life” refers to <i>friends, networks and friendships</i> with both <i>Dutch and international friends</i>. There is some overlap between “Social Life” and “Society” as defined by Focus Group 2. For Focus Group 2, <i>ease of making friends</i> in the <i>international environment, missing family and friends</i> and the challenge of <i>making Dutch friends</i> are comparable to Focus Group 1’s “Social Life”. But Focus Group 2 used a broader definition, “Society”, which includes <i>family, ease of living, work-life balance, and aspects of the system (bureaucracy and well-organised)</i>. Thus, “Social Life” as defined by Focus Group 1 can be classified as a sub-system of “Society” as Focus Group 2 defines it.</p>
Work	Professional Development	<p>For Focus Group 1, the affinity “Work” was related to <i>profession, voluntary work, networking, social contact, and the opportunity to further one’s education (study opportunities)</i>. Focus Group 2 also associated “Professional Development” with <i>networking and education</i>, but focused much more on the</p>

Focus Group 1: 24 April 2012	Focus Group 2: 12 June 2012	Comparison of affinities
		<p>challenges or limitations in <i>career development possibilities, company culture and discrimination</i>. Thus, there is some conceptual overlap between the two affinities, but in interpreting the results, care should be taken not to handle these two affinities as synonyms of each other – they are two concepts under the same umbrella: Personal and Professional Development.</p>
Family		<p>“<i>Family</i>” was a separate affinity for Focus Group 1 and encompassed the direct (nuclear family), and extended family both in the home and host countries. <i>Faith, love and support</i> also resorted under this affinity as support factors for adjustment. Focus Group 2 categorised <i>family</i> under the affinity “<i>Society</i>”, where <i>missing family and friends</i> in the home country served as a barrier and new friends in the host country became <i>family</i> as a support factor in the host country. Thus, Family could form a sub-system within the larger affinity of “<i>Society</i>”.</p>
Identity Personality Loneliness Dedication		<p>Focus Group 1 created a separate affinity for “<i>Identity</i>”, which consists of “<i>Personality</i>”, “<i>Loneliness</i>” and “<i>Dedication</i>” – for them, the self and identity are determined by relationships with others and adapting one’s mindset to reframe the experience and <i>re-invent</i> oneself. Focus Group 2 did not discuss the sense of “<i>Identity</i>” as explicitly. It resorted under affinities such as “<i>Dutch Culture</i>” – <i>understanding my own culture, impossible to become Dutch</i>; and “<i>Miscellaneous</i>” – <i>missing home and missing the inter-national part when I’m back home; realizing things are great in your home country and cherishing them more</i>. Thus, for both groups, “<i>Identity</i>” had to do with adjustment and adaptation to the host country and feeling that one should conform to the culture of the host culture, which is <i>impossible</i> and means that one could <i>lose</i> a part of oneself.</p>

Pasting systems together

*Researcher's note:

At this point of the research process, I started to feel as if I was stuck in what Northcutt and McCoy (2004:314) refer to as an “insidious” feedback loop, “doing the same thing again and again without progress”. In order to break this loop and move towards constructing a conceptual model that builds and expands on existing theories, I needed to find a way out of the feedback loop. Like Alice in Wonderland, I found myself wandering through, and wondering about, various turnoffs without finding the right door out. Whilst I was stuck in this spiral, Prof. Charles Hampden-Turner from Cambridge University visited our office. He is a co-founder of the company I work for, and a genius for whom I have great respect. I mentioned to him that I was struggling to find final conclusions and that I found myself stuck in a system that seems far more complex than my simple mind can comprehend. Prof. Hampden-Turner suggested that the problem may be that I am looking at a double-helix pattern without realising it. “One can look at a double helix from 600 perspectives and not realise that one may be looking at a double helix. Follow your instincts and let your creativity guide you: try to identify the dilemmas and tensions between affinities in the systems” (Charles Hampden-Turner, 5 February, 2013). Puzzled by this new idea, I decided to follow the professor’s advice and continue to develop a theoretical model that incorporates but also expands on the “mind maps” created by the two groups in the previous section.

Northcutt and McCoy (2004:383) suggest that where two systems have some degree of overlap, a combined system can be created that provides “a more general theory” that can predict different outcomes. The keyword analysis and cloud diagrams were useful to highlight the broad themes that underlie the experiences of the two groups. This exercise helped me to zoom out of the group’s experiences and re-focus the comparison of the two systems so as not to get bogged down in the details of the focus group transcripts. The systems that have been presented so far aimed to provide a “birds-eye” view of participants’ general experiences as they constructed themselves within a very short time. Hence, these systems were not subjected to further exploration or theorising by the group, and at first glance, they may seem fairly static and simplistically causal (in other words, A leads to B leads to C). However, in a system where social actors play an active role in the “shaping of their social world” (Aulin, 1984:148), it would be premature to draw conclusions at this point. Therefore, this section of the chapter “pastes” the two systems together to provide a platform for creating a combined SID and develop further hypotheses for testing. The key themes that could be used to

explain the adjustment experience are provided in *italics*, followed by a description and analysis of the adjustment experience with supporting quotes from the focus group transcripts and relevant literature.

There is an overlap between “Culture” and “Language” for both groups. These two affinities, “Culture” and “Language”, are conceptually similar and can be combined and inserted into the system. The affinity of *Environment*, as described by Focus Group 1 was retained and combined with the affinity *Society* to represent the physical location, changeable and unchangeable environmental factors and social structures, as described by Focus Group 2. The affinities *Social Life* and *Family* as defined by Focus Group 1 were combined to form the affinity *Social Support*. The affinity of *Identity* was retained as a circular/pivot that is influenced by all other aspects of the system. The affinities of *Work* and *Professional Development* could be combined into the super-affinity *Personal/Professional Development*.

There are various complex sub-systems and feedback loops present in the system of meaning that needed to be explored further. For example, the systems presented begin with “Culture” and “Language”, but do not account for “Previous experience” (in the home country and other host countries in which the participants lived and worked before), nor do they account for the role of motives that influence the choice to move, which may in turn influence a person’s perceptions and eventual adjustment to the host culture. The systems presented also end with *Work/Career Development* and *not* “Cross-cultural Adjustment, Adaptation and Acculturation” or anything related to Thinking, Feeling and Doing (CQ). It seems that the participants considered these aspects as components of a much larger system related to self-initiated expatriation in which various feedback loops, sub-systems and spiralling experiences play a role.

Thus, to account for these insights, I identified a number of affinities from the focus group transcripts and the review of extant knowledge that commonly occurred in the conversation. Thematic content analysis was used to group the key themes from the data, yielding the following affinities:

- Previous experience;
- Expatriate Decision and Motives; and
- Mindset, Perception and Responses.

These affinities were added to the final combined SID. The definitions of these affinities, based on evidence from the literature and focus group transcripts can be found in Table 5.3 (below).

Table 5.3 Affinity definitions: Previous experience, Expatriate Decision and Motives, Mindset, Perceptions and Responses

Previous Experience	This affinity includes previous work experience acquired in the home country and during other expatriate assignments, as well as the influence of living and/or working in other countries prior to relocation to the current host country. Education, upbringing and the experience of growing up in another country also contributes to previous experience which may influence decision-making and the ability to connect with other cultures later in one's life.
Expatriate Decision (Motives)	This affinity includes the reasons and motives influencing the decision to relocate to another country as an SIE. Motives include, but are not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relocation to join a partner/spouse in the host country; • work/study opportunities; • remaining in the host country after a traditional expatriate transfer has expired due to the presence of a partner/spouse in the host country; • following one's partner/spouse who is a traditional expatriate or SIE in order to pursue one's own SIE opportunities in the host country without the support of a company; and/or • travelling and seeing the world.
Mindset, Perception and Responses	The ability to reframe one's perceptions of the environment in order to remain motivated to persevere despite negative feedback from the environment and consequently enacting appropriate responses to the environment.

The final integrated SID for the two groups (see Diagram 5.4, overleaf) represents a system where Previous Experience, Expatriate Decision and Motives; and Mindset, Perception and Responses set the scene for the journey of SIE. Culture, Language and the Environment/Society consequently influence Social Support, Identity and, as a final outcome, Personal and Professional Development. Diagram 5.5 (on p. 264) presents an attempt at a three-dimensional system that illustrates the circular, developmental nature of the process.

Diagram 5.4 Final Integrated Systems Influence Diagram incorporating affinities identified by Researcher

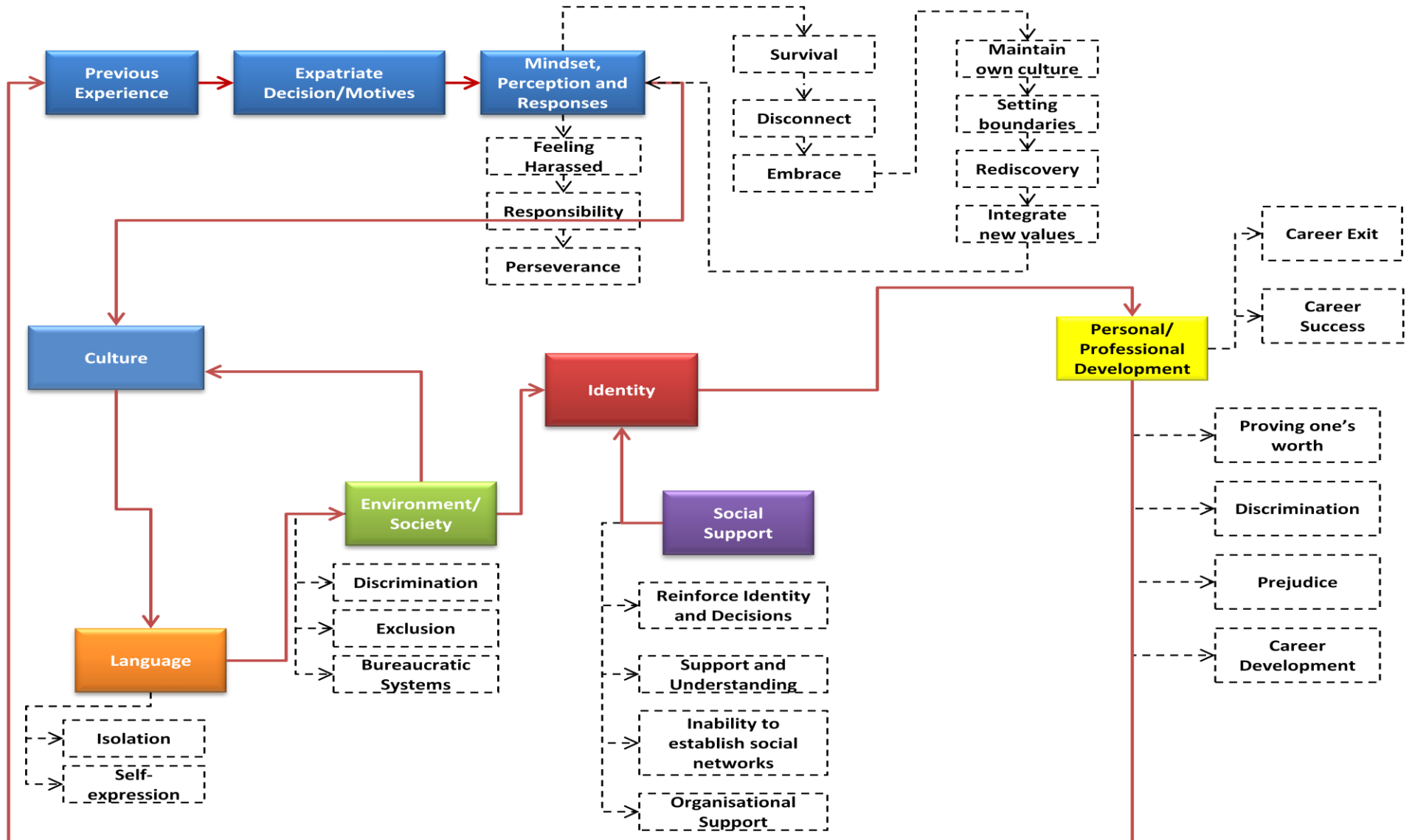
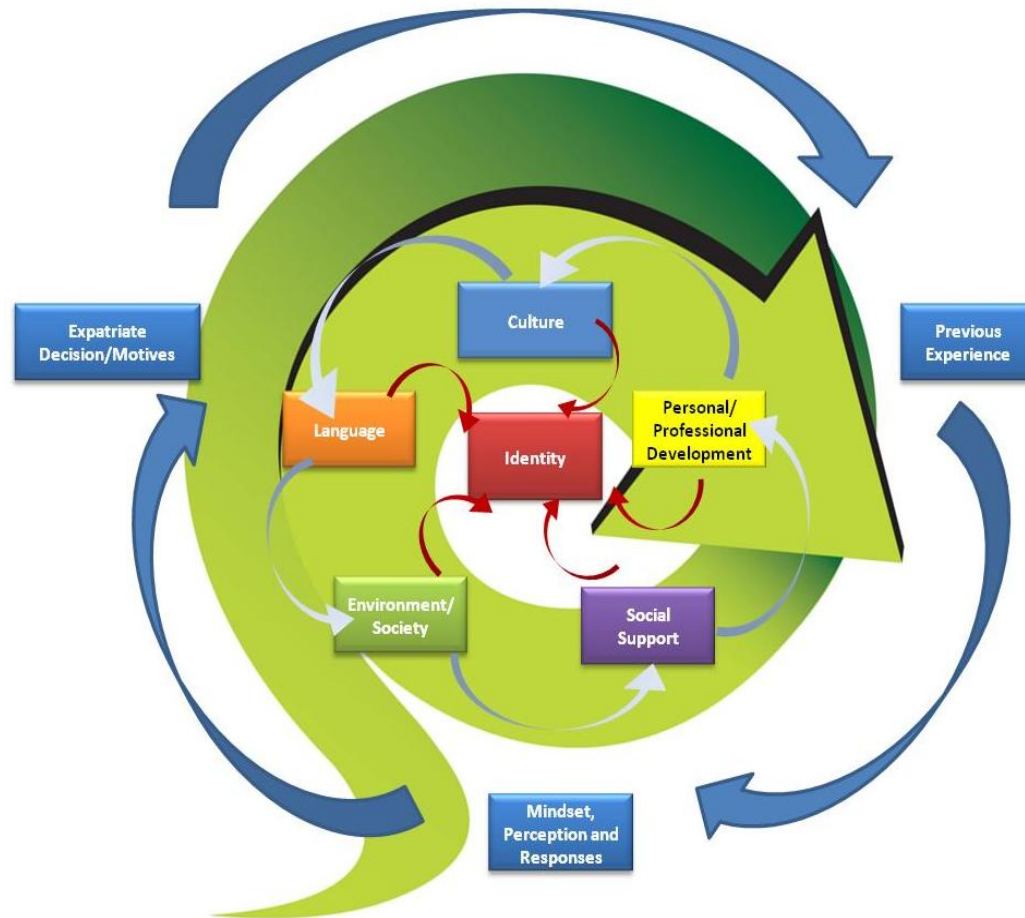


Diagram 5.5 Final integrated SID illustrating the circular, developmental nature of the system



5.2.2 Touring SIE adjustment system: The journey of adjustment during SIE

*Researcher's note:

Because IQA is a systems-based approach to qualitative research, the word “system” is used in the descriptions to refer to the final, combined SID representing the experience of self-initiated expatriation. Various metaphors are used to describe the adjustment process and underlying experiences of participants represented by the SID.

Adjustment during self-initiated expatriation is described with the metaphor of a journey that leads to personal/professional development. Metaphors using participants' own language are illustrated in *italics* in the discussion below.

The “journey” of an SIE woman is compared metaphorically to the adventures of Alice in Wonderland during the process of zooming in and out of the system.

A journey through a maze of choice and chance. The final system of meaning reflects the SIE adjustment experience and can be described by the metaphor of a journey through a maze of choices, a journey between choice and chance. When navigating through a maze, one has to make choices in order to get out of the maze, but sometimes a little bit of luck is also important to help one on the right path.

Previous Experience, Motives, and Mindset form key drivers that influence the overall outcome of the system that represents the adjustment process. All aspects of the system influence each other mutually in a continuous spiral of feedback loops, which means that the journey through the maze is highly complex and multi-faceted. The outcome of the adjustment journey (at the end of the journey of adjustment through the maze of choice) is Personal and/or Professional Development. The choices one makes and one's perceptions of each affinity influence the outcome and impact on the other parts of the system, either positively or negatively. Focus Group 1 used the concept of *choice* to describe their adjustment experiences. On the one hand, one has to make various life choices and it implies the freedom to choose to reinvent oneself:

“It is a choice to become what you want to become, and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to choose all kinds of stuff...” (Tatiana, Serbia)

On the other hand, this freedom of choice may also be a restriction, as one may be overwhelmed with too many choices, and even if one does have a choice, one may be restricted by external factors over which one may not have any control.

“...choosing isn’t a freedom. It’s kind of its own trap.” (Bonita, USA)

This notion of *choice* coincides with Scruton’s (2007:2) perspective of individual choices that shape the way in which modern people make sense of the world. The experiences of these two groups confirm the findings of Varma *et al.* (2006:118), who point out that *choice* is not necessarily an individual freedom as the local society may enforce certain choices upon the individual. Thus, whilst some choices along the way may be easy and routine, others are more complex and cannot be made without the routine choices being made first. Choice can be a freedom that determines the direction one takes in the maze – this finding is comparable to Scruton’s (2007:2) notion of individual freedom and choices – but too many choices may cause a person to become trapped in a maze of choice. Not all choices are voluntary, and in some cases one’s freedom to choose is restricted by internal and external factors – this finding is comparable to Berry’s (1997:9-10) and Varma *et al.*’s (2006:118) conceptions of limitations on the acculturation strategies available to an individual that limit free choice. Thus, whilst some choices may lead to development and fulfilment, others may force one into a “trap”.

There is also an element of gambling in this journey of adjustment of self-initiated expatriation, and some aspects are not in one’s own hands to control. Focus Group 2 used the concept of a double-sided coin to describe the ambivalence of the adjustment experience. For every aspect of the journey, there are always two sides of the coin. The one side of the coin may be positive, whilst the other side may be negative, as can be seen in Bonnie’s example of work-life balance:

“...it is a blessing and a...it’s the two-sided coin again.” (Bonnie, USA)

The way in which one interprets the side on which the coin lands is influenced by one’s perception and expectations – things are not always as they appear:

“So in the double coin, it depends on what you’re looking for and it depends on what you want.” (Laura, Canada)

Some coin flips may have predictable outcomes or have a positive effect in both ways, whilst others may have either negative or positive consequences, depending on one’s viewpoint. It is important to note that participants did not consider themselves irrevocably subject to their fate – one should also take responsibility and control of one’s fate:

“That’s why you have to execute...” (Lana, Czech Republic)

Thus, although external forces such as the attitudes of host country nationals may have an influence on one’s acculturation process (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:41; Olsen & Martins, 2009:324; Yavas, 2001:67), one’s own motivation, goals and the ability to execute strategic behaviours are important determinants of one’s success in the host country, both at a personal and professional level (Cai & Rodriguez, 1996; Selmer & Leung, 2003:244-255).

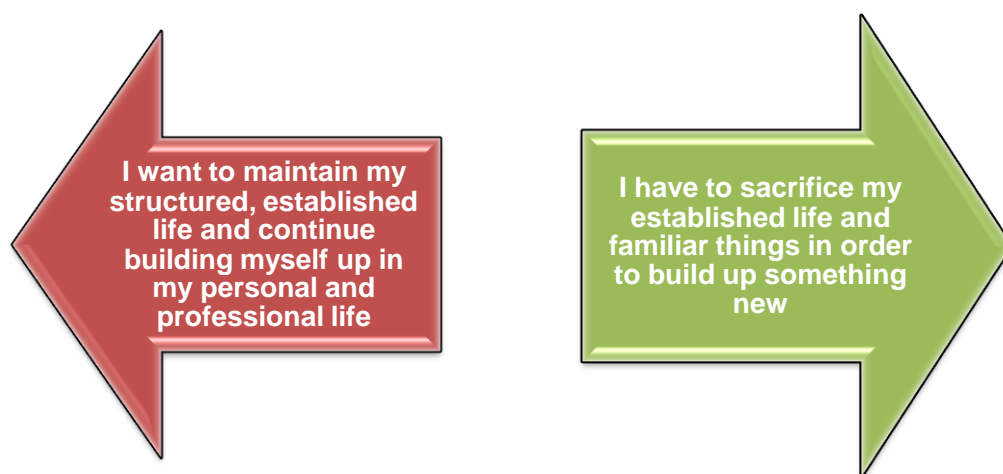
The journey of choice and chance is thus typified by a number of choice-chance dilemmas that require reconciliation in order to enable successful personal/professional development during the SIE process. Table 5.4 (overleaf) provides a summary of the key dilemmas faced by the women in this study. These dilemmas are discussed further using metaphorical comparisons based on participants’ own descriptions of the adjustment process.

Table 5.4 Key dilemmas that have to be reconciled during the journey of choice and chance

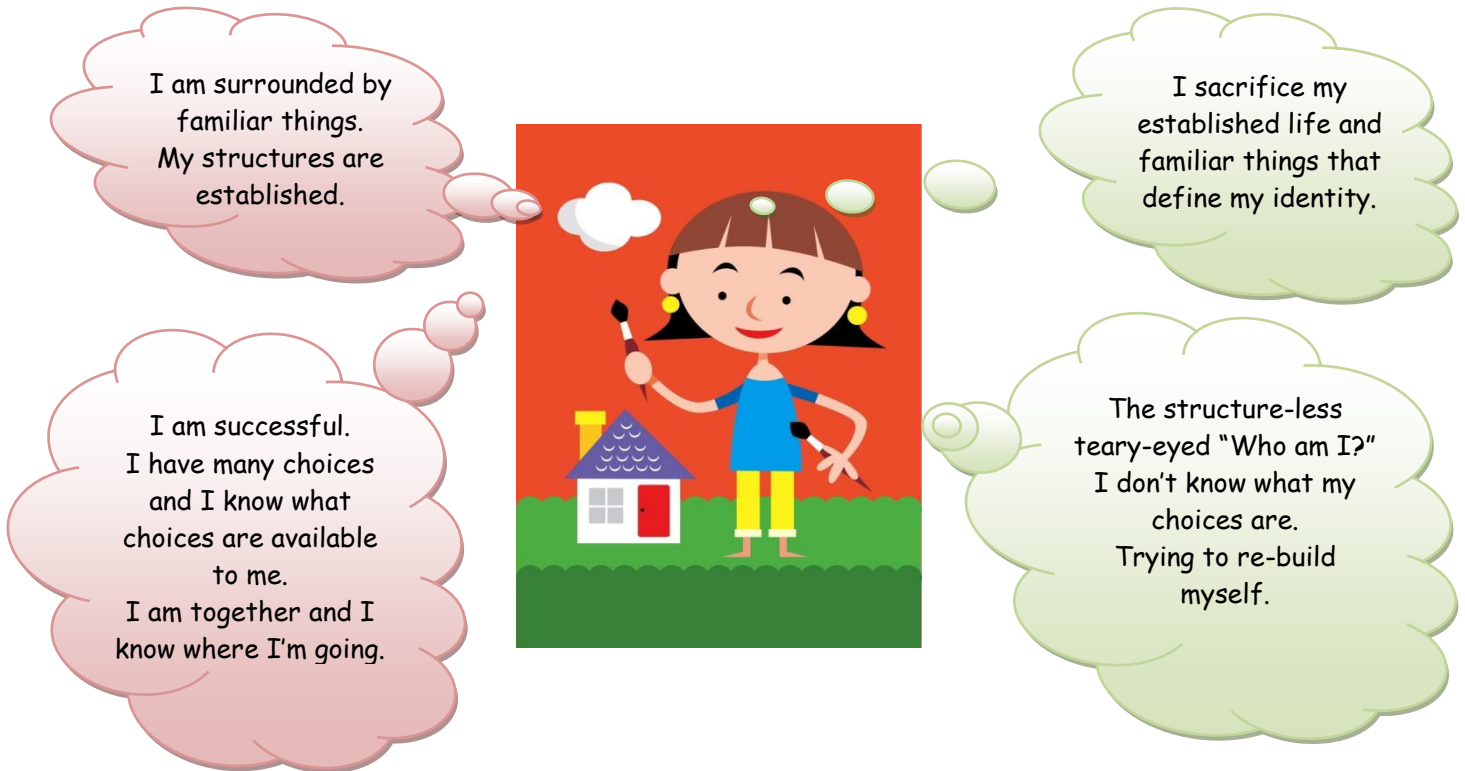
<i>On the one hand...</i>	<i>On the other hand...</i>
1 <i>I want to maintain my structured, established life and continue building myself up in my personal and professional life.</i>	<i>I have to sacrifice my established life and familiar things in order to build up something new.</i>
2 <i>I want to retain my own cultural values.</i>	<i>I want to adopt the values of the new culture.</i>
3 <i>I want to fully immerse myself in the Dutch society.</i>	<i>I want to remain part of the international community.</i>
4 <i>I want to feel at home in my home country.</i>	<i>I want to feel at home in my host country.</i>
5 <i>Learning the language helps me understand the culture and gain access to local networks.</i>	<i>Local people also speak fluent English and there are many English alternatives available so that I don't have to learn the language.</i>
6 <i>I want to invest in my personal development and growth and the well-being of my family.</i>	<i>I want to invest in my professional development and career growth.</i>

- **Dilemma 1: Will I stay or will I go?**

The expatriation journey begins in one's home country with the decision to relocate to the host country. Thus, the first main dilemma in the journey of choice and chance is the following:



Many of the women in this study indicated that, prior to moving to the Netherlands, they were surrounded by familiar things that reinforced their identities through established structures. However, once they decided to move to the new country, all the familiar, established structures were torn away and they had to start re-building themselves.



Self-initiated expatriation is not a simple process, and in the vast number of choices that one has to make in a short time, choice can become a trap. It is important to take responsibility for one's choice to be in the host country, but one should also have realistic expectations and take time to first re-establish structure in respect of practical things which cost a lot of time and energy. Once these have been established, one can progress through a second spiral of choosing to address higher-order choices such as "Who am I?" and "Who do I want to be?"

- **Dilemma 2: A boat-bike cruise through turbulent waters.**

Participants in both groups found the adjustment process very hard. Monika and Margaret used the examples of boats and bikes (surface aspects of the culture) to help them gain insight into the deeper aspects of the country and its culture. By contrast, Inbal felt as if she was thrown into the deep end and had to learn to swim. Through using the surface aspects of the host culture as clues for the deeper underlying aspects of the culture, a degree of cultural learning takes place that allows for effective adjustment from a socio-cultural perspective (Liu & Lee, 2008:182; Selmer *et al.*, 2007:151).

In order to navigate the journey of choice and chance successfully, one could imagine our participants on a boat-bike trip. Each individual is captain of her own boat-bike and is therefore in charge of determining the direction of the boat (choice). However, external conditions such as the wind and storms may affect the direction and speed with which one is able to paddle one's boat-bike down the river (chance).

In order to arrive at one's final destination (Personal/Professional Development), the captain has to know when to paddle harder, when just to stay afloat and go with the flow of the current, and when to call the coast-guard for rescue, or perhaps throw out a life-buoy when a passenger falls overboard.

The role of culture in participants' experiences and their descriptions of their interactions with the local culture in relation to their own cultures correspond with Swidler's (1986:277) conception that culture provides a repertoire from which an individual is able to draw strategies of action. By adopting different cultural values and restructuring their cultural frames of reference, participants were able to re-evaluate and reframe their existing mental frames (Grove & Torbiörn, 1985:216; Haslberger & Brewster, 2005:4).



Through the boat-bike one can stay afloat and determine one's own direction and pace of adjustment until one has successfully moved between the different phases as described by Tatiana in order to achieve the balance that Margaret describes:

"I think there are some kind of phases. First you really want to integrate, and then you come to...What you really don't want to compromise and then you go to the balance..." (Tatiana, Serbia)

“...in the end you can get a balance...” (Margaret, Spain)

Thus, through experiencing different aspects of the culture and experimenting with aspects in the environment, one can develop new knowledge structures and incorporate more mental models and values into one’s cultural frame of reference:

“You have more values and you see them.” (Sandra, Germany)

“...it is a revolution in terms of values...” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

“I’m absorbing something....I’m adjusting to what I had, what I’ve been and what I’m now.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

- **Dilemma 3: Chasing windmills**

In the process of navigating the system, one should be careful not to start chasing *windmills* (figuratively, or literally, in the case of the Netherlands). Sonya, for example, assumed that life in the Netherlands would be similar to life in her home country, Australia. Upon her arrival in the host country, she decided to fully embrace the local culture and expected to *integrate* fully:

“...I just need to be able to see a windmill or look at a canal out my window...and the rest I didn’t care...the rest is like living in Australia...And I’m only going to speak Dutch, you know, but that lasted like two days.” (Sonya, Australia)

Sonya’s example can be used to illustrate the experience of so many of the participants in this study. If one starts chasing only the quaint windmills of the Dutch countryside, one may become alienated from the international community and lose parts of oneself. Thus, the dilemma can be framed as follows:



For Sonya, *the rest* turned out to be much more complicated and challenging than she had expected, and she quickly realized the need to maintain parts of her own cultural identity and seek support for herself and her family in the international environment. Learning the language took a lot longer than she expected, and her children did not fit in at the local Dutch schools. On the surface, everything may have seemed much as they did when they were as living in Australia, but in truth, the deeper aspects of the culture were hidden and caused barriers to her family's successful integration. Sonya and Sue are both examples of participants who were able to reconcile the dilemma by finding support in the international community until they were able to express themselves sufficiently in the local language to integrate with local values and find support in the Dutch community.

Not all the participants were able to reconcile this dilemma effectively however, and they found themselves in a pendulum, swinging from one extreme to the other. Adri, for example, started off finding her support only in the international community, after which she realised that she needed to find more friends in the local community. Once she established an entirely "Dutch" friend-base, she began to miss the international community again.

- **Dilemma 4: Home is where the heart is...**

The experience of hopping between countries (as Rina, Margaret and Sandra did) or living abroad for an extended period, changes one's world view and cultural frame irrevocably. This means that one may be at home neither in the host country, nor in the home country. The dilemma to resolve at this stage of the journey can be framed as follows:



Margaret voiced her need to *belong* somewhere in the world, and Sandra suggested a solution: create an “expat country”. Interestingly, both these young women voiced their feelings of isolation from the local Dutch community, and neither of them is fluent in the language. It seems that by excluding themselves from the local culture in the host country, they were unconsciously trying to protect their own cultural identities in order to retain their sense of belonging in their home countries. Rina and Monika are examples of participants who successfully reconciled this dilemma: despite the challenges they face, they feel at *home* in both their host and home countries. They are professionally employed, speak the local language fluently and have friends in both the local and international community.



My home country is my base.
I moved on and my friends in my home country moved on.
My family do not understand the changes in me.

I have two homes: a home here and a home there. Friends here and friends there.

The Netherlands is my home because this is where I get my mail.
I have friends in both the international and local communities.

***Researcher's note:**

The review of extant knowledge preceding this study did not look at the concepts of “home” and their impact on the experiences of expatriates or SIEs. It is suggested that future research compare the abilities of SIEs to re-frame their notions of “home” in the context of overall CQ and adjustment success.

- **Dilemma 5: Insular circles and expatriate bubbles**

The role of language for these two groups is comparable to previous findings: For both groups, understanding and being able to speak the local *language* was a source of information and insight into the local culture which helped them establish contact with locals and gain insight into local values and practices (Earley *et al.*, 2006:86; Friedman *et al.*, 2009:254; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:41):

“...I can't fully understand the way Dutch people think, the way the whole life is...” (Sandra, Germany)

Thus, the metaphor of insular circles can be used to describe the use of *language* in the system. If one is unable to master the local language, one may be excluded from the local community and end up in an expatriate bubble. However, in both groups, participants also indicated that learning the language was challenging partially because of the abundance of English-language alternatives in the Netherlands. The following dilemma relates to language:





Language helps to prevent isolation from the local community (Andreason, 2008:284; Selmer, 2006:1217; Yavas, 2001:67). However, despite the benefits of learning the local language, which were also highlighted by these respondents, there is a downside to fluency in the local language. Instead of becoming *more acculturated* (as asserted by Osland, 2000:231), many participants found themselves in a position of segregation and isolation from the local community *in spite of* their language abilities, for example, Anushka, who put in a lot of effort to learn the local language, but faces prejudiced reactions from her Dutch counterparts because of her accent and pronunciation.

Of the participants in our focus group, some were able to reconcile their language-related dilemmas successfully by finding the motivation to learn the language quickly (like Rina and Annabelle). These two women are fluent in the local language, which has helped them in their working environment. They considered it a challenge to become fluent and surprise their colleagues with their skills. Gina, by contrast, found it very hard to learn the language. Although she can understand it, she is not fluent in it. She chose the path of compromise in respect of the language dilemma. Monika decided to open a psychological counselling practice focusing on expatriates in order to overcome the obstacle of language in her professional life. However, in her personal life (with regard to administration, etc), she is still facing language barriers.

- **Dilemma 6: Not a “Career” path but a “developmental path”**

Interestingly, for both focus groups a key outcome of the experience was related to their personal and professional growth. Neither of the two groups opted for a label “Career” and both instead used the labels “Work” and “Professional Development” to label the final outcome of the system. For these women, a “career” is related to personal growth and development and is an aspect of one’s *identity* that provides a sense of *self-worth* and a source of confirmation of the self through the *appreciation* shown by others.

The key dilemma related to this phase in the journey of choice and chance can be framed as follows:



The two groups and individuals in the two groups differed in respect of their interpretations of the concept of personal growth and development: Some participants equated their personal development directly with their careers and upward mobility in the organisation (for example, Annabelle, Rina, Gina and Anushka, who are all highly driven regarding career development and career goals).

At the other end of the continuum, participants used a broader definition for development, including not only a formal career perspective, but also volunteer activities, part-time work and development in one’s personal life as important aspects of development. Magdalena, for example, is a mother with young children. She clearly indicated that she is not a *career woman* but that she wants to work in order to use her talents on a part-time basis. Sonya, also a mother, chose to step out of the formal *male culture* that companies offer

and instead runs her business from home. Interestingly, although these two women follow a similar approach to their development; their perceptions of their situations are different. For Sonya, it was a natural choice to be a full-time mother who is there for her children, and she seems content with her situation. Magdalena, by contrast, feels frustrated and *stuck* because there are no childcare alternatives that would enable her to pursue her ambitions.

Both Sonya and Magdalena have found ways to resolve this dilemma effectively. Magdalena runs a successful online business, but also does volunteer work for her children's school. Her biggest challenges are the *lack of appreciation* for the volunteer work she does, and the fact that it is not recognised from a professional perspective. Gina indicated the inability of her Dutch managers to show appreciation through *praise* of good work. Once one's familiar *environment* and *networks* are removed (through moving to a new country), one first has to go through a process of re-assessing one's identity before one is able to continue developing through work or professional activities. For both groups, this process of re-establishing identities in order to become effective at work was a challenge. Some were more successful in this process than others, whereas others who were perceived to be successful did not regard themselves as successful. Sue, for example, felt that she had become *unstuck* in the Netherlands. She felt that, although she seems to have managed to integrate successfully in the Netherlands and start up her own business, she felt a strong sense of disappointment in herself for not achieving her goals. At the other end of the spectrum, Monika felt that the *opportunities* are all there, but one has to *execute*. The ability to re-establish strong support structures that reinforce one's identity thus seems essential for achieving success (both objective and subjective) as a result of the adjustment process.

***Researcher's note:**

Although the review of extant knowledge referred to self-initiated expatriation as an alternative, boundaryless career path for women, the initial focus of this study was not on career development. Hence, career development was not included in the initial review of extant knowledge. The final review of extant knowledge does aim to link different types of career paths for men and women to the adjustment process.

For the women who participated in this study, “Career” was a social process. Although money and promotions were important to them, the role of personal relationships, the environment and subjective notions of success were much more prevalent topics. These findings confirm the earlier findings of Sullivan and Maineiro (2007:247) and Cabrera (2009:190): women tend to follow more non-linear career paths than men. It seems that the pattern of Challenge-Balance-Authority reported by Sullivan and Maineiro (2007:246) is even more pronounced for SIE women than for women professionals who remain in their home countries. Inbal and Rina are examples of this career pattern – both first opted for building their careers in their host countries (Challenge); however, as Inbal noted, at an age where she would like to settle down, perhaps start a family and pursue other interests (Balance), she has to start climbing the corporate ladder again to prove herself (regression back to Challenge) in the host country.

Personal and Professional Development are thus interrelated and can be understood in terms of both formal employment and career-building in a corporate context, as well as the development of one’s own potential in an informal context through volunteer work and other informal work-related activities.

5.3 ZOOMING IN AND OUT: MAPPING DECISIONS AND OUTCOMES IN THE JOURNEY OF CHOICE AND CHANCE

In order to explore the full complexity of the journey in which individual actors are able to determine the outcomes of the system by “resisting external distractions...and producing new situations that never existed before” (Aulin, 1984:150), it is necessary to zoom into the different aspects of the system to highlight the complex, progressive and spiralling nature of the process: as one

dilemma is negotiated and resolved, the resolution of the dilemma provides a new set of dilemmas to be resolved.

Table 5.5 (overleaf) provides a high-level summary of some of the key choices and outcomes that the SIE women who participated in this study were faced with during the journey. Interestingly, many of the outcomes of their choices are progressive and cyclical. Thus, through experience, time and the integration of new information into one's frame of reference, one's responses to, and the outcomes of those responses change progressively over time. Each experience during the adjustment process thus builds upon the previous one(s). The continuous process of thinking, re-evaluating one's existing frame of reference, remaining motivated and changing one's behaviour facilitates the learning process (cognition, meta-cognition, motivation and behaviour) in order to aid the successful reconciliation of paradoxes and resolution of dilemmas during the journey of choice and chance.

Table 5.5 Summary of choices and outcomes for the two SIE women focus groups

Choices	Example of supporting quote	Outcomes	Example of supporting quote
Self-initiated expatriation	<i>"...realizing that it is a choice that I made to be here..."</i> (Theresa, USA)	Taking responsibility Perseverance	<i>"...taking responsibility..."</i> (Theresa, USA) <i>"...we locked down..."</i> (Sonya, Australia)
Reasons for relocation/ motives	<i>"...reasons for us to come here"</i> (Theresa, USA) <i>"...my boyfriend...I decide to follow him...after three years we separated...but I'm still here."</i> (Margaret, Spain)	Survival Disconnect from local society Embrace the local culture	<i>"...it is up to your survival...make it the best that you can make..."</i> (Sonya, Australia) <i>"they realize...they don't connect that well with this whole society...and then they start complaining..."</i> (Margaret, Spain) <i>"...either you embrace it, or you just go back home..."</i> (Margaret, Spain)
Maintaining one's own culture versus adapting to the host culture	<i>"...a choice also for re-invention."</i> (Sonya, Australia) <i>"...realize the good things from your own country, but also picking up the good things from the new country..."</i> (Margaret, Spain) <i>"...It's like ... being thrown at the sea and then, ok, now you learn how to swim."</i> (Inbal, Israel)	Fully integrate to the host culture Maintain one's own culture A process of discovery and re-building Setting boundaries Establishing a new set of values A changed world view	<i>"...in the end you can get a balance..."</i> (Margaret, Spain) <i>"...trying to assess 'what do I take' and 'what do I like' and what is the limit. Who am I?"</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia) <i>"You have more values and you see them."</i> Sandra, Germany

Choices	Example of supporting quote	Outcomes	Example of supporting quote
Learning the language	<i>"...I've taken a lot of time to study the speech..."</i> (Anushka, Russia)	Feeling harassed	<i>"...I stopped doing this when I felt harassed..."</i> (Gina, Romania)
	<i>"...I've never tried."</i> (Margaret, Spain)	Discrimination by locals	<i>"...It doesn't matter that you speak Dutch...you are still a foreigner."</i> (Anushka, Russia)
Establishing new social support structures	<i>"I just said, well I'm going to learn Dutch."</i> (Rina, Romania)	Exclusion/isolation from local community	<i>"...they..ignored me by only speaking Dutch..."</i> (Annabelle, Romania)
	<i>"...your friends...move on...there is some distance...growing between the both of you..."</i> (Inbal, Israel)	Isolation from colleagues and networks	<i>"I live in this expat bubble and I don't know anything around it..."</i> (Margaret, Spain)
Establishing new social support structures	<i>"...to choose new friends..."</i> (Tatiana, Serbia)	Ability to express oneself	<i>"I could express myself sufficiently in the language."</i> (Sue, UK)
	<i>"...I am going home and they are my friends and I'm like... 'What are we going to talk about?'"</i> (Gina, Romania)	Passivity (no energy to meet people)	<i>"...to get out of there and actually meet someone would be very difficult. You just don't have the energy to do that..."</i> (Rina, Romania)
Establishing new social support structures	<i>"...your friends...move on...there is some distance...growing between the both of you..."</i> (Inbal, Israel)	Loneliness and physical isolation	<i>"...Stranded. ...in this little tiny village..."</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia)
		Establish social support networks (work and personal)	<i>"...we always have someone to fall back on. Mommy and Daddy and the family and the close people."</i> (Inbal, Israel)
		Maintaining social networks with significant others in home country	

Choices	Example of supporting quote	Outcomes	Example of supporting quote
		Support and understanding Reinforcement of identity and decisions	<i>"...everyone that I meet is an expat and they all leave..."</i> (Adri, South Africa) <i>"...the support and understanding from all sides...is also what motivates you to keep going..."</i> (Inbal, Israel)
Personal and career growth	<i>"So it was great for someone to guide me about my career."</i> (Rina, Romania) <i>"...you're developing yourself...not only in school and in my career but also in more personal and fun things."</i> (Inbal, Israel) <i>"...we are the one who have to take the steps towards what we want."</i> (Annabelle, Romania) <i>"...I'm actually just looking to do Art and Event management for different galleries and just kind of be freer."</i> (Sandra, Germany) <i>"...I don't want to be a career woman. I don't want to work 50 hours a week. I want to work 2 times a week."</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia)	Feeling more integrated Fighting to be seen Proving one's worth' Discrimination based on gender and nationality Career exit due to caring responsibilities	<i>"...my profession...actually helped me to feel more integrated..."</i> (Tatiana, Serbia) <i>"...I have to prove myself ten times more. But at the same time I'm female, but you have to execute, that's what I learned..."</i> (Monika, Slovakia) <i>"...Foreigners were more based in a...non-permanent contract. So we have to prove ourselves."</i> (Margaret, Spain) <i>"...you're a foreigner and you're probably not going to be here forever..."</i> (Gina, Romania) <i>"...when you have children: Either you have a lot of money to spend on childcare, or you're just stuck. You're stuck. You can't do anything."</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia)

The journey of choice and chance that is represented by the final combined SID is fairly complex and at first glance rather static. In order to explain the different feedback loops through zooming into the system, I decided to use the analogy of Alice in Wonderland to explore the deeper aspects and sub-systems of the SIE journey of choice and chance. The rationale for using this analogy is that the young Alice's preconceived ideas of reality are challenged and shaken up during her adventures in Wonderland. Alice continuously finds herself in a process of questioning her own identity and value systems whilst consequently having to respond and interact with her environment. The tale ends with a young Alice who emerges from Wonderland a more mature and changed person. This analogy enables us to get a 'gestalt understanding' of the experiences of the participants in this study (Carpenter, 2008:277).

5.3.1 Zooming once: slipping down the rabbit hole

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

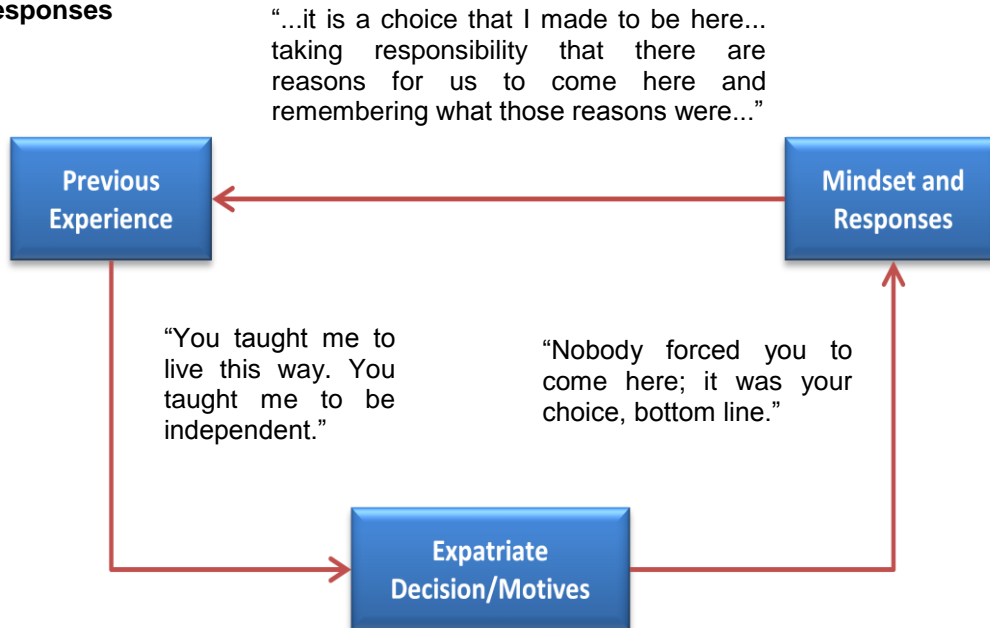
***(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,
Lewis Carroll, 1866:13)***

The first look at the combined SID representing the SIE women's experience in this study could be compared to the moment Alice starts following the white rabbit, which eventually takes her down the rabbit hole. Before she actually lands in Wonderland, a number of circumstances drive her into the hole. The same applies to our journey of choice and chance, which begins with a number of circumstances that work together to result in self-initiated expatriation.

The first process of zooming into the SID begins with a feedback loop in the system between Previous Experience, Expatriate Decision/Motives, and Mindset and Responses.

Diagram 5.6 (overleaf) illustrates the first feedback loop in the system.

Diagram 5.6 Feedback loop: Previous Experience, Expatriate Decision/Motives, Mindset and Responses



Previous experience in the home country (in the form of work experience, upbringing, etc.), as well as previous experiences of living and working abroad, influenced participants’ willingness to move abroad. These experiences also determined the number of relevant skills and abilities with which they were equipped to be able to adapt successfully to different cultures and environments. Hence, the transition was easier for some participants than for others. Growing up in different countries (or example, Inbal and Sonya) or previous expatriate assignments (for example Rina, Michelle, Sandra, Magdalena and Margaret) shaped the personal and professional identities that shaped the participants’ lives. This finding is in line with those of Richardson (2006:470), Selvajarah (2003:9) and Volpe and Murphy (2011:71). Previous experience influences the degree to which a person is able to deal with the challenges faced in another country (Selvajarah, 2003:9).

The *Expatriate Decision/Motives* for self-initiated expatriation is influenced by various factors, including work experience and prior international opportunities, personal factors (a partner/spouse in the host country, family ties in the host country, a sense of adventure, etc). Interestingly, there is no clear distinction between the reasons for expatriation, and these reasons may change over time. For example, Rina lived and worked in various countries as a traditional expatriate transferee prior to relocating to the Netherlands as an SIE. She met her Dutch boyfriend during an assignment in India, and consequently decided to relocate to

the Netherlands in order to pursue her career and relationship. I recently had some follow-up conversation with Rina, whose relationship with her boyfriend (her main reason for coming to the Netherlands) has ended. For the moment, she decided to remain in the Netherlands for the sake of her career and established friendships and networks. Thus, her reason for self-initiated expatriationSIE has changed, but has not necessarily led her to leave her current host country. Bonnie and Margaret have had similar experiences when they decided to join their boyfriends in relocating to the Netherlands out of a sense of adventure. They chose to remain in the Netherlands after their break-ups for other reasons. Since the commencement of this study, Margaret and Sandra have moved on to other countries.

Gina originally moved to the Netherlands as an expatriate transferee, but after her contract expired, she decided to remain on a local contract because of her boyfriend (a Canadian), who was also living in the Netherlands. Thus, reasons and motives change over time. The role of *choice* in this process distinguishes this group of SIE women from traditional expatriates and migrants: for them, the *decision* to live and work in the host country was in their own hands (“*we made a choice to be here*”), which consequently influenced their mindsets about adjustment and responses to the host culture. Thus, unlike the definition of Al Ariss (2010:341) of a migrant (who has little or no choice in moving), these women had a sense of control over their own moving between countries, in line with the motives for expatriation proposed by authors such as Mc Kenna and Richardson (2007:311). This mindset of taking responsibility for one’s choices also influenced participants’ willingness to persevere and step out of the identity crisis that comes with leaving familiar structures behind.

Starting down the journey of choice and chance is not easy – regardless of the “rabbit” one may be chasing (the motive for going to another country), very little can prepare one for how long, how tough and how emotional the journey may be.

5.3.2 Zooming twice (a mysterious place of growing and shrinking)

*It was much pleasanter at home," thought poor Alice,
"when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller,
and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I
almost wish I hadn't gone down the rabbit-hole – and
yet – and yet –...*

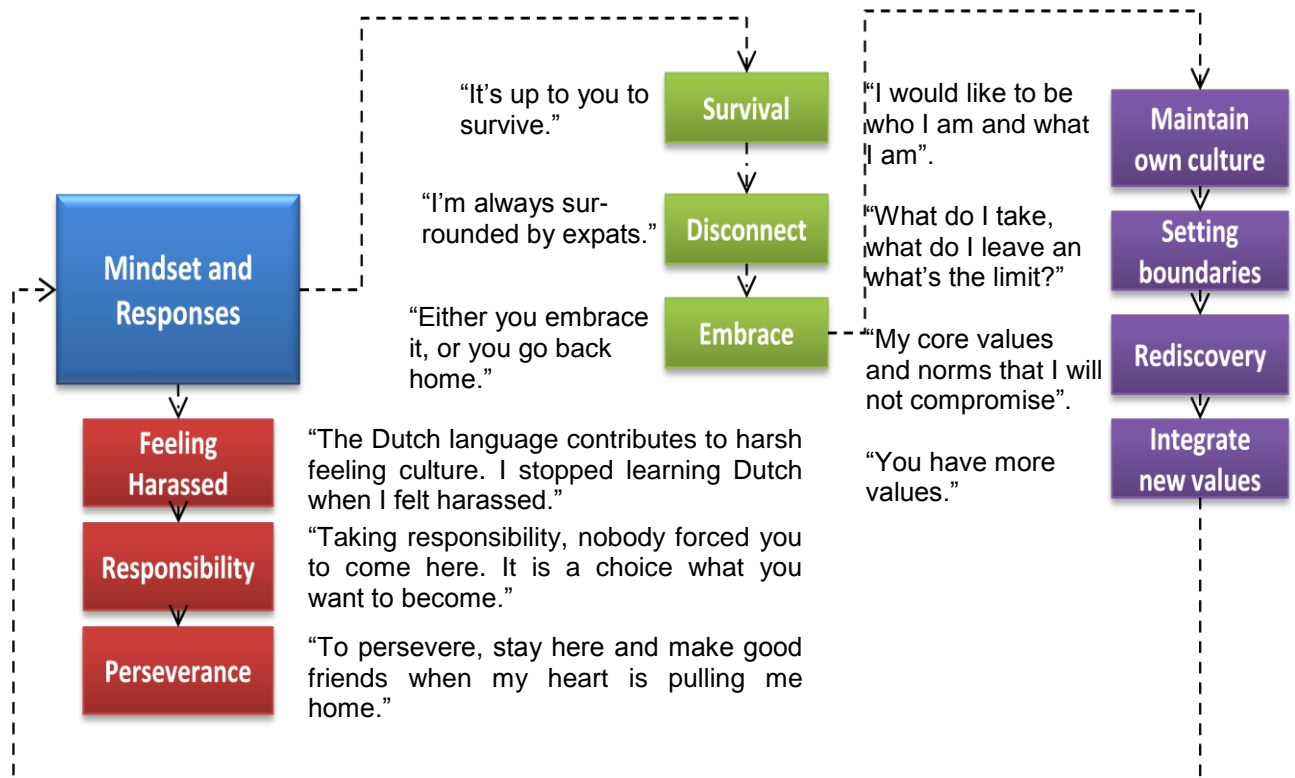
(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll, 1866:32)

Once the decision is made, and one sets foot in the host country, the slide into the rabbit hole begins to feel more like a roller coaster of tumbling and whirling in a downward spiral into an unknown wonderland. Just like Alice, many of the participants began this journey with the feeling that “things were much pleasanter at home” (Carroll, 1866:32). However, there was general consensus in the two groups that if it were not for their identities being challenged, they would not have been in the host country in the first place.

If one zooms even deeper into the affinity of “Mindset and Responses”, a set of spiralling experiences emerge. These spirals of experience continue throughout the journey of choice and chance where an individual is actively part of the process and each experience builds upon the other. Diagram 5.7 (overleaf) illustrates the sub-systems representing the affinity of “Mindset and Responses”.

Diagram 5.7 Zooming in: the sub-systems of Mindset and Responses



The affinity of Mindset and Responses relates to the cyclical learning process throughout the adjustment journey. Just as Alice in Wonderland is confronted with her own assumptions and pre-conceived ideas during her journeys in Wonderland, the participants in this study found themselves challenged in their experiences of their host culture. Individual learning throughout the adjustment process plays a critical role in determining the outcome of the journey of choice and chance. Learning takes place in a cyclical, incremental process, through experiencing, reflecting, observing and experimenting (Ng *et al.*, 2009:512), enabling an individual to re-frame her mindset in order to respond more effectively to the different elements in the system. Aulin (1984:151) describes this process of spiralling in a system as follows: "[A] solution found to some problem usually produces new intellectual challenges, new problems to be solved." Thus, as one challenge is resolved, a new one occurs due to a previous solution which has unexpected or unanticipated process outcomes which require a new level of thinking from the individual. This continuous learning process can also be related to the development of CQ as illustrated by the PRISM model for developing CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:37) (see section 2.5).

Thus, if one takes a closer look at Mindset and Responses, the components of CQ (meta-cognition, cognition, motivation and behaviour) seem closely linked to the sub-systems of “Feeling Harassed – Responsibility - Perseverance”; “Survival - Disconnect - Embrace”; and, “Maintaining own culture - Setting boundaries - Rediscovery - Integrate new values”.

- The process of “Feeling Harassed - Responsibility -Perseverance” as described by participants is related to aspects Motivational CQ such perseverance, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and confidence (Earley & Ang, 2003; Earley & Peterson, 2004:105).
- The process of “Survival - Disconnect - Embrace” as described by participants is related to aspects of Behavioural CQ, such as: speaking the local language; and behaving appropriately in different situations (Earley, *et al.*, 2006:35; Earley & Peterson, 2004:109). The concept of group membership as related to motivational and behavioural CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:74-75) also influences the extent to which an individual’s learning cycle progresses from survival mode to disconnect and embrace of the host culture.
- The process of “Maintain own culture - Setting boundaries - Rediscovery - Integrate new values” seems closely related to Cognition and Meta-cognition: Becoming consciously aware of cultural preferences, planning, monitoring and revising mental models (Ang *et al.*, 2007:338); reflective observation and reframing one’s cultural frame of reference (Ang, *et al.* 2007:338; Thomas, *et al.*, 2008:127).

If viewed holistically, CQ becomes the underlying facilitator of the entire adjustment experience where individuals with high CQ are able to adapt, interact and shape their environments in order to create a context for new interactions (Thomas *et al.*, 2008:131).

By superimposing CQ theory on Mindset and Responses, the following spirals of experience emerge:

Motivation

- a. Feeling harassed
- b. Responsibility

- c. Perseverance

Behaviour

- a. Survival
- b. Disconnect
- c. Embrace

Cognition and meta-cognition

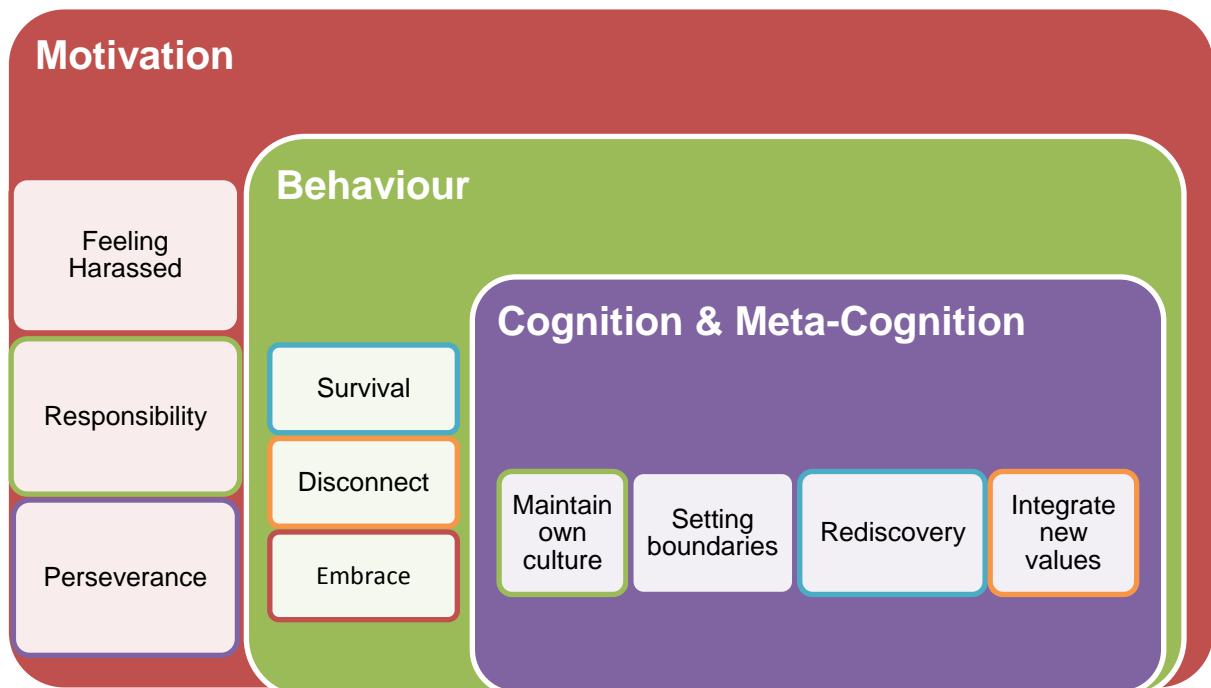
- a. Maintain own culture
- b. Setting boundaries
- c. Rediscovery
- d. Integrate new values

***Researcher's note:**

The components of CQ are presented in this order in this section based on the premise that the SIE experience begins with the Motivation to move to another country. However, the three "layers" of heart (motivation), body (behaviour) and mind (cognition/meta-cognition) are interrelated, overlapping and continuously influencing each other, not necessarily in any particular order.

These spirals of experience as embedded in CQ are illustrated in Diagram 5.8 (below).

Diagram 5.8 Zooming in: the sub-systems of Mindset and Responses



This system will be further explored in the following paragraphs to illustrate how participants to this study experienced the adjustment process from a CQ perspective. CQ is considered a facilitator in the entire process.

- **Cognition and meta-cognition**

From the discussions, it seems as if participants had different reflections and perceptions of their lives in the Netherlands. Although both groups highlighted similar challenges in the adjustment process, their responses and cognitive framing of these challenges differed. Consequently, their responses to these challenges influenced their general well-being and perceptions of success in the Netherlands.

***Researcher's note:**

Various authors have highlighted the role of contextual factors on the interpretation of findings by a researcher (See for example Johnson & Duberley, 2003; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). In the case of this study, it may be that my interpretation of participants' experiences of successful adjustment was influenced by such contextual factors. For example: Anushka is not a native English-speaker. I am not familiar with the Russian culture or language and it may be that her expression of her experiences was interpreted in an overly negative manner by me as a researcher due to my own cultural bias and a language barrier.

In order to help one *step out* of the identity crisis, Thinking and meditating were emphasised as essential skills for navigating the journey. Thus, through thinking about one's perceptions and re-evaluating one's frame of reference, one can arrive at a changed *point of view* (Ang *et al.*, 2007:337; Earley & Peterson, 2004:105; Kim *et al.*, 2006:n.p.). The experiences of the women in these two focus groups reflect the importance of *declarative*, and *procedural knowledge* as components of Cognitive CQ that moderate the adjustment process (Ng *et al.*, 2009:521; Thomas *et al.*, 2008:128).

For some participants, the process of re-framing their perceptions and adapting their values was natural. Sonya, for example, simply decided to frame the process as a *chance for reinvention* and then decided how to integrate new values into her existing frame of reference. Through active experimentation, she quickly realised that full assimilation into Dutch culture would be impossible (one cannot *become Dutch*) and instead she decided to pursue a different strategy. Realising that one's identity has a central core that cannot be changed, but has fluid edges that are open for re-negotiation, is key to successfully navigating one's way through the journey of choice and chance.

Through exposure to the culture, one becomes aware of which components of one's own cultural values are static and which are fluid. Thinking and meditation (cognition and meta-cognition) enables one to determine a different course of action and to integrate new information into one's existing mindset. Gina, for example, re-framed her expectations of the service levels in the Netherlands. By contrast, Bonnie has not yet been able to re-frame her expectations in relation to certain aspects of the culture, and consequently continuously finds herself in a state of tension when she is dealing with the service industry. This process is also true for deeper layers of the cultural experience. Others, despite the fact that they understand Dutch culture at a cognitive level, were still unable to integrate it into their value systems, for example, Anushka, who, despite knowing that one should change one's point of view, still feels that some things are just impossible to understand and appreciate.

Thus, at a cognitive and meta-cognitive level, re-evaluation of one's values takes place where the initial behavioural response of "embrace" is reflected by a need to integrate fully into the host culture. However, as conflicting values become apparent, a person may regress to the need to maintain her own culture and disconnect from the host culture. However, through reflective observation and by creating new mental categories (rediscovery), new values can be incorporated into an existing frame of reference (Ang *et al.*, 2007:338; Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:82; Thomas *et al.*, 2008:12; 2009:78). Some participants chose to disconnect from the host culture deliberately (as was the case with Sandra and Margaret), only to realise that they have become isolated from the host culture, and needed to integrate more host culture values into their value systems.

As the journey of choice and chance progresses, the individual is faced with new challenges and a spiralling process begin to occur in which the person learns to set new boundaries, rediscover her cultural identity and consequently integrate new values into her existing value systems, which in turn influences her mindset and approaches. Thus, Social Learning Theory and Culture Shock influence people's behaviour and ability to respond to the environment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:239; Shapiro *et al.*, 2009:78).

- **Motivation**

For both focus groups, it seems that motivation, perseverance and confidence in their own abilities was very important in the process of adjusting to life in the Netherlands. These aspects are related to the *motivational* component of CQ as described by Earley and Ang (2003:138), Earley and Peterson (2004:105) and Fishbein and Ajzen (2001:15). The self-directed nature of their motives for expatriation had a strong influence on the participants' motivation to persevere in the host country. It was a choice (out of free will) to be in the host country. Thus, their attitude is that because they placed themselves in the host country, they were responsible for persevering and making a success of their lives there.

Motivation came from both external and internal sources. Commitment and perseverance were understood as simply digging one's heels in and sticking to one's decision – despite hardships and challenges. Focus Group 1 placed a strong emphasis on the role played by family, friends and significant others in both the home and host countries in respect of their ability to remain motivated. Significant others in the home country could be a source of positive reinforcement for the decision to move, but could also be a source of negative reinforcement and a de-motivator. The pressure to return “home” from significant others in the home country could be a significant source of negative reinforcement, not to mention a lack of support from parents who do not support the decision to move. However, the presence of one's spouse and children in the host country do play a crucial role in moderating the negative inputs from outside: participants mentioned the need to remain motivated for the sake of a spouse or children – as one participant put it: “*The woman controls the temperature of the house.*”

For Focus Group 2, the source of motivation was centred in the ability of the self to maintain itself – believing in one's own abilities, *executing and initiating*, becoming *pushy, fighting* to be seen in a man's world. A reason for this shift in focus may be that participants from more communitarian societies felt that one cannot “count on one's family” in the Netherlands. Participants from more individualist backgrounds in this group were also of a younger generation than the participants in Focus Group 1. The majority of them did

not have children yet, and were free to pursue their careers and personal development goals. Thus, it may be that for that age group, one's life phase and the age of one's children (if any) may have a significant impact on one's source of motivation and the opportunities available for pursuing one's goals.

The mindset with which the majority of participants approached their move to the new country ranged from feelings of harassment (which was strongly related to learning the language) to taking responsibility for the decision and perseverance (the determination to "lock down" and carry on in the face of adversity). These aspects are closely related to the motivational component of CQ – the level of self-efficacy and willingness to persevere despite possible failure or adversity (Earley & Ang, 2003:138; Earley & Peterson, 2004:105). This progression of adapting one's mindset occurs in parallel with the process of adapting one's belief system at a meta-cognitive level in order to develop the motivation to persevere and endure (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2001:15).

- **Behaviour**

The behavioural component of CQ entails that an individual is able to acquire an appropriate set of behavioural responses that can be implemented in different intercultural situations (Earley & Peterson, 2004:109). Through learning an appropriate set of responses, one is better able to adjust to the host culture and overcome culture shock (Black & Mendenhall, 1991:239). For both groups, the behavioural component of CQ was manifested in themes such as learning the *language*. Both groups agreed that learning Dutch was very hard and took a lot more time than they initially expected. Through understanding the language, one is provided with a lens to gain insights into the culture, which consequently helps one to learn appropriate behaviours. Furthermore, language (and the right accent) enables one to overcome certain social barriers in the private sphere as well as in the workplace. Through proficiency in the language, one is also able to express one's identity better and gain deeper insights into the culture, which consequently reinforces the cognitive and meta-cognitive components of CQ. Some participants reported that they found themselves isolated from the Dutch community through their inability to master the language. This led to insular circles of interactions with the *expatriate community only*. The downside of

mixing only with other expatriates is that expatriates are continuously moving in and out of the country and thus one's friend base and social support network is not stable.

This mindset change is a phased process through which the individual may first respond *behaviourally* with a survival instinct, followed by either a disconnection from or embrace of the host culture. This process is thus not only acculturative (Berry, 1997:7; Padilla & Perez, 2003:34), but also related to the behavioural component of CQ – “convincingly and consistently playing a role in the other culture” (Earley *et al.*, 2006:35).

5.3.3 Zooming a third time: wandering through Wonderland

But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.

"Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here.

I'm mad. You're mad."

"How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

"You must be," said the Cat, or you wouldn't have come here."

(Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

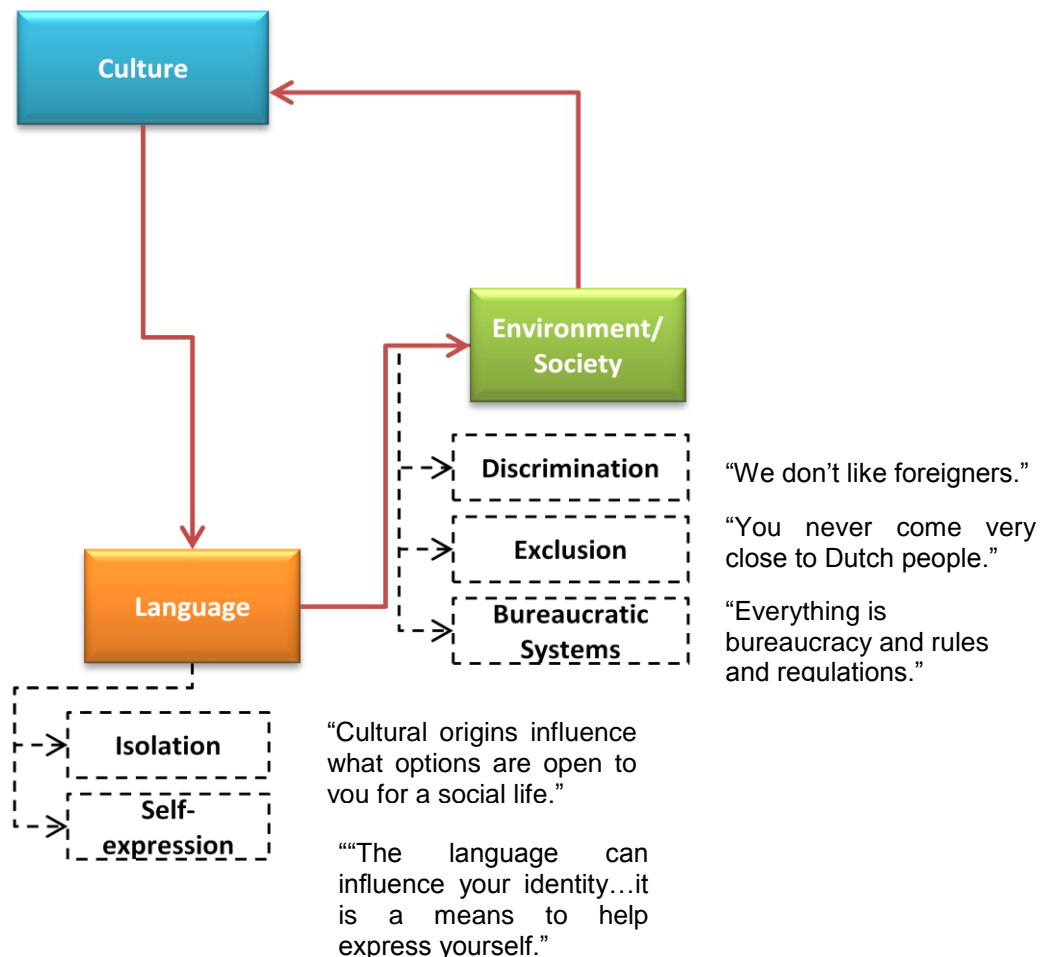
Lewis Carrol, 1866:48)

The next feedback loop in the final SID relates to the host culture, one's own culture, the environment and societal structures and the language of the host culture. Just like Alice finds herself among a variety of strange creatures, these three affinities influence a person's journey of choice and chance. The culture, language and environment are all aspects related to living in a strange country with seemingly mad people, where various factors and structures limit freedom of choice, challenge one's mindset and cultural frames, and determine the nature of choices and chances along the road.

According Aulin (1984:153), human society is a system pursuing survival by means of regulation and control. The more rigid the hierarchy in a system, the less self-steering is possible, because hierarchical systems do not allow for feedback loops.

One can assume that the more rigid and rule-driven a culture, the more hierarchical structures there are in the society, which consequently limits an individual's freedom to adapt to the culture. Diagram 5.9 (below) illustrates the Culture, Language and Environment/Society feedback loop.

Diagram 5.9 Zooming into the feedback loop Culture, Language, and Environment/Society



In the system developed by our participants, an inability to express themselves effectively in the local language led to their feeling isolated from people in the host culture, as well as activities and experiences offered by the host culture. Thus, understanding the language also provides a portal for effectively expressing oneself and functioning in the host culture. However, the responses by the environment (locals and local structures) could influence one's ability to adapt to the culture and learn the language. Discrimination and exclusion by locals may limit an individual's freedom to integrate and adjust, and could lead to a situation where a person becomes alienated from the local culture and begins to live in an "expatriate bubble" that is far removed from the local reality. The experiences of

some members of these two groups of women coincided with the notions of marginalisation and segregation by locals described by Berry (1997:10). Thus, as a result of negative reinforcement and host country national categorisation (Varma *et al.*, 2006:118), an SIE woman may find herself in a negative downward spiral of continuing isolation which is reinforced by a negative mindset, feelings of harassment and disconnection from the local culture.

Both groups indicated that the Dutch system (the bureaucracy of governmental structures, etc.) sets up barriers to individual freedom which consequently limited their ability to respond to the system. For example, both groups of women highlighted the male-dominated culture in the Netherlands that leads to discriminatory practices based on their gender and nationality. Thus, these women were relegated to a lower level of status than their local counterparts. This finding is in line with similar findings by Al Ariss and Özbilgin (2010:283), Felker (2011:78), Lee *et al.* (2009:46) and Tharmsaseelan *et al.* (2010:233). Furthermore, the “boys’ club” in the Netherlands created a structural barrier that limited the choices available to these women on the journey between choice and chance. This finding is comparable to previous findings illustrating discrimination against women in management in Western countries by Linehan and Walsh (1999b:523, 2001:93), Mathur-Helm (2002:19) and Selmer and Leung (2002:348-358).

It is at this point in their experience that participants need positive reinforcement from social support and work colleagues that can help them break this negative spiral. For some participants, maintaining a positive mindset or reframing their experience, and giving a new meaning to their segregation helped them to break this negative cycle (for example, Margaret, Sandra, Lana and Monika, who all felt they had to take control of their experience and emotions). Others, after years in the host country, still had strong feelings of being discriminated against (for example, Anushka and Magdalena).

Various authors have emphasised the importance of knowledge and competence in the local language as important for CQ and adjustment to the host country (Ang *et al.*, 2007:5; Kim *et al.*, 2006). Although language may indeed be a reflection of a high level of CQ, many of the participants in the two focus groups found themselves successful in the host country without being fluent in Dutch language

(although they also reported very often being isolated from the host country nationals). The motivation to persevere in learning the local language and becoming fluent in the local language is important, and provides a window into the local culture and local social networks (Earley *et al.*, 2006:86; Friedman *et al.*, 2009:254; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985:41). However, prejudiced reactions from locals, or colleagues' and friends' switching to English instead of reinforcing the learning of the language, set up a barrier to learning and improving one's language skills in the local language. The negative reactions by locals based on different accents for example, as described by Anushka, corresponds to findings about host-country national categorisation of colleagues into marginalised out-groups (Lauring, 2008:356; Olsen & Martins, 2009:219).

5.3.4 Zooming a fourth time: finding who am I

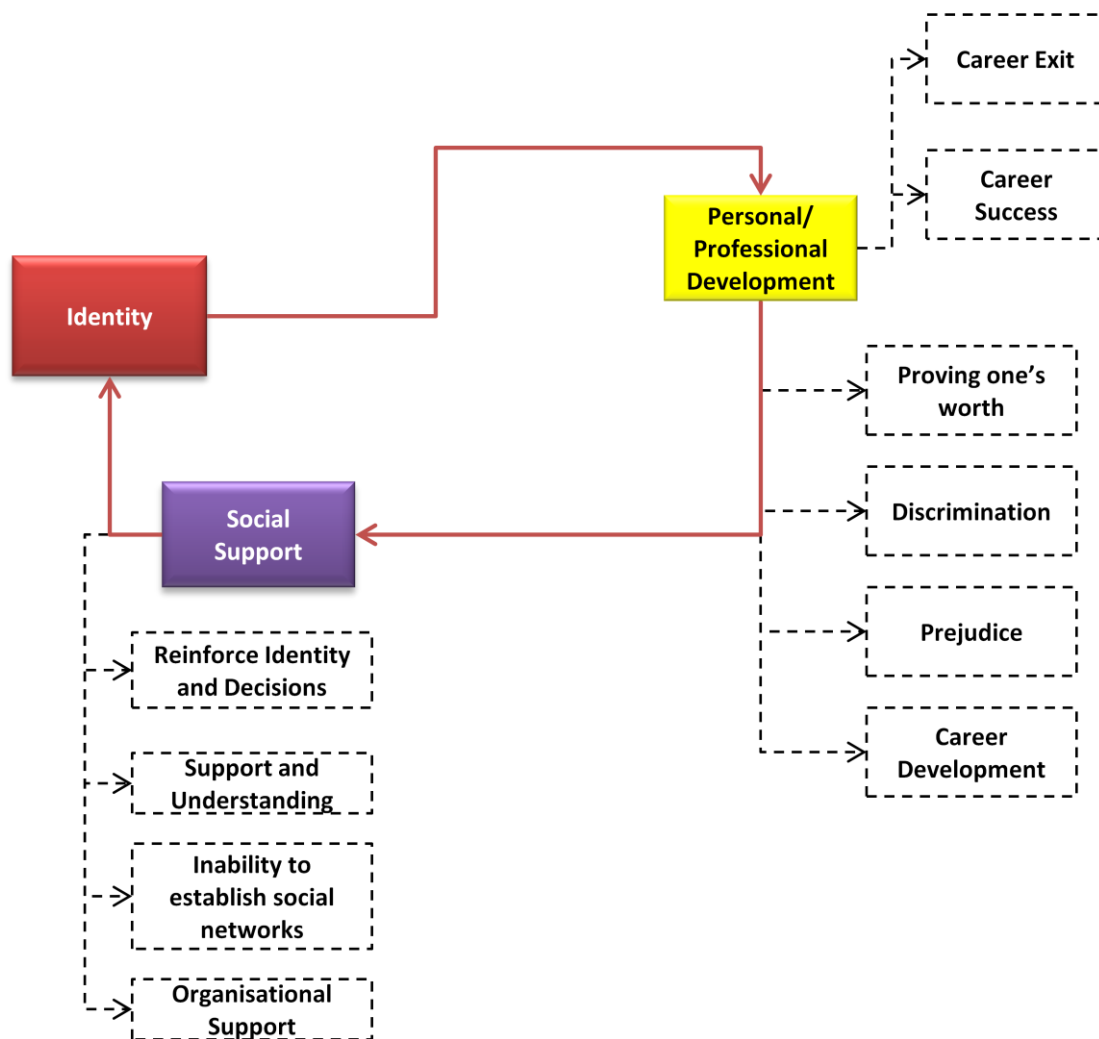
*...it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a
different person then.*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Lewis Carroll (1866:76)

The fourth feedback loop in the system occurs between *Identity*, *Social Support*, and *Personal/Professional Development* (illustrated in Diagram 5.10, overleaf).

Diagram 5.10 Zooming into the feedback loop Identity, Social Support, and Personal/Professional Development



- **Identity**

Identity forms a central pivot in the entire system, as it is influenced by all other aspects of the system, and also influences all other aspects in the system. A person's identity is shaped by the entire experience at a macro-level, but also by the individual systems, sub-systems and actors that one may come across along the way. Margaret described this experience of change beautifully, in a similar way to which Alice realised that her adventures in Wonderland had changed her:

“But I know [sighs], when I’m there [Spain], you can see how time has passed by and people have evolved in a different way that you have. And you also kind of see how the international part is in you now, and you can see things

that people can't see...and then you kind of don't understand them the same way you used to understand them.” (Margaret, Spain)

- **Social Support**

Social Support helps to reinforce one's identity and the decision one has made to be in the host country. It also provides sources of emotional support and understanding. The inability to establish new social networks in the host country may lead to isolation and may also have an adverse effect on one's identity as identity is embedded in social networks (Hartl, 2004:43; Padilla & Perez, 2003:50). In the journey of choice and chance, identity in its various forms is continuously being challenged and re-defined through interactions between the self, the family and significant others in the home and host culture, and social networks (friends and colleagues), both in the international and Dutch communities. Family serves as both a hindrance and a help in this regard: on the one hand, one's family may provide reinforcement for one's decision to relocate, and reinforce one's identity; on the other hand, one's family is a source of stress when family members suffer a sense of loss of a loved one and cannot cope with the changes in the value system of their loved one.

- **Personal/Professional Development**

Identity is also reinforced and shaped by one's *Personal and Professional Development*, which is also the outcome of the system of meaning. Thus, the feedback from the working environment may motivate an SIE woman to continue to prove her worth in order to continue developing her personal and professional growth. However, discrimination and prejudice may also hamper the opportunities available to her and have an adverse effect on her identity. Furthermore, bureaucratic systems in the cultural environment, coupled with the availability of social support, may influence eventual career exit or career success.

5.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to combine the findings of the two SIDs developed in Chapter 4 into a combined system of meaning in the integrated SID. This

integrated diagram forms a basis for the development of a theoretical model. A comparison of the affinities represented by the two SIDs revealed a significant degree of overlap between them. I also recognised a number of affinities that influenced the final system that were not initially identified by participants – the final system is influenced by cognition, meta-cognition, motivation and behaviour, which are components of CQ. Through continuously learning and integrating new learning into their existing repertoires, participants were able to navigate their journey of personal and professional development successfully during the adjustment process. During each part of the journey, an individual is faced by a number of dilemmas that need to be reconciled successfully in order to move to the next level. With the reconciliation of each dilemma, a new dilemma arises to be reconciled, leading to a spiral.

In the final SID, a number of integrated, recursive, developmental processes became apparent. These were compared with processes described in the prior literature. Unfortunately, the graphic abilities of the researcher are limited, and it was not possible to create a three-dimensional, layered model that can be used to represent the full complexity of the entire experiential learning spiral that takes place during the adjustment process. As expected, many aspects of the system were comparable with previous research on CQ and adaptation, acculturation and adjustment on expatriate samples.

The outcome of the final integrated SID, namely “Personal/Professional Development” is consistent with previous research on SIE women which point to the role of adjustment on the personal growth and development of the individual (Cabrera, 2009:187; Mäkelä, Suutari & Mayerhofer, 2011:268; Myers & Pringle, 2005:247; Richardson & Mallon, 2005:416). However, the findings also expand on previous research by providing evidence for the facilitative role of CQ in the overall adjustment, personal development and career development of SIE women. Thus, connecting previous expatriate literature with CQ theory by acknowledging the notion of a strong self-growth motive as moderator of expatriate success and a reflection of high CQ (Earley, *et.al.*, 2006:31.)

It seems that the SIE experience results in something more than merely adjusting, adapting and acculturating to the host country culture. Instead, long-term exposure

to the host culture seems to result in the overall development of CQ for SIE women and their career decisions.

The next chapter provides a link back to career development theory as an additional outcome of this exploratory research, in order to develop a complete conceptual-theoretical model based on the building-blocks identified from the IQA process involving SIE women.

CHAPTER 6

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD – REVISITING THE EXTANT KNOWLEDGE AND PRESENTING A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



Photo 6.1 Prof. Yvonne Du Plessis and Dr. Nicolene Barkhuizen visiting me at the company where I work in Amsterdam (June 2012)

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the exercise of constructing SIDs for the two sample groups provided useful insights into the specific realities of the groups being investigated, these diagrams also provide insights into the nature of the specific research conducted (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:357), in this case, the role of CQ as facilitator in the adjustment (adaptation and acculturation) of SIE women in the Netherlands. The IQA research design is one of continuous recursion as an approach to research as a system (Northcutt & McCoy, 2004:71). Through this study, it became clear that the original research questions led to new avenues of research that needed to be explored in order to elaborate on and inform our understanding of women's self-initiated expatriate adjustment. The final system represents a number of supra-affinities, each of which can be "zoomed-in" on further to explore complex sub-systems.

The experiences detailed by participants indicated a need to explore the role of Personal/Professional development further as an *outcome* of adjustment during self-initiated expatriation.

This chapter revisits the literature and proposes an integrative framework focusing on the career outcomes for SIE women by revisiting the theory of self-initiated expatriation and career paths for women. Propositions for future research will also be integrated in the framework.

6.2 SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE CAREER PATH

Self-initiated expatriation is often advocated as an alternative career path for women who wish to sojourn internationally. However, there is also a downside to this career path, which may have a significant influence on women's successful adjustment to the host country: SIEs are often equated with migrants and are consequently allocated a lower status than company-sponsored counterparts (Lee *et al.*, 2009:46). Many SIEs move into lower positions that pay less and are less challenging than their prior position held in the home country (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010:283; Felker, 2011:78). These findings have been augmented by recent

findings by Schneidhofer, Schiffinger and Mayrhofer (2012:77), who assert that the accumulation of “feminine” career capital contributes to a widening income gap between men and women. As a result of stereotypes, misconceptions and barriers to entry, a psychological form of “brain waste” leads to the underutilisation of the human capital of SIEs (Tharmsaseelan *et al.*, 2010:233). Many of the women who participated in this study found themselves having to work “*ten times harder*” than their Dutch counterparts to be seen, often working below their qualification level or in fields other than where their experience lies.

Women’s motivation for mobility is often related to psychological and physical factors (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009:1561), and their career choices tend to be relational rather than contextual (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:62). Thus, although self-initiated expatriation may seem like a boundaryless career option where individuals have full freedom of choice, there are still factors out of the individual’s control which create boundaries and consequently influence the choices available to the individual (Cabrera, 2009:195; Sullivan & Maineiro, 2007:249; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:66-69). Many of the women who participated in this study were motivated by personal reasons that brought them to the host country. However, these motives for expatriation also limited their choices, and it became apparent that choices are not always in the hands of the individual, and some aspects of the experience are mere chance.

6.3 BETA CAREER PATTERNS, CAREER CAPITAL AND WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR SIES

Unlike the linear “alpha” career pattern typically followed by men, women’s career patterns tend to be much more complex and non-linear (a “beta” career pattern) (Cabrera, 2009:190). Alpha careers are characterised by a strong career focus, where upward mobility and career growth forms the measure of an individual’s success. Beta careers, on the other hand, are characterised by a need to balance aspects of work and family life, which may lead to sacrifices with regard to upward mobility and growth (Sullivan & Maineiro, 2007:247). The majority of women tend to follow a complex beta career path driven by challenge and ambition in the early parts of their career, followed by a need for balance and a focus on caring

responsibilities during their mid-career, and then seeking authenticity in the late parts of their career. The alpha career pattern, by contrast, is characterised by challenge and ambition in the early parts of their careers, followed by a need for authenticity in mid-career, and then seeking balance in the late part of their careers (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007:249).

According to Myers and Pringle (2005:430), beta career patterns may be a benefit for SIE women. Due to women's need for a "stable base", embedded in networks and relationships, women tend to remain in one country longer and consequently accumulate a significant amount of career capital and skills in the host country. Others do not agree with this finding, and assert that the beta career path may in fact form a boundary for SIE women – accumulated career capital prior to self-initiated expatriation may be less marketable than similar accumulated career capital held by their male counterparts, and in many cases SIE women may be excluded from essential networks that would provide access to potential career growth opportunities (Forret & Dougherty, 2004:419; Myers & Pringle, 2005:424).

Factors such as caregiving responsibilities, childbearing, discrimination, stereotypes, and traditional gender roles are examples of boundaries that limit women's career choices in their home countries (Sullivan & Mainiero, 2007:249; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:66-69). These factors become even more pronounced when women decide to sojourn abroad. Cabrera (2008:195) refers to the "choice gap" that limits the freedom of choice available to women due to external factors, which form blockages in women's career paths at much earlier stages than for men. This choice gap may lead professional women to exit their careers temporarily or permanently (Cabrera, 2008:195; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:69). This concept of career exit corresponds with the beta-type career path, where a career is marked first by challenge, then the need for balance, followed by a need for authenticity.

Research findings about women's expatriation experiences are inconclusive: while some believe that self-initiated expatriation provides women with new frontiers to conquer and an alternative to a traditional corporate career (see, for example, Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008; Myers & Pringle, 2005), others feel that women still face many barriers and injustices in the workplace, even as SIEs (see, for example, Felker, 2011; Tharenou, 2010).

6.4 TOWARDS A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S CROSS-CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT AND CAREER EXPERIENCES

Expatriation in its various forms requires an individual to cross physical and psychological barriers, which in turn requires a series of initiatives and adaptations to employment, family and different communities, evolving with changes in individual interests or skills, life experiences of oneself and the people central to one's personal space (individual domain), the characteristics and requirements of one's contemporary employment context (organisational domain) and the encountered economic pressures, technological opportunities and cultural values of the global context (global domain). (Capellan & Janssens, 2005:350)

Expatriation experiences thus lead to a "rearrangement of the self" (Hartl, 2004:43), a theme that also became apparent in this study, where identity was reported to be a central component of the expatriate experience. Through interaction with the host organisation, changes occur not only at the individual level (which is mostly the primary focus of expatriate research), but also at the organisational level of the host country. According to Hartl (2004:44), a person's career self-concept ("internal career") is subject to re-evaluation when an expatriate is exposed to a different reality ("external career") in the host country. For the women in this study, their self-initiated expatriation experiences provided a chance for reinvention and an opportunity to clarify their goals in order to arrive at a place of knowing "*what I am, who I am, what I want, and, what I can*". This ability to re-arrange and recreate one's identity when crossing borders is considered to be a crucial component of Cultural Intelligence (Earley, *et al.*, 2006:27).

The individual identity is also shaped and influenced by a number of gendered factors (Myers & Pringle, 2005:423), a concept which is closely related to the idea of "doing gender" (Hartl, 2004:43). Gendered development plays an integral role in the way an individual actor interacts with the environment in the structuration of life and career experiences. Women's career decisions are strongly influenced by their identity and sense of self, which is rooted in social relationships and networks (Richardson, 2006:473; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:72). Interestingly, this aspect also led to some discussion among women in this study who had to choose their roles as mothers, spouses and career women in the host country. The role of gendered

socialisation, both in the home country culture and in the perceptions of gender roles in the host country culture (a male-dominated culture in the Netherlands) seemed to influence the participants' overall adjustment success.

Social support from significant others in the home and host country is essential for positive reinforcement of role identity, and in helping women to re-build their professional identities in the host country. Social integration involves aspects such as the length of a woman's stay in the host country, the maintenance of her own culture, adaptation to the host culture, and social support from other foreigners and locals in the host country (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:221).

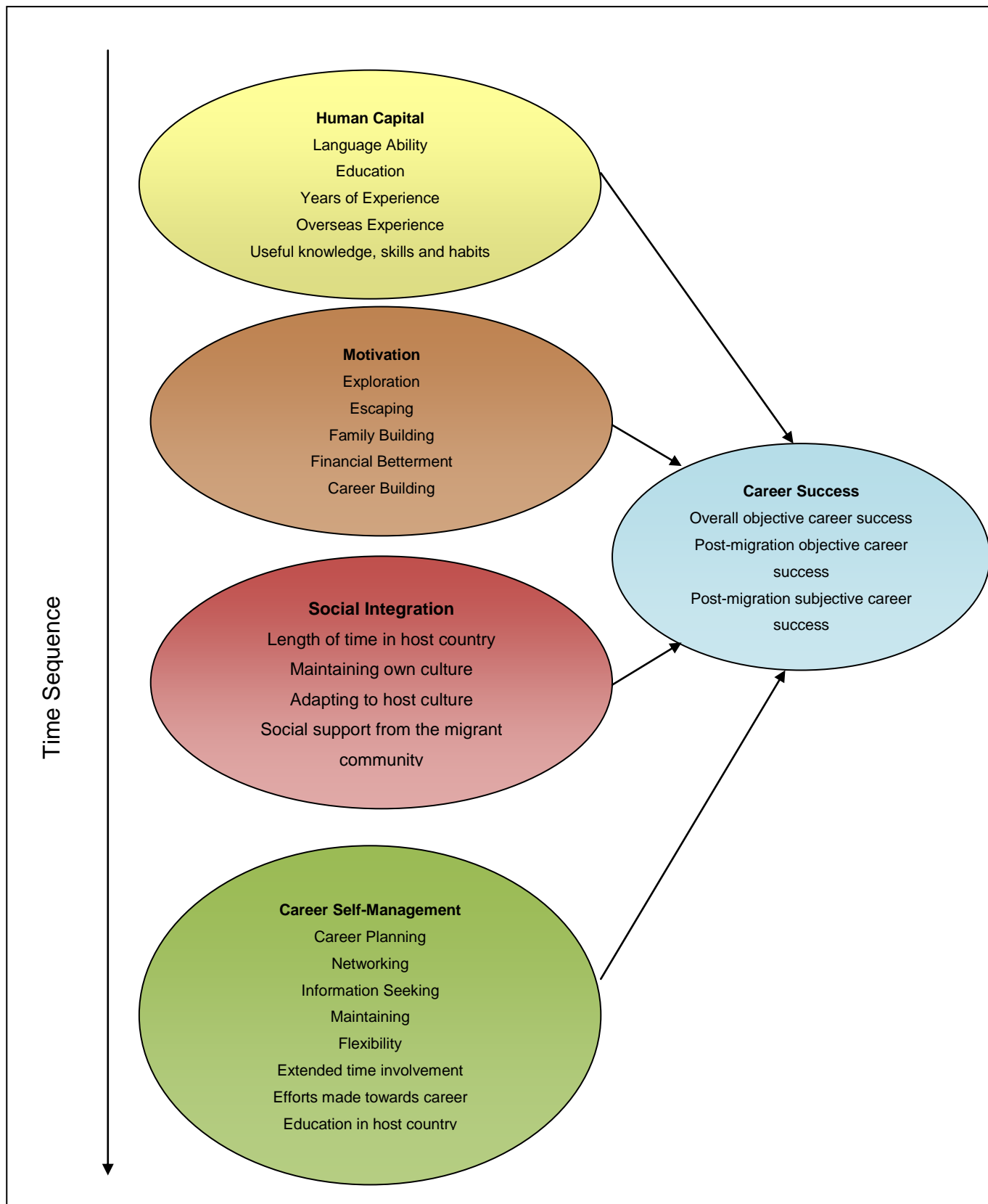
It is assumed that women tend to have a natural ability to establish interpersonal relationships, which consequently allows them to develop higher levels of CQ and an increased ability to adjust to different cultures (Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002:769; Thomas & Inkson, 2003:166).

Women shape their career experiences based on the choices they make, the opportunities that come across their paths, and planned and unplanned life events over which they may or may not have control (Hartl, 2004:45; Sullivan & Maieneiro, 2007:238). Network embeddedness and social networks also contribute to the development of identity and the consequent choices women make in terms of their careers (Volpe & Murphy, 2001:61). Women also tend to invest more in their personal development, and consequently gain more varied experience, in different fields (Cabrera, 2009:187; Myers & Pringle, 2005:430; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61).

Various authors have explored the relationship between expatriate adjustment and career success during expatriation. However, many of their models fail to follow an integrative, holistic approach to expatriation. The "time-sequenced model" of migration and career success developed by Tharmaseelan *et al.* (2010:219) is one of a few initial attempts in the literature to gain an integrated understanding of the various predictors of career success during migration/expatriation. This model was tested with a group of 210 Sri Lankans (136 males and 74 females) who sought better lives in New Zealand. The strength of the model is that it explores both pre-migration and post-migration factors internal and external to the individual in determining career success. However, unlike current thinking on boundaryless and protean careers, this model assumes a degree of permanence in the migration

process: the “career before migration” and the “career after migration” (see Figure 6.1, overleaf). Furthermore, the model was tested on a sample of migrants. The generalisability of the model to expatriates and SIEs is thus limited, and the model does not account for the possibility of gender differences or perceptions of host country nationals as a moderator for adjustment and career success.

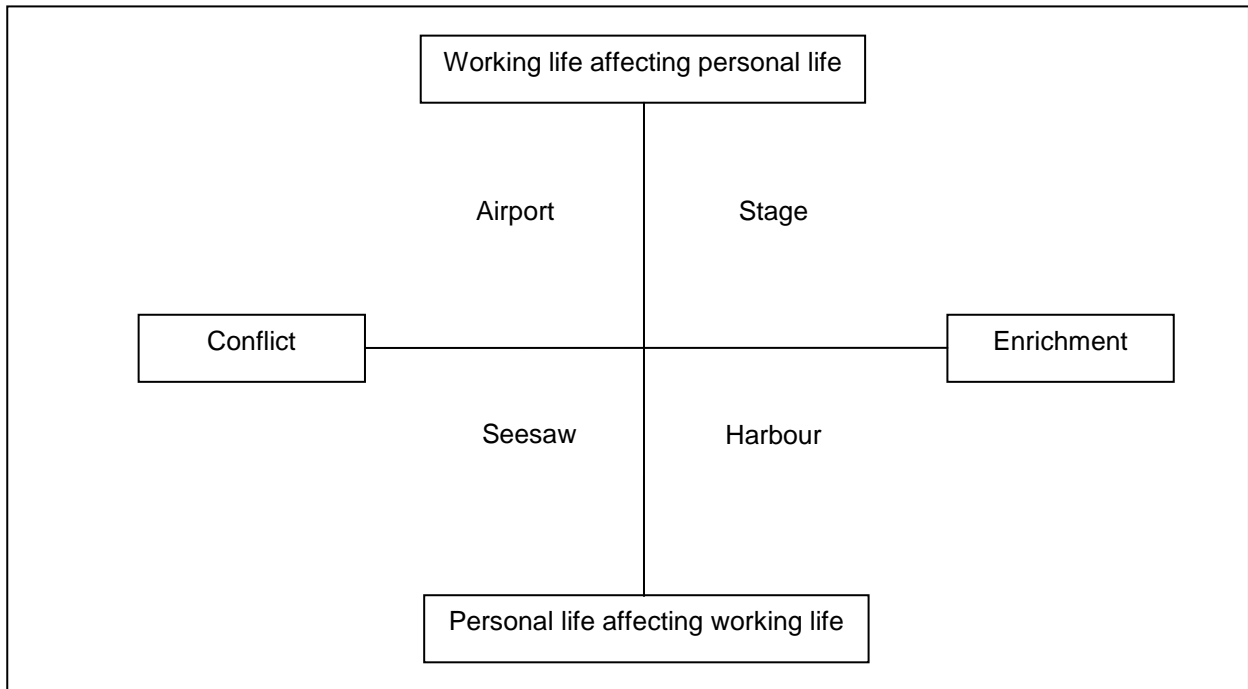
Figure 6.1 A time-sequenced model of migration and career success



Source: Tharmaseelan *et al.* (2010:219)

Mäkelä *et al.* (2011:268) point out that women pursue international assignments for personal growth and development, but that this development is also a two-way process in which work-life conflicts, life and career stages are integral to developmental experiences. These authors present an integrated model to describe the “bi-directional interplay between professional and private lives” (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2011:268). This model is illustrated in Figure 6.2 (below).

Figure 6.2 Metaphors concerning female expatriates’ Work Life Balance



Source: Mäkelä *et al.*, 2011:263

These metaphorical dimensions of conflict between different life spaces can be defined as follows (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2011:264):

- *Airport*: Work affects personal life negatively; related to aspects such as long working hours, feelings of frustration and limited options in the short term.
- *Seesaw*: Personal life affects work life negatively; dual-career conflicts, family responsibilities, young children and traditional gender roles where the wife is a home maker place strain on a person’s ability to commit fully to career development.
- *Stage*: Personal development takes place as a result of successful career development during an international assignment.

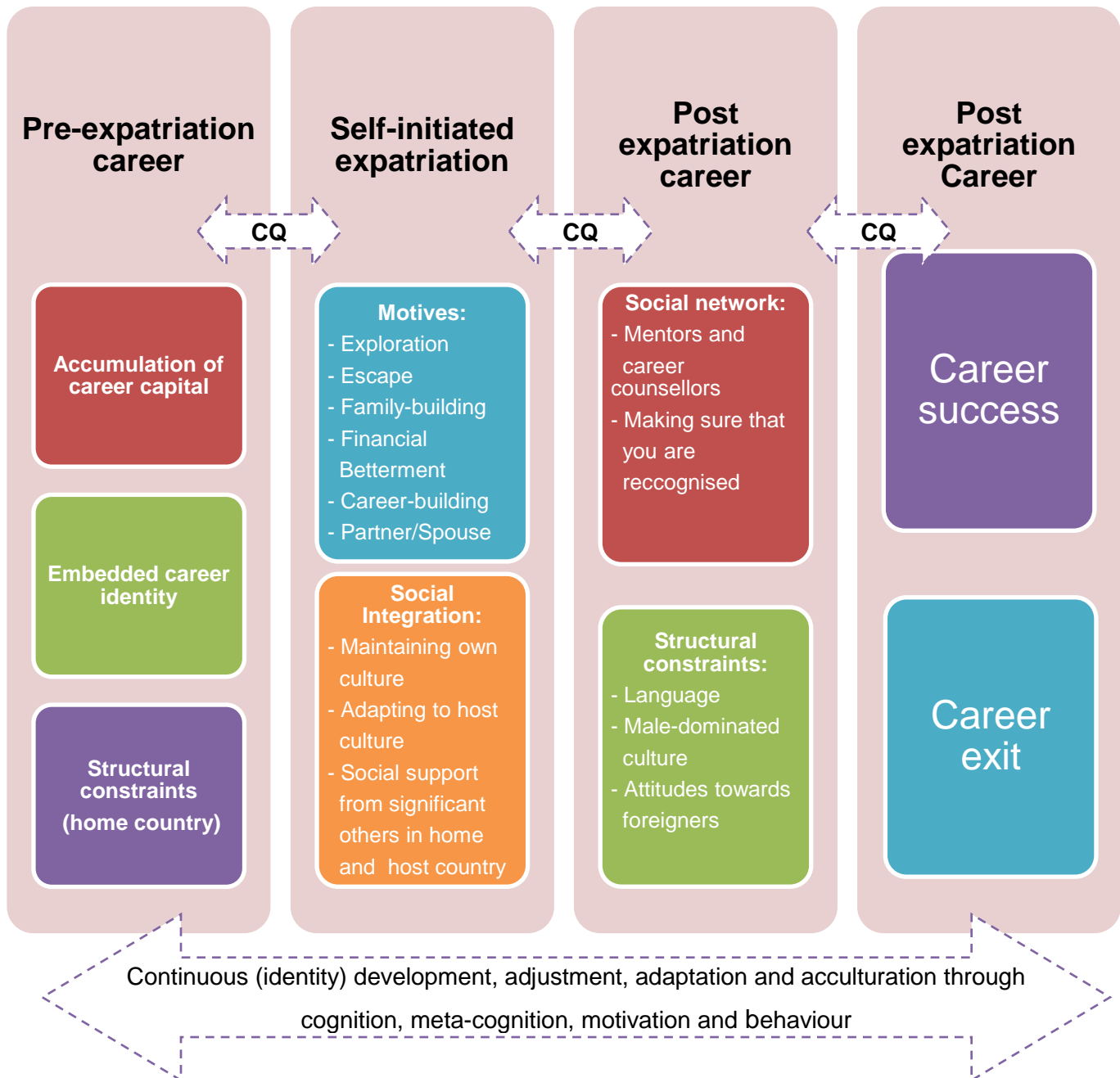
- *Harbour*: The person's work life is enriched by personal life experiences and the ability to withdraw from work in order to renew his/her energy and gain fresh perspectives.

Although the model presented by Mäkelä *et al.* has not yet been validated beyond their sample, it provides a first step towards understanding the complexities of different life spaces and the overflow between these spaces for women in an international context. This model also addresses women's need for network embeddedness (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61), and the role of significant others in the adjustment process (Richardson, 2006:469-468). This model illustrates the critical dilemmas that the participants in this study also faced in terms of the tug-of-war between their life spaces. However, the model does not account for the role of CQ and does not explain the process of how an individual would resolve these conflicts in the broader context of adjustment.

Volpe and Murphy (2011:61) developed a model for understanding the career exit of women in their local environments. The value of this model is its focus on the influence of identity formation and social networks on the career decisions of women. For women who sojourn internationally, the concerns related to a work-life-balance that would be usually lead them to opt out in the home country are complicated by the overflow of life-spaces into each other in the international context (Mäkelä *et al.*, 2011:264) and the need to re-build one's identity during the adjustment process (Hartl, 2004:43; Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:219). Women who opt for self-initiated expatriation are likely to face a further barrier in the transition to a new country, due to the need to re-invent their career identities after an inevitable form of opting out of their existing careers in the home country and re-building their careers in the host country (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:68).

As a starting point for exploring the adjustment, adaptation and acculturation experiences of expatriate women, an integrated conceptual model based on the Time-Sequence Model (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:221) and the model of married professional women's career exit (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61) is presented in Figure 6.3 (overleaf). Based on the findings from the final integrated SID presented Chapter 5, CQ is integrated in this model as a moderating factor throughout the framework.

Figure 6.3 A conceptual framework for understanding the possible facilitative role of CQ in women’s self-initiated expatriation



The elements of the model are discussed next.

6.4.1 Pre-expatriation career

A person’s pre-expatriation career is defined by an accumulation of career capital, an embedded career identity and structural constraints in the host country.

- **Accumulation of career capital**

Career capital is acquired by an individual prior to expatriation. This includes education, work experience, knowledge, skills, and previous overseas experience (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:221). Various authors have emphasised that career capital accumulated outside the host country may not always be relevant or tradable in the host country (Al Ariss, 2010:228). Because the career decisions of women are influenced by factors such as non-work responsibilities, the needs of significant others and fulfilment of personal values, the tradability of their acquired career capital may be even lower than for their male counterparts when they choose to sojourn abroad (Cabrera, 2009:195; Myers & Pringle, 2005:430).

- **Embedded career identity**

The types of career choices women make prior to expatriation are guided by their role identities, as embedded in various social networks in the home country (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:62). Embedded networks help to facilitate a clear identity.

- **Structural constraints (home country)**

Structural constraints in the home country may influence the availability of options available to women in the home country, and may include aspects such as the socio-political context, occupational and organisational demography and the national culture of a country (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61).

- **CQ and the pre-expatriation career**

Personal experiences form the context for the journey of adaptation and give rise to the initial decision for self-initiated expatriation (Richardson, 2006:470; Selvajah, 2003:9; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:71). These experiences play a significant role in forming a woman's CQ and influence her ability to step out of the crisis in order to re-establish support structures in order to deal with the challenges in the host country (Selvajah, 2003:9). Women with a strong personal growth motive are likely to be better able to maintain their motivation to persevere in the host country in spite of potential setbacks and negative

feedback, which is a key component of Motivational CQ (Earley *et al.*, 2006:31, 73).

Proposition 1: The building blocks for enhancing a woman's CQ are activated prior to expatriation and can be considered an essential form of career capital that will influence overall adjustment and career success in the host country.

Structural barriers in the home country may actually enhance women's propensity to build behavioural and motivational CQ. People with high CQ are able to pick up on subtle environmental changes long before those around them are able to do so (Earley, *et al.*, 2006:83). This ability tends to be higher among individuals who are used to standing out (for example school children who are not part of the 'in-group' in high school) and as a consequence continuously aware of the subtle changes in their environments (Earley, Ang & Tan 2006:15).

Proposition 2: Women who are structurally underrepresented in their home countries, or women who are minorities in their home countries due to structural barriers, will have a higher propensity to develop and enhance their behavioural CQ as SIEs.

6.4.2 Self-initiated expatriation

- **Motives**

The findings by Tharmaseelan *et al.* (2010:230) indicate no predictive relationship between the motivation perspective and career success. This is contrary to findings by other authors such as Cerdin, Dine and Brewster (2011:297), who assert that the motivation for expatriation may have a significant influence on the level of adjustment and integration that a person achieves in the host country. Cerdin *et al.* (2011) link motivation to the degree to which an expatriate's expectations are met in the host country, which consequently influences their general life satisfaction, job satisfaction and career success.

It is worth noting that the presence of a partner/spouse who is native to the host country may also significantly influence the adjustment process and consequent

career outcomes for SIE women (Vance *et al.*, 2011:n.p.). It seems that married SIEs tend to achieve better work outcomes than their non-married counterparts, but there seem to be no gender differences between work outcomes, work efficiency and work performance (Selmer & Luring, 2011:207). Furthermore, Vance *et al.* (2011) suggest that a traditional expatriate assignment could provide an SIE with opportunities for the trailing spouse. To date, no attempts have been made to explore the specific experiences of SIEs with a partner or spouse in the host country; nor of trailing spouses who wish to pursue self-initiated expatriation as an alternative career path.

- **Social integration**

Encounters with new cultures may challenge an individual's taken-for-granted self-concept and identity by calling existing mental and behavioural habits into question (Kim, 2001:50). For women, career decisions are strongly influenced by identity and sense of self, which are embedded in social relationships and networks (Richardson, 2006:469; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61). Social support from significant others in the home and host countries is essential in the positive reinforcement of role identity and helping women re-build their professional identities. Having to adjust and integrate into a new culture may impose various constraints that could consequently influence a woman's career success. Social integration and acculturation are essential for achieving career success in the host country (Berry, 1997:15). Social integration involves aspects such as length of stay in the host country, maintenance of one's own culture, adaptation to the host culture, and social support from other foreigners and locals in the host country (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:221). Various authors have explored the adjustment patterns of men and women, concluding that women expatriates tend to be better adjusted than their male counterparts (Selmer & Leung, 2003:251; Haslberger, 2010:163).

- **CQ and self-initiated expatriation**

CQ is developed through experiential learning over time (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:68). It seems however, that for women SIEs, taking care of the practicalities of life and re-establishing physical structures in the host country

(like setting up a bank account) will take preference in the short-term, over deeper learning processes and re-structuring of identity in the long-term. Once these structures are in place, one is able to invest time and energy into establishing personal and professional goals; and to invest in personal/professional development in the host country.

Women's adjustment process seems to be marked by an identity crisis where one has to face many choices and adapt parts of one's identity in order to respond to the changes in the environment. Thus, parts of one's identity are fluid and changeable, comparable to the chameleon-like properties of a person with a high level of Cultural Intelligence (Thomas & Inkson, 2003:14). Managers with a high level of CQ are not only aware of their different identities and the tensions between them, but are also flexible and able to adapt their self-concepts (Earley, *et al.*, 2006:27; Earley & Peterson, 2004:106).

In order to successfully adapt to the host country, one has to go through the various phases of re-framing one's own cultural assumptions in order to allow new values into one's repertoire. Further to Swidler's (1986:278) findings that culture functions differently in settled and unsettled lives, the question arises: Does *identity* formation of women also function differently in settled and unsettled lives?

Proposition 3: There is a relationship between SIE women's CQ and their identity development. SIE women, who are used to moving between different roles, will find it easier to reconstruct and re-establish their identities in the host country through their higher level of CQ.

Proposition 4: Subjective evaluations of self-worth, locus of control and a general sense of well-being should not be ignored in exploring Cultural Intelligence as an individual construct.

Proposition 5: Life-phase development for women influences the construction and re-construction of identity in the host country which may consequently affect SIE women's general sense of personal and professional development.

6.4.3 Post expatriation career: success/exit

The traditional concept of a “career” as being the property of an organisation has gradually shifted to a more protean or boundaryless conception where the individual takes responsibility for his/her own career (Stahl *et al.*, 2002:217). Thorn (2009:457) suggests that self-initiated international mobility (self-initiated expatriation) is the most extreme form of boundaryless career as an individual holds the power over his/her own career and location. The main assumption of research in this domain is that an individual is able to exert a considerable amount of power and influence over his/her own career, hence pursuing a protean or boundaryless career path, where the person’s identity is developed around specific skills and competencies (Biemann & Andresen, 2010:43; Park 2009:649).

Although the decision to live and work abroad may be initiated by individual choice, there are multiple external factors that influence, and often limit, the options available to an individual in a foreign setting (Biemann & Andresen, 2010:441; Richardson & Mallon, 2005:416). Tharmaseelan *et al.* (2010:221) emphasise the importance of proactive behaviour in ensuring career success through strategies such as career planning, networking, mentoring and education in the host country. Women with a local partner/spouse in the host country may achieve a higher level of career success, because they have “inside access” to the host country with the possibility to access broader local networks and opportunities (Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002:769; Osland, 2000:231). Considering the importance of networks on reinforcing career role identities for women in their local settings (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:71), it could be asserted that the long-term effects of a clearly defined identity and being embedded in a network of like-minded professionals (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61) tends to have a positive impact on the eventual career success of women expatriates.

However, women may also face a number of structural constraints which may affect the outcomes of their career decisions and the outcomes of their eventual career paths. Aspects such as organisational and occupational demography, socio-political context and the culture of the host country are only some of the structural barriers that may limit women’s career paths (Al Ariss, 2010:228; Volpe & Murphy, 2011:66-69). Attitudes toward women, discrimination and stereotypes and

prejudice may form further barriers to success in the host country (Taylor & Napier, 2001:349; Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:221). Gender stereotyping may form an instrumental barrier in women's career advancement, as negative attitudes toward women may influence their motivation, self-esteem and self-confidence (Wood, 2008:624). This may lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy where women surrender themselves to their circumstances or end in a negative spiral which may lead them to opt out (Wood, 2008:625).

Career success is a multi-faceted concept that consists of overall career success, post-migration objective career success and subjective career success (Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:219). Since traditional measures of career success are not relevant for the evaluation of career success in protean careers, this study focused on subjective career success, which is defined as psychological success in terms of the fulfilment of one's personal values (Cabrera, 2009:189). Women tend to focus on the seamless integration of various interactions of their lives and their "career" is not considered a separate entity (Cabrera, 2009:188). The pursuit of balance between personal, work and family lives can also be considered a measure of career success for women (Myers & Pringle, 2005:430). Park (2009:649) is of the opinion that organisations that want to retain their professional female talent should help women find subjective career success and create opportunities for creating networks and knowledge sharing.

Post-expatriation *career exit* may be related to aspects such as discrimination and segregation, exclusive staffing policies that do not provide many opportunities to foreigners, economic circumstances or the fact that career capital obtained in the home country is not accepted in the host country (Al Ariss, 2010:228; Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010:281; Tharmaseelan *et al.*, 2010:233). Individuals with a high level of CQ are able to weigh and filter the information and feedback that are presented to them equally (both positive and negative feedback) (Earley, *et al.*, 2006:29). Thus, women SIEs with a high level of CQ will be able to maintain a high level of motivation and self-efficacy in spite of the barriers they may face in the host country due to HCN categorisation, gender stereotyping or cultural/language barriers. Earley, *et al.*, (2006:154) allude to the "face" of the self that a person

presents to the world: the inner-and outer-directed selves may be distinctly different from each other and do not necessarily overlap.

Proposition 6: SIE women may present a sense of self-worth that may or may not be similar to the inner world. CQ enables a woman to effectively maintain her outer-directed face in the workplace in order to achieve career success.

Proposition 7: Too much discrepancy between the inner-directed and outer-directed selves may lead to career exit for SIE women if the values represented by the two selves are in conflict.

CQ at individual level plays an important facilitative role in the career success of SIE women, but at the team and organisational level there are also a number of barriers that could be addressed to support women's upward mobility and career growth. Many researchers are turning their attention to the importance of organisational CQ: Creating a culture that leverages diversity at various levels could prove to be a core competitive advantage for companies who wish to stay ahead of their competition (Moon, 2010:458).

Proposition 8: Organisational CQ could require the re-structuring of organisations in order to respond to the needs of a diverse workforce, specifically relating to the upward mobility and representation of SIE women.

6.5 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Through the use of IQA focus groups, the initial building blocks were identified for developing an Integrated Career Development Framework that incorporates the processes of adjustment, acculturation, adaptation and CQ to enable understanding of the experiences of SIE women. The contribution of this framework to the academic discourse on women's self-initiated expatriation is that it provides a starting point for understanding the complexity of the boundaryless, "beta" career patterns of SIE women. The influence of CQ as potential moderator between different phases of the SIE process was discussed, identifying a number of propositions that require further research.

Moving to another country means that SIE women have to re-establish their existing support structures and deal with the general practicalities of life, whilst also trying to prove themselves career wise. Life phases and age also seems to play a role in the careers of women SIEs: in a life phase during which women seek stability, perhaps become pregnant and start a family, or invest in increasing caring responsibilities, an SIE woman has to start rebuilding herself and her career. Thus, the need for balance in her mid-career is replaced by the drive to meet the challenge of re-establishing a successful career identity. This places a significant restriction on the options available to women. The “beta” career pattern described by authors such as Suutari *et al.* (2012) becomes even more complex in the winding river of choices and experiences SIE women have to make. Instead of providing freedom of choice to women (Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008), it can become a barrier to women’s development (Cabrera, 2009; Sullivan & Maineiro, 2007; Volpe & Murphy, 2011). Organisational CQ may play an important role in reducing the barriers to women’s upward mobility and career development through reconsidering the way work is organised.

Chapter 7 provides final conclusions and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Photo 7.1 After four years of living and working in the Netherlands, I've sorted out the "nitty gritty stuff" in my own life: dual-citizenship and a house, and I am almost done with this thesis! (Dutch Naturalisation Ceremony, November 2012)

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a conclusion to this thesis in order to end this study journey with an overview of the key insights and findings based on the data analysis that was conducted to answer the research questions. The chapter starts with a summary of the key research findings and the answers to the research questions, followed by a description of the contributions of study and practice, an overview of the limitations of the study, recommendations for future research and final conclusions.

7.2 SUMMARY OF KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS TO ANSWER THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

There appears to have been a shift in the discourse regarding women in international assignments – away from an organisational perspective towards an internal, individual developmental perspective. This perspective shaped the approach followed in this study, which aimed to contribute to this shift in discourse by exploring the experiences of two groups of SIE women residing in the Netherlands in order to address the following research questions:

- What linkages can be identified between the individual adjustment factors and processes perceived and experienced by SIE women?
- What insights can be gained in terms of CQ as facilitator of the adjustment of SIE women?

To respond to the research questions, this study followed mainly an IQA research approach and design, underpinned by a phenomenological world view and supported by the principles of feminism and pragmatism.

Two IQA focus groups were hosted in the Netherlands during 2010. Each of the two groups created an SID representing their experiences related to self-initiated expatriation and adjustment. These two systems were compared and integrated in order to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of SIE women and to identify the facilitative role of CQ in their adjustment (adaptation, acculturation). The final integrated SID developed by me as the researcher, based on the review of extant knowledge, a thematic content analysis of the focus group transcripts and

the final SIDs of the two groups, provided a system of nine affinities with a number of sub-affinities. The initial systems that were developed by the participants did not account for the role of contextual factors prior to expatriation (such as the role of previous experience and motives for SIE). In-depth analysis of the focus group transcripts showed that it was important to incorporate the affinities of “Previous Experience”; “Expatriate Decision/Motive”; “Mindset and Responses” into the final integrated SID. This final integrated SID (see diagram 5.4) represents the adjustment experiences of SIE women and consists of the following nine affinities:

- Previous Experience;
- Expatriate Decision/Motives;
- Mindset and Responses;
- Culture;
- Language;
- Environment/Society;
- Identity;
- Social Support; and
- Personal/Professional Development.

This complex system represents the self-initiated expatriation process as an adjustment journey that finally results in Personal/Professional Development – a journey of choice and chance. The metaphor of Alice in Wonderland was used to describe the choice-chance journey of SIE adjustment. At each step in the journey an SIE woman has to resolve a number of key dilemmas in order to move to the next step in the journey. Just like Alice found herself in a strange world that challenged her mindset and existing frame of reference, the SIE women in this study also had to re-assess their frames of reference in order to successfully adjust to the host culture. The facilitative role of CQ seems to be especially evident in the ‘mindset and responses’ feedback loop. Through successful resolution of a number of choice-chance dilemmas, learning takes place in a cyclical process, which eventually will result in successful integration of new values and, eventually, personal and professional development. The system of adjustment is a self-managed system in which individual freedom is limited by the hierarchy in the system, and where solutions or reconciliation to challenges give rise to new and unexpected problems.

The main outcomes of the SIE women's' adjustment experiences were work and professional development. Work also forms part of one's identity. It provides a sense of belonging and purpose, and helps to reinforce a person's social status. However, work does not only support the adjustment process. It may also have a negative influence on a person's adjustment and mindset. Many women in this study found themselves in the difficult position of being at the receiving end of double discrimination – as both a *foreigner* and a *woman*. Interestingly, although the women in this study recognised gender discrimination in the host country, the majority of professionals did not consider it to be something that affected them, in spite of the fact that they felt they had to work “*ten times harder*” than their Dutch and male counterparts.

7.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FINAL SID

The findings represented by the final SID presents a new conceptual model for understanding the facilitative role of CQ in SIE women's adjustment and career development. Although the themes of adjustment identified in the SID is comparable with previous research on expatriate adjustment, the way in which SIE women experience these factors are different to traditional expatriates. Lack of support structures, discriminatory hiring policies and prejudiced perceptions of SIEs are only some of the barriers to adjustment that impact the overall adjustment and career prospects of SIE women. By constructing a “mind map” from the perspective of the participants, I was able to identify the complex overall process of their adjustment, adaptation and acculturation, highlighting the emergence of CQ as a possible facilitator in the adjustment process. Furthermore, this system of meaning led to unexpected outcomes which have not yet been addressed by any streams in the prior literature, namely the interrelationship between adjustment, CQ and career/personal development. The initial IQA helped me to identify the core dilemmas and choices of SIE women in order to re-direct my attention to the broader career literature.

7.4 A RETURN TO THE LITERATURE: TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED MODEL

A second round review of extant knowledge and the “building blocks” identified from the final SID provided a theoretical basis for a new conceptual model for

understanding the career development experiences of SIE women. This model of the career development experiences of SIE women consists of three phases:

- their pre-expatriation career;
- their self-initiated expatriation; and
- their post-expatriation career.

See the table in Appendix 9 for a summary of the components of the model with evidence related to the literature.

7.5 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

This study contributes to the theoretical development of the field of International Human Resource Management, focusing specifically on expatriate management, in the following ways:

- The SIDs that were developed provide a participant-based understanding of the adjustment process from a holistic perspective, by providing specific insights into the experiences of a group of women (SIEs) that has never been explored before.
- The study highlights the key dilemmas/tensions that SIE women have to resolve in their adjustment journey in order to achieve personal/professional development. Resolving these dilemmas requires CQ from the individual. CQ provides a basis for understanding and exploring the strategies that SIE women employ in the adjustment process further.
- The role of CQ as a facilitator in the overall adjustment and development process of SIE women's personal/professional development was highlighted as an underlying set of competencies that enable SIE women's adjustment. The role of CQ as a potential facilitator of overall adjustment and personal/professional career development was also highlighted and provides reasonable grounds for testing the moderating effects of CQ on adjustment and career success further.
- The cyclical, three-dimensional nature of the women's SIE adjustment process was highlighted. The findings expand current understanding of the role of life-spaces and life phases in the career development and overall adjustment of SIE women. Existing adjustment models tend to be linear and one-dimensional, failing to account for the complexity of women's adjustment experiences.

- Career development was found to be a key reason for SIE women's crossing borders. A conceptual framework for understanding and describing the adjustment experiences and career development of SIE women was proposed for further investigation and validation.
- The findings from this study suggest that current perceptions of self-initiated expatriation are overly positive, but fail to account for the categorisation of SIEs as migrants. The term "migrant" seems to have a negative connotation in many countries. Whilst current research advocates self-initiated expatriation as a viable alternative for women with international aspirations, prior research has often failed to acknowledge fully the barriers that SIE women may face, such as a lack of acknowledgement of previous experience in the home country; the host country culture; perceptions of gender equality; gendered discrimination; language barriers and classifications as foreigners/migrants, which lead to negative discrimination against women SIEs.
- An important secondary contribution of this study relates to self-initiated expatriation as concept and as field of research. The women who participated in this study did not consider themselves migrants (although some of the literature might classify them as such). Instead, they considered themselves expatriates (even though they relocated of their own accord). As mentioned before, the term "migrant" seems to have a negative connotation, and although the term "expatriate" is not necessarily appropriate to label the participants of this study, they associated themselves more readily with the term "expatriate" than with the terms "migrant" or "immigrant". Thus, there is a need to clarify these terms further, and to also educate organisations in order to break down existing stereotypes about recruitment and the employment of "foreigners" and "migrants".
- This study also provides an important methodological contribution by providing a novel approach to exploring expatriate adjustment. The rigorous research design and analysis framework provides an important platform for making the 'voices' of respondents heard without the risk of the researcher uncritically imposing his/her own perspective onto the data.

The study contributes to international human resource management practice in the following ways:

- If companies and HR departments understand the key challenges faced by women SIEs and the key support structures that these women use in their adjustment processes, the companies and HR departments are able to recognise the instrumental role that organisational support can play in the overall well-being and adjustment of SIE women.
- The high level of internal motivation and drive to persevere that the group of women portrayed reflect the importance of an individual's responsibility in the adjustment process, despite the one-sided nature of the process. From a practical perspective, organisations can support SIE women in taking responsibility for their own growth and development by providing peer-to-peer support structures. The use of social networks, online communities, chat rooms and support groups could prove a valuable platform for providing support to SIE women.
- Human Resource practitioners and policy-makers should recognise and develop organisational support structures for SIEs. The needs of SIEs for organisational support may be different from traditional expatriates. Even though SIEs may be hired on local contracts, their needs are also different to host country nationals on local contracts. There is a need to educate recruiters, managers and colleagues about the virtues of SIEs in order to eliminate potential barriers in the areas of recruitment and selection, performance management and upward mobility, professional development, and training.
- Organisations can play a vital role in supporting an SIE in learning the local language, by setting realistic expectations and using colleagues as language coaches.
- Women can be supported in establishing career identities in a host country if managers are educated and the women are helped to re-frame their expectations of subjective career success. Career counsellors and mentors (both male and female) could play a critical role in helping women SIEs develop strong and embedded career identities in the host country. Training programmes for dealing with cultural differences and practical support for the trailing families of SIEs may also prove useful in easing adaptation and ensuring a smooth work transition for SIE women.

7.6 LIMITATIONS

As with all research investigations, this study had a number of limitations:

- The framework presented in this study still needs to be explored further in other countries, and needs to be validated by means of quantitative research on larger sample sizes in different countries.
- The IQA design and process proved to be very insightful in data collection, but is very time-consuming. It was impossible to discuss every single card generated by participants during the silent brainstorm session. This means that, although a broad range of topics was discussed, some depth had to be sacrificed.
- The initial intention of the study was to conduct follow-up interviews with all participants. However, this was limited as many participants had already moved on to their next assignment by the time I was able to conduct follow-up interviews. This might have limited the depth of the interpretation of the SIDs, as further theorizing had to be done mainly by me, as the researcher.
- Due to the exploratory nature of the research, participants were not asked to complete a CQ questionnaire prior to the research. Such a measurement may have been useful for comparing the actual measured levels of CQ of each participant with their overall perceived adjustment success.

7.7 GENERALISABILITY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to the qualitative, explorative nature of this study, the findings may be less generalisable. As such it is the responsibility of the reader to be a reflective participant in determining the generalisability and application of the research (Limerick & O’Leary, 2006:101). This study provides a basis for further exploration and validation of the role of CQ in the adjustment (adaptation, acculturation) and personal/professional development of SIE women.

This study also invites further discourse and research to validate the proposed career development framework and propositions related to the role of CQ as facilitator of phases of career development in order to strengthen the theoretical underpinnings of the findings. The challenges that the women (from both developed and developing countries) in the research faced suggest a need for a

more in-depth investigation of the complex factors that influence SIE women's career success in a host country. I also suggest a more in-depth exploration of the impact of expatriation on the life phases and career development of professional women. Further research is also needed into the experiences of women in countries where women are not afforded equal opportunities to men and also the inclusion of women from different ethnic backgrounds.

Self-initiated expatriation is becoming increasingly popular, and various authors are of the opinion that SIE provides an alternative career path for women who wish to pursue international careers (especially for the trailing spouses/partners of traditional expatriates). The findings of the current research point to the fact that self-initiated expatriation is not a simple career option. Aside from the sense of identity crisis that accompanies the adjustment process, the women in this study faced double discrimination because they were labelled both as foreigners and as women. This is an important insight that requires further investigation, because it seems that the women who participated in this study experienced the opposite of "Gaijin Syndrome" as described by Adler (1987:188).

The concept of SIE is also fairly novel, and there seem to be some discrepancies in the ways the term is used, with considerable overlap between definitions from migration literature and expatriate literature. There is a need to clarify these concepts further.

Furthermore, future research should also aim to compare gender differences in the adjustment (adaptation, acculturation) of SIEs.

The findings indicate that although the presence of a partner may reinforce identity development and ease the transition, the opposite may also occur when such a partner/spouse falls away. The role of an accompanying partner/spouse and the presence of a partner/spouse who is native to the host country provides a further avenue for research.

The role of subjective evaluations of career success or exit also seems to be a topic that requires further research. An interesting phenomenon in this study was those participants who did not view themselves as career women. Despite the fact that these women successfully managed their own businesses or engaged in

successful career-related activities as freelancers, these women did not subjectively evaluate their careers as successful. There is a need to re-assess the current thinking about career success and what it means for women, in order to harness the unique strengths women bring to the workplace.

The research further invites for the testing of the following propositions:

Proposition 1: The building blocks for enhancing a woman's CQ are activated prior to expatriation and can be considered an essential form of career capital that will influence overall adjustment and career success in the host country.

Proposition 2: Women who are structurally underrepresented in their home countries, or women who are minorities in their home countries due to structural barriers, will have a higher propensity to develop and enhance their behavioural CQ as SIEs.

Proposition 3: There is a relationship between SIE women's CQ and their identity development. SIE women, who are used to moving between different roles, will find it easier to reconstruct and re-establish their identities in the host country through their higher level of CQ.

Proposition 4: Subjective evaluations of self-worth, locus of control and a general sense of well-being should not be ignored in exploring Cultural Intelligence as an individual construct.

Proposition 5: Life-phase development for women influences the construction and re-construction of identity in the host country which may consequently affect SIE women's general sense of personal and professional development.

Proposition 6: SIE women may present a sense of self-worth that may or may not be similar to the inner world. CQ enables a woman to effectively maintain her outer-directed face in the workplace in order to achieve career success.

Proposition 7: Too much discrepancy between the inner-directed and outer-directed selves may lead to career exit for SIE women if the values represented by the two selves are in conflict.

Proposition 8: Organisational CQ could require the re-structuring of organisations in order to respond to the needs of a diverse workforce, specifically relating to the upward mobility and representation of SIE women.

7.8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite the relative confidence and success that the SIE women who participated in this study experienced prior to their expatriation, adaptation to the host country had a strong influence on the further identity formation and self-esteem of these formerly successful, skilled and professional SIE women. The role of the individual is crucial in the adjustment process, and during each phase of this highly complex journey, a woman has to navigate tensions successfully at different levels: tensions inside herself (for example, home country vs host country values and identity), tensions regarding her environment (wanting to return home vs remaining true to her choice), and tensions regarding her support structures (supporting adjustment of her children, her work-life balance, re-establishing support networks vs maintaining existing networks in the home country). In order to achieve successful personal and professional development, SIE women need to reconcile these tensions by learning (cognitive CQ), revisiting their existing frames of reference (meta-cognitive CQ), remaining motivated and finding sources of motivation (motivational CQ) and by enacting appropriate behaviours (behavioural CQ).

In conclusion, this study has achieved its various aims, namely, to expand and contribute to existing theories of adjustment (adaptation, acculturation), CQ and SIE career development, in order to inform both research and practice. Furthermore, the study provides a platform for SIE women allowing them to voice their adjustment experiences in order to stimulate further research on women SIEs.

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ETHICAL CLEARANCE BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND
MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Tel: +27 12 420-2306

E-mail: anske.grobler@up.ac.za

29 March 2010

Prof Y du Plessis
Department of Human Resource Management

Dear Professor du Plessis

Project: *Towards a cultural intelligence development model for women on international assignments*
Researcher: R van den Bergh
Supervisor: Prof Y du Plessis
Department: Human Resource Management
Student No: 22086804

Thank you for the application you submitted to the Committee for Research Ethics, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences.

I have pleasure in informing you that the Committee formally approved the above study on 24 February 2010. The approval is subject to the candidate abiding by the principles and parameters set out in her application and research proposal in the actual execution of the research.

The Committee requests you to convey this approval to Mrs van den Bergh.

We wish you success with the project.

Sincerely

PROF AF GROBLER
CHAIR: COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH ETHICS

cc: K Stanz

Members:

Prof AF Grobler (Chair); Dr N Barkhuizen; Prof S Coetzee; Prof D Gouws (Vice Chair); Prof B Lubbe; Prof M Mabugu; Ms K Plant; Prof M Stiglingh; Prof C Thornhill; Prof R van Eyden; Prof J van Vuuren

Ex officio members:

Chair, Research Committee; Prof SR van Jaarsveld, Faculty of Law

INFORMED CONSENT FORM



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Economic and
Management Sciences

Informed consent for participation in an academic research study

Dept. of Human Resource Management

A CULTURAL INTELLIGENCE DEVELOPMENT MODEL FOR WOMEN ON INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Research conducted by:

Mrs. R. van den Bergh (Student Number: 22086804)
Cell: +31648156976

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Riana van den Bergh, a doctoral student from the Department of Human Resource Management at the University of Pretoria.

The purpose of the study is to explore the adjustment experiences of expatriate women living and working in the Netherlands.

Please note the following:

- This study will require a high level of commitment from you during the data collection process. You will be asked to participate in a focus group session and a one-on-one follow-up interview. The results of both the focus group and the interviews will be handled with confidentiality and your anonymity will be ensured through the use of aliases and coding.
- The focus group will take the form of an interactive workshop which will last from 09:00 – 16:00, with lunch and tea breaks in-between.
- The interview will last about 45 minutes to 1 hour and will be scheduled at a mutually convenient time.
- Interviews will be either online through MSN Messenger or a similar application, or face-to-face, depending on convenience and availability.
- Online interviews will be facilitated through MSN Messenger or a similar application and all steps possible will be taken to protect your privacy via the internet.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also end your participation at any time without any negative consequences.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in a thesis, an academic journal and possibly a book (in which case your consent will be obtained). We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded on video, audio cassettes and photographs for the purpose of analysis – access to these materials will be for the sole use of the researcher and study leader in order to protect the privacy and identity of participants.

- Please contact me, Riana van den Bergh, riana.vandenbergh@yahoo.com or my supervisor, Prof. Y. du Plessis, Yvonne.duplessis@up.ac.za, if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that

- you have read and understand the information provided above; and
- you give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Kind regards,

Riana van den Bergh

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CARDS GENERATED FROM THE SILENT BRAINSTORMING PROCESS ON 24 APRIL 2010

Agenda-culture, not spontaneous/Planning in advance
Beauty of nature (Where I live) - ENVIRONMENT
Becoming extrovert (assertive)
Being a mother in Holland
Being assertive, direct
Being located in the Hague
Being willing to laugh at yourself
Burning bridges
Busy schedule
Career counsellor
Challenging work
Chance for reinvention
Choice
Cold weather (Lack of sun)
Commitment (X2)
Confrontational culture
Contact with YU community
Cooking (+)
Creating a community
Cultural differences
Culture
Culture in terms of INTER- INTRAPERSONAL RELATIONS (Individualistic)
Dealing with the practicalities of life – the nitty gritty, day-to-day living
Determination
Differences in and between my and Dutch culture including in my marriage
Direct confrontation
Disrespect
Do not always think “Back home we do it like this...”
Double standards
Driving License
Dutch “Inburgeringscursus”
Dutch administration
Easy travelling
Europe no boundaries
Expatriate groups

Feeling as though you have to conform
Feeling isolated, and being isolated (home, no work yet)
Finding a job that is in my field (not educated in my professional work field)
Finding friends and colleagues
Finding girlfriends
Finding your gift to offer
Food (X3)
Food plain... sometimes
Frustration
Giving up my established “Life” to start a new one – identity crisis
Go for it
Going home regularly
Great study opportunities
Have clear goals
Having clients – beginning with work process
Having realistic expectations
Having the support of my husband and his love
Heartache of being separated from family and old friends
Helped me: Developing NEW interests and hobbies, as well as keeping some old ones!
Helped me: To see the situation as an opportunity. e.g. did the study I had not had time for in the UK
Helping others
Helping others in the same situation
Highly organized life
Homesick
In the beginning do not only meet up with people from own country
Inburgerings trajectleider (tries to help adjust)
Insular social circles
International/Expat groups
Isolation
Jesus
Lack of appreciation in volunteer work done
Lack of precise/useful information (not only commercial)
Learning the language
Letting go of old self
Living in Europe ☺
Looking at life as an adventure
Loss of independence (X2)
Love (X3)
Meditation about who I am
Meet Dutch friends

Meet people from all ages – “Adoption family”
Men culture in companies
Missing my friends and family
Misunderstood
Money
Motivation: Arts, Music, Dance
My beliefs
My boyfriend
My children (Motivation)
My dear expatriate friends from all backgrounds/cultures & nationalities have enriched my life as
have
My Dutch friends
My faith
My family & my husband’s family
My family at home
My mother
My sister
Networking ☺
Networks of friends/colleagues to help give support
New experiences ☺
New friendships
No support of companies or institution for families (women mainly)
Not understanding the Dutch (directness, behaviour towards other people *etc*)
Old friends
One day I will write a book about it
Organisation
Other expat girlfriends
Perspective of women equality J
Planning culture
Precious attitude of the Dutch towards qualifications and education levels from other countries (non-
acceptance/arrogance)
Rules society
Skype, Facebook *etc.* are game changers
Soul food
Speaking English
Stepping out of comfort zone
Stress of not being able to buy/find familiar tea *etc!* ☹
Support and understanding
Supporting husband
Taking criticism
Think in solutions

To adjust to Dutch norms and values
To do voluntary work for the international women's club Utrecht – use of skills/social contact
To find work here that I could do in my own language (at a reasonable level for me)
To integrate in my local community
To persevere and make some (close/good) Dutch friends
To support my daughter (9 years old when we came here) in her adjustment and integration process
To stay here when my heart was pulling me home! (to put family first-ahead of self)
To work out how much I actually was willing to change/adapt and what was important (to me) to keep the same
To work out who I was once my work identity had been pulled out from under me (self-esteem)
Transport
Trips home to UK (2 or 3 each year) to see family and friends and to see the hills!
Wanting to “fit in” and feel comfortable with Dutch people
We got a dog and I met people when walking him in the woods (common topic)
Wealthy country
Weather – rain clouds
Weather (X3)
Women business organisations
Work – used network to get work
Work colleagues
Work culture

CARDS GENERATED FROM THE SILENT BRAINSTORMING PROCESS ON 12 JUNE 2010

Asking any question and having a Dutch person respond with "It's not possible" – not solution oriented

Attempting to make plans with friends, but it needs to be 3 weeks in advance

Attempting to speak Dutch and having the Dutch respond back in English

Being German on 'Bevrijdingsdag' is a horrible feeling

Bias (work: Not here permanent – "in development")

Biggest barrier is language

Biking is bliss!

Costs of setting up a new home

Culinary heaven

Difference in a woman's role in society

Differences in career development possibilities

Differences in culture

Different communication styles: Direct (Dutch) Semi-Direct (Me)

Different society dynamics

Discovering excellent cultural life

Discrimination (directly expressed):

Age

Country of origin

Sex

Do not need to drive

Dutch "coldness" can be tough

Dutch bureaucracy is crazy and annoying sometimes

Dutch colleagues have been really good about only having conversations in English when I am present

Dutch directness can be shocking sometimes

Dutch do not really know how to praise

Easier to be happy when you know people here already when you get here

Easy to live here

Easy to travel around the world

Eating at restaurants. In San Francisco, it was a – form of entertainment, in Holland it is a recipe for frustration.

Every life turns around only your own well-being

Excellent work environment

Expat community only

Express feelings

Family

Finding affordable housing
Finding work that pays (enough) based on education
German<->Dutch in Football (but not only...)
Get introduced to new culture/way of living
Getting my point across (e.g. medical system)
Good mentality of life
Great leisure time/cultural offer
Hard to make Dutch friends
Having Dutch friends is a little hard (language and cultural barrier)
Having international experience
Hidden “tolerance” as foreigner
Holland is a double-sided coin
Impossible to become Dutch
Informal (no titles)
Job market good upon arrival
Lack of network in areas of interest/education
Language
Language barrier
Language barrier in daily life
Learning Dutch is essential to be able to connect with Dutch culture
Less and less openness toward immigrants
Living more spontaneous life
Main barrier: Language
Miss cultural life from home (e.g. theatre)
Miss family and friends but also you get your own “family” here
Missing home food
Missing home, but I am missing the international part when I’m back home
Missing spontaneous life, fun
“Niet voldoen aan bedrijfcultuur” (Do not comply with company culture)
Not writing in the language
Often have the feeling that I need to be ten times better to be promoted
Opportunities for better education
Organic food
People are creative, great atmosphere living in Amsterdam
People are more open-minded and free
People in Amsterdam seem very content and satisfied with their lives
Poor family life
Pressure to be great at Dutch quickly because of being German
Realizing that things are great in your home country and then cherishing them more
Setting up your business is challenging but really worth it when starts working
Sometimes lack of Dutch input to understand better

Speaking language (Dutch)

Starting “single life” is not that difficult as I thought

Sundays...what do you do with yourself?

Taxes (I’m clueless)

Time to figure out the systems (damn KPN!)

Too much talk about nothing

Understanding my own culture and respecting it

Very easy to make friends (International Environment)

When you break through the exterior, Dutch are lovely, warm and helpful

Work-life balance: work hard 9-6, then home/family time

You are alone here

CLARIFICATION OF MEANING (24 APRIL 2010)

Affinity	Description of topics to identify the affinity
Career counsellor	<p><i>"In [name of company] everybody has a <u>career counsellor</u> and it really works...I was lucky enough to have a Hungarian as a career counsellor...Someone that has been with the company for 15 years, but it's also a foreigner here. That helped tremendously and I will thank her forever..." (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>"I think we are ourselves we are the best <u>career counsellors</u>. Because we have to make the choices...Someone else can help us gain insight but we are the one who have to take the steps towards what we want." (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>"...once you have everything there, and information and everything is available to you, then you are able, maybe, if you get into yourself and you understand where you want to go, your direction. But first you have to have all this information around you and that allows guidance that allows you to just go in your direction. So I think first, before, a <u>career counsellor</u> would be I think, a good step." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p> <p><i>"...deciding what you can do, what you can offer, but then find a <u>mentor who has done it and has gone before</u> you and done it, and then hook onto them...it doesn't even have to be in career, it can just be getting your kids into school..." (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>"When you move to a foreign country, sometimes you feel like you need all the <u>support and the guidance</u> you can get." (Inbal, Israel)</i></p>
Choice	<p><i>"...realizing that it is <u>a choice</u> that I made to be here. And so that one might be inclined to complain about things, but also taking responsibility that there are reasons for us to come here and remembering what were those reasons..." (Theresa, USA)</i></p> <p><i>"Nobody forced you to come here; it was <u>your choice</u>, bottom line." (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>"It is also a <u>choice to be here</u>. It is <u>a choice</u> to become what you want to become, and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to <u>choose all kinds of stuff...</u>" (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>"For me coming to Holland was a sort of an <u>intrinsic choice</u>. Because until then, my moving choices were based on my career, and this time it was based on a man. And it felt wrong for a long time. And undermining myself and 'what am I doing? Putting myself through all this bullshit?'" (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>"I think also its sort of overwhelming the <u>number of choices</u> you have to do at one time...I've made...the same kinds of choices over the course of...35 years...But then to make them all at once. And you <u>MUST choose</u>. There is <u>no choice in choosing</u>. You have to choose and you have to <u>choose it right away</u>...sometimes in life you don't choose, you just deal with what you have...it's almost too much choosing, you know... So it's almost like <u>choosing isn't a freedom</u>. It's kind of its own trap." (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>"...making the <u>choice</u> of...moving here...we made that choice..." (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>"...when I first came, I thought that I didn't have a <u>choice</u> and I expected that</i></p>

<p>Chance for reinvention</p> <p><i>This card is also related to “choice” – reinvention is a choice.</i></p>	<p><i>I would integrate.” (Sue, UK)</i></p> <p><i>“It is a <u>choice</u> to become <u>what you want to become</u> and to choose new friends, to choose new hobbies and to choose all kinds of stuff...” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“<u>What kind of life do I want to have? What kind of relationship are you gonna have? You know, what is your home going to be like? What is your social life going to be like?</u>” (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“I see that as a <u>choice</u> also for <u>re-invention</u>. <u>You can totally reinvent yourself.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>Giving up my established “Life” to start a new one – identity crisis</p>	<p><i>“...Back home I had a great job and I had a very active social life and everything, and it’s like: no, you have to quit your job, you have to leave your friends, and you have to leave your family. All the <u>familiar things</u> and the <u>things that make it cosy and happy for you</u>. And you know, you’re not 20 or 21 years old...where it’s like ok I go and I experience one or two years and I go back...we’re at an age where you’re <u>really looking for stability and you want to develop yourself</u>...not only in school and in my career but also in more personal and fun things. But then...you move to another country...And you move back 10 steps and then you <u>start building yourself again</u>.” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“For me, I felt that <u>I didn’t know who I was</u>. I, I felt that I lost myself and I had doubts... I had so many choices in my country, I was so successful and <u>I had everything and at once everything changed</u>. I didn’t know what my choices are, although there were so many choices. So that was <u>my crisis</u> at a certain point.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“...the double person is sort of in the person that I was in our relationship before I moved and the person I am now. I mean, the person I am now is the like teary-eyed, hyper emotional, aimless, you know, <u>structureless ‘who am I?’</u>. I don’t even recognise myself sometimes. And <u>the person that I was...</u>for the first couple of years of our relationship was very confident, very together, I mean I knew...where I was in my life and <u>everything was sort of established</u> and I was just kind of like <u>fine tuned</u>. And now I’m just kind of pulling up crap out of the rubble to <u>try and build something up</u>.” (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“...<u>my life that I had before I came here</u>...was wonderful. I had lovely friends, I was doing well in my work – I was building it up, my child was happy, and all sorts <u>of things were going really well</u>...I came with him for his work... I was on my own, with my child, trying to get her to adjust, <u>trying to adjust myself</u>...and I just felt: “Excuse me?”...it just felt to me at the time because I was so miserable, that he was ok...I couldn’t earn money at the time, and he had to go do his job....I was the one who was <u>trying to integrate and learn the language, do all these practical things, and support my child</u>...” (Sue, UK)</i></p>
<p>To stay here when my heart was pulling me home! (to put family first – ahead of self)</p>	<p><i>“...going home once for a holiday for 3 weeks, and when I got back, he [my husband] said to me... ‘<u>I really didn’t expect you to come back</u>.’ He knew it was so bad. He just knew! He thought: ‘Wow, is she gonna come back or what?’” (Sue, UK)</i></p>

<p>Meditation about who I am</p>	<p><i>“Because <u>it is by thinking</u>. That is why I wrote there ‘<u>meditation about who I am</u>’. So this is the way you <u>come to yourself</u>. You come closer to yourself from this crisis. This is <u>the door to a step out of this crisis</u>. Thinking. This is what I meant with ‘meditation’.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p>
<p>To work out how much I actually was willing to change/adapt and what was important (to me) to keep the same.</p> <p><i>The descriptions of these cards link back to the concept of compromising one’s value systems.</i></p>	<p><i>“...it gradually dawned on me that actually <u>I didn’t want to integrate completely</u>...some really important aspects of me...I wanted to keep that were important to me, were more important than integrating...to find a balance that that was my choice...it took me a long time to realize that, that was what I wanted...I’d say, from sort of 5 years I really had adjusted sufficiently to appreciate the things in the Dutch culture that I did want to take on board and try and integrate myself into, and the things that had to do with my core values and norms and me, that <u>I was not willing to compromise on</u>. And I have become sufficiently fluent in the language to be able to put that across to people...in a nice way.” (Sue, UK)</i></p> <p><i>“Starting from 3 years...you become <u>aware of what you are, of who you are, and of what you can</u>.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“<u>First you really want to integrate</u>, and then you come to this after 4.5 years, obviously because we’re the same now... What you really <u>don’t want to compromise and then you go to the balance</u>...” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“But you realize that there are <u>some aspects you want to have and that you don’t want to compromise</u>.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of times I also feel that because you want to become fully adapted, sometimes you lose a little bit of who you actually are....So a lot of times it’s like: ‘...I just want to be myself’. So I do want to adapt, <u>I do want to fully integrate, but there are things that are important for me to leave as-is and not say ok, I’m gonna change a 180 degrees. I would like to be who I am, and I would like you to accept me for who I am and what I am. If you give me a chance, we might become best friends. But I am willing to change some things, but not all</u>.” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“...I just wasn’t me....I was doing well, but they didn’t want to adapt to me. So we’re <u>prepared to adapt to them, but they’re not prepared to adapt to me</u>. And they don’t have to. Why should they?” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>To integrate in my local community</p>	<p><i>“I think when I first came, I thought that I didn’t have a choice and I expected <u>that I would integrate</u>. That’s what I thought I should do: <u>integrate, learn the language, get a job</u>. And I thought that was going to take place in about 18 months or a year or two years at the absolute most.” (Sue, UK)</i></p> <p><i>“...I’ve also had your experience of <u>I’m going to integrate</u>, this is what we’re going to do. I’m going to <u>take Dutch lessons</u>; we’re going to have <u>Dutch neighbours</u>. We actually started out living in Almere...I said, I just need to be able to see a windmill or look at a canal out my window. I don’t care where I live, you know, that’s just what I have to do. And so, we moved onto a canal and the rest I didn’t care. You know, the rest is like living in Australia, you know...But we found a street with young people with children. And I said, this is really good. And I’m only going to <u>speak Dutch</u>, you know, but that lasted like two days. But I took the Dutch lessons, we settled in...then my kids were going to a Dutch school...” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>Challenge: dealing with the</p>	<p><i>“...at the beginning I was also overwhelmed. You know the <u>practicalities of life</u>. Just, you know, how do you set up a bank account? The <u>nitty gritty stuff</u></i></p>

<p>practicalities of life – the nitty gritty, day-to-day living</p>	<p><i><u>overwhelmed me and took up all my energy and focus for a long, long time. So that these other choices about work, identity and self-esteem and all the rest of it...you don't really physically have the energy and time for that until later on. So that's why it sounds a long time, four and a half years, but you have sorted out a lot earlier than that to get your stability and your grounding, before, for me anyway, my experience, I could come on to that next level, really.</u></i> (Sue, UK)</p>
<p>Other expat girl friends</p>	<p><i>"I found that really important, this one... that's where I found my <u>girlfriends</u>. And I went: 'aaah you're just like me!'... But to find a girlfriend... 'ah, this is great'...we're doing the same thing...you <u>try to go through life together</u> because, I adore my husband, of course. But...he doesn't always get me...I just want a girlfriend...I just want to recommend it to anybody that lives here... <u>Go find a girlfriend first. And you'll be able to get through everything.</u>"</i> (Sonya, Australia)</p>
<p>New friendships</p>	<p><i>"The challenge, though, in the international context that you find yourself in, is the fact that there's this <u>continuous shuttle...you have to select...</u>"</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</p> <p><i>"...when I first came here...I met up with a lot of exchange students...And then after a year they all left...I've been here now 8 years and <u>everyone that I meet is an expat and they all leave...so at the end of two years I said I'm sick of this, I'm going to make Dutch friends...now I've built this <u>Dutch friend base</u>, and now I really, again, start <u>missing my international friends.</u>"</u></i> (Adri, South Africa)</p>
<p>Insular social circles</p>	<p><i>"...when I came here, there was barely any foreigner in sight. There were <u>only the Dutch white community</u> that I was living in, all Dutch...I was in Oud-Loodsrecht...they were very Dutch in their essence. And <u>I was the only foreigner</u> probably of the area...because I was living in Oud Loodsrecht, the <u>middle of nowhere</u>; and I was working in Amsterdam as a base; but actually working in The Hague; so 3 hours from my day were actually commuting to work and home. And then I would be stuck there, and to get <u>out of there and actually meet someone would be very difficult</u>. You just don't have the energy to do that. You also have a relationship, you also have a house to maintain, no kids but still a lot of things to do..."</i> (Rina, Romania)</p>
<p>Finding girl friends</p>	<p><i>"...I find <u>kids here a connector</u>. I just throw my kids into school and tell them to <u>go find people</u> and then I go meet their mom." (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>Being a mother in Holland</p>	<p><i>"Don't you find that you have <u>changed your mindset in terms of being a parent</u> being here?... <u>You change totally...</u>I'm originally Italian. You know Italian mothers are like 'ooh' taking it over. So <u>here I had to adjust</u> to that and now...when I go back home they look to me and they go 'but wouldn't you do that? How are they dressed up?' or 'do you allow them to do this'. And I say...I'm 40 years old, I'm living in a new country and a new culture, so I'm absorbing something. So I'm not the same person that you know or that you knew. I'm another one and now I'm adjusting to what I had, what I've been and what I'm now. So you have to adjust too! I'm sorry!' And it's difficult." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p>
<p>To adjust to Dutch norms and values</p>	<p><i>"...this one is also tough for them to accept because really, <u>it is a revolution in terms of values</u> as well. It is. I found it very hard to, and I'm still going through the process of <u>adjusting</u> to certain things." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p>

<p>Agenda-culture, not spontaneous</p>	<p><i>“It’s like they have these <u>lists of topics that you talk about</u> when you meet your friends: How’s work, how’s that? How’s that? They run through all those important topics, pah, pah, pah, pah...It’s like, Ok we’ve covered all the bases, <u>set the agenda and in four months we do it again</u> and then you talk about all these...” (Adri, South Africa)</i></p>
<p>Having clients or beginning the work process</p>	<p><i>“...<u>my profession is having clients</u>...it actually helped me to <u>feel more integrated</u> and more like, I’m really living and...also working in Holland...To get out and to get dressed and do make-up and not feeling only like a mom. And that helped me a lot and I like my profession...” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“...that helped you also to be active and <u>to have work and to communicate</u>...” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“For me this had a different meaning...For me consultancy was new. I used to be in mainstream HR before I started being a consultant here...But for me, <u>starting work actually demolished one of the basic understandings I had about Holland</u> as a country that accepts international people. And...doesn’t necessarily try to adapt, but tolerates them in the society.” (Rina, Romania)</i></p>
<p>Disrespect</p>	<p><i>“I take it as a thumb rule that whenever you have someone in the room that doesn’t understand a language; everybody comes to speak the language that everybody speaks...I started working and four days after that we had a very important business update...that was in Dutch. That was a moment when things really started to fall down and fall apart...as...something that goes down the side of a mountain and it doesn’t stop. Because it was so against my values and I just couldn’t understand this. <u>I felt disrespectful</u>, not to me as a person, but overall also to the company as such. So it took me some time to actually stop being angry and frustrated at them, and understand that also maybe they don’t need to stop speaking Dutch in their lunch break, even when I’m sitting next to them and have no one else to speak to and I’m just eating my own lunch. Because in the end, they are in their own country; because they never worked in another country; so they don’t really know how you feel...” (Rina, Romania)</i></p>
<p>Learning the language</p>	<p><i>“...I decided because my Dutch...it was difficult to get it to the level, I decided to open my own practice for expat people...But <u>I’m still limited with the language – Dutch language and Dutch administration</u>.” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“...That’s what I thought I should do: Integrate, <u>learn the language</u>, get a job. And I thought that was going to take place <u>in about 18 months or a year or two years at the absolute most</u>.” (Sue, UK)</i></p> <p><i>“...their comparison to me <u>learning Dutch fast</u>, was that one of them was on a vacation in Italy and he learned a few words...I just said, well I’m going to learn Dutch. <u>I’m going to show to you that it is possible. I went to my course in July, and I was speaking in October</u>. And now I do meetings and now everyone is really surprised. And now I also get positive feedback from my colleagues” (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“My managers and people who had more international experience spoke in English to me...my interviews, and my assessments were in English, but then <u>they expected that I would speak Dutch fluently after a few weeks</u>. And my colleagues started to ignore me...they were...going to lunch...leaving me behind and speaking of me in Dutch, and stuff like that.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“...I’ve been <u>trying to learn Dutch</u>, but I think it’s gonna take me a lot longer</i></p>

	<p><i>than a few months.” (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“...the first few years here, I went into <u>Dutch lessons and speaking lessons and language lessons.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...I’m <u>learning Dutch and in school...</u>” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p>
<p>Not understanding the Dutch (directness, behaviour towards other people, etc.)</p>	<p><i>“...we say that <u>Dutch people are direct, but...it is not true...it is not true that the culture is direct, or the people are direct...this directness is actually sometimes manipulation...</u>But this manipulation is that you are just putting in my face something, just because you want to have something back... this is one aspect that I find very hard.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p>
<p>Male culture</p>	<p><i>“...I was at a workshop...Strategy for women...it was all about <u>associating in a man’s culture</u> here in the Netherlands...their culture is <u>dominated by men</u>, women don’t get any management positions, except some line positions or middle management, but Top management is like really hard to get. And it was about these qualities of women who succeed and qualities of men who succeed. It was really an eye-opener. There is no recipe, you just have to be yourself and just start from your own values.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“I didn’t notice there was a <u>male dominated culture</u>. Clearly I have no inroads into a company...” (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“I think it’s kind of mixed up...there are a lot of women in finance...from universities more than half of the graduates are women, so there are actually <u>a lot of professional women starting out their careers</u>. And as you get higher and higher, it gets fewer and fewer...” (Theresa, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“They have <u>less female managers</u> than in the rest of rest of Europe, top managers.” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“I really think <u>it depends on the field...</u>in the science as well...my boss is a professor and she is head of the department...<u>80 % of people working at the hospital are female.</u>” (Adri, South Africa)</i></p> <p><i>“...when I came I...thought...I would just go for a job and my children will be organised, everything will be done... Exactly the contrary. I mean I came here and I realized that <u>the structure of how things are...for a woman – it is impossible for her to just find a job</u>. When you have children: Either you have a lot of money to spend on childcare, or you’re just stuck. You’re stuck. You can’t do anything.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p> <p><i>“...it all comes down to like <u>men in management...</u>I think it still really comes down to <u>choice</u>. If you choose to go and work in that company, you have to understand the culture of that company and where you’re going to fit in. If the <u>culture of the company is male-orientated, you’re stepping into a male-orientated company.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...what I see in Holland is that...If you have a career, then kids come at around 35, so that’s also ok, but then you make a <u>choice</u>. You are bound to say I pull out, 3 days I work, consultancy still. I don’t get my promotion in 3 years, I get it in 5, or you just get out completely. And that’s not ok. Because the society and the companies are missing out on knowledge. Are missing on intelligence. And this is my point with <u>this culture</u>. And not only, it’s not that I’m the biggest feminist on the planet, but my issue is, and where I find that I should take it on, is that: <u>Why do you then say this is a female-friendly country when it is not? It is not even a foreigner-friendly country!</u>” (Rina,</i></p>

	<p>Romania)</p> <p><i>“There are countries where you are not able to work part-time. In South Africa you <u>either work full-time or you don’t work.</u>” (Adri, South Africa)</i></p> <p><i>“...I don’t know if they’re forced to, but <u>women stay at home and they are housewives here. It’s a big deal here.</u>” (Jay, South Africa)</i></p> <p><i>“Because the <u>husbands have a higher position and the women can afford to stay home.</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...Do you know what my secretary told me? ‘...your boyfriend is working...why do you work 5 days a week? <u>Why don’t you work 3 days a week?</u> Why do you study so hard?’ So they like it. Most of them...” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p>
<p>No support of companies or institution for families (women mainly)</p>	<p><i>“...I think what has to be done is that...international companies...I mean it is a country with a lot of international-based firms. So if firms allow families to come in, they also have to understand that they don’t have to cater only for the man or woman professional; they also have to <u>cater for the whole situation of the family.</u> The package. So there are relocation companies, but still there is a vacuum there.” (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</i></p> <p><i>“In my work, I work for HR also, and there’s a family that is being relocated from Israel to here. We have to help the family find schools for the children and so forth. The wife is not planning to work, at least not in the beginning. So one of my colleagues were like: “so why do we have to look for schools or whatever for the children if the wife is home?” “...<u>Why does the company need to spend money on schools for the children, why do we have to spend money on a crèche if the mommy isn’t working?</u>” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“...I don’t think enough is done on the other side for trailing wives...And that it shouldn’t be done at this end. I mean, it should be done at this end finally, but the first step should be in the countries of the companies that are transferring people. And it is <u>not for the man, but for the wives and the children.</u> And they need to sit down and say “what are your expectations? What do you expect when you get to that country? What do you need when get to that country? How do we help you in that way? Let’s start some lessons now, and get your basic “milk”, “bread”, “toilet”.’ You know, and ‘Whatever you need.’ And, <u>there I see this huge vacuum in countries around the world that transfer all these families.</u> That they need...psychologists...working especially on transferring families. Work with them in that country and then be able to travel and go and visit them. And that person needs to understand that country.” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...we had <u>no support either.</u> We came with a multi-national company. The support we got was to help us find a rented house; they helped us set up a bank account...that was it...I got <u>NO support whatsoever.</u>” (Sue, UK)</i></p>
<p>Food</p>	<p><i>“...I can summarize that in one word: Terrible. There is no <u>Dutch cuisine.</u>” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“<u>Fifteen minutes cooking!</u>” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“There are some <u>similarities between Romanian food and Dutch food: Potatoes, zuurkool, and stuff like that.</u>” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“What’s a <u>traditional Dutch breakfast?</u> Bread, hagelslag, butter...” (Jay, South Africa)</i></p>

	<p>“...I think it also depends on the family. I think so. Because my father-in-law cooks really <u>nice food</u> and he prepares like <u>international meals</u>...” (Annabelle, Romania)</p>
Weather	<p>“Go out in summer a lot!...Try Russian winter...This is nothing. <u>This is not even winter here!</u>” (Tatiana, Serbia)</p> <p>“It’s exactly the <u>same as the British weather</u>, so...the crisp days in <u>winter</u> are actually quite enjoyable I find.” (Sue, UK)</p> <p>“...when I moved here it was the <u>first winter</u> I ever experienced in my life...which was shocking....I...don’t wear layers. I mean I need to breathe. I feel like a care-bear if I wear so many layers...I kept telling my boyfriend: ‘Does it get any worse? Does it get any colder?’ And then it got to minus 18 degrees and he was like: ‘Sweetie, from here it only goes up!’...I’m ok, I survived last winter, and then we had this winter which was so <u>long and it was so cold</u>...we had eight weeks of snow... I survived two Dutch winters and lived to tell about it!” (Inbal, Israel)</p> <p>“I come from...the seaside, from Costanza. And we also have a lot of <u>rain</u>, so for me the rain and the ultimate spring, they don’t really terrify me a lot. But the <u>wind</u>. In Costanza we don’t have so much wind...[here in the Netherlands] I feel like you are shelled...it’s almost like it is something that comes over you. <u>Like bombs and stuff. With the way the wind works.</u>” (Rina, Romania)</p> <p>“...I’ve found, doing Dutch lessons...in the first year, one of the exams were: You had to put with the seasons, the words that go with the seasons in Dutch. And there was <u>winter</u>, and it was like...there was nothing...I’m sorry the test is wrong, there’s no word that can possibly fit in there... And then it came up, and I said: ‘What was the word?’ ‘<u>Depressief.</u>’ And for winter, and I go: ‘What kind of attitude is that?!’ I mean...they accept it. There’s a culture that <u>winter is depression</u>...once you put it into their culture and saying ‘winter is depression for you. So get used to it, it’s grey, it’s dark, you’re gonna have to stay inside, you’re gonna have to get really sad. You know’...they’re putting that into the culture. And I’m like: ‘You guys have got to be crazy! <u>If winter is dark and grey, change it. Like change what you do. Become creative, go out.</u>’” (Sonya, Australia)</p> <p>“My Dutch friends <u>love the winter</u>. They love <u>skating</u>, they love <u>walking</u>, and they don’t think of it as depressive and all the rest of it...they just go out and they enjoy the outside.” (Sue, UK)</p> <p>“The <u>houses inside are warm</u>. In South Africa the houses are cold in the winter!” (Adri, South Africa)</p>
Homesick	<p>“The world is getting smaller. I wrote also ‘<u>homesick</u>’ – you just get on a plane and you fly five hours and you’re home...” (Inbal, Israel)</p> <p>“...I would see my parents every week, sometimes twice a week...<u>not seeing them</u> on a regular basis, <u>it’s difficult</u>. I talk to them on the phone every day, but it’s not the same. It’s the <u>physical touching</u>.” (Inbal, Israel)</p> <p>“...I would be <u>homesick</u> if it wasn’t for Skype...” (Bonita, USA)</p>
Skype, Facebook, etc. are game changers	<p>“...you have the <u>internet</u>, and the telephone are much cheaper, you have <u>Skype</u> and everything else...” (Inbal, Israel)</p> <p>“<u>Skype</u> is the best invention ever!” (Tatiana, Serbia)</p>

	<p><i>“There is its own topic for this thing. I’m serious; I would be homesick if it wasn’t for <u>Skype</u>... It’s <u>changed how I feel about relating to my family at home</u>...I can see my nephews growing up...I can talk to my sister and it’s like she’s sitting at a table here...I can see my mom, like, every couple of days...I mean it’s just astounding...it doesn’t make the change so drastic. It doesn’t make our separation so great. It really feels like we can connect almost any time and we can see each other and respond to each other...it’s a game-changer...I went home for the first time, a month ago...I heard some really bad stories about how difficult it can be to return after you go home the first time. And I didn’t feel that way. I mean I was so happy to see everyone, but I didn’t feel like I wasn’t going to see them again.” (Bonita, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“It really depends on how you use this <u>social tools</u>...do you really use it to promote yourself or do you really use them because you need to <u>connect</u> again with some part of your inner side that are lacking.” (Magdalena Ethiopia)</i></p> <p><i>“I <u>speak to my mom</u> more now that I’m away, than I was actually living at home. Because living at home...I was so busy and I would go for like Sunday lunch and then, ok, bye mom! I’m busy.” (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“When we moved here, it was in ‘95. And there was <u>no Skype</u>, and there was no...there was nothing. We had a <u>fax machine and a telephone</u>, you know? And we didn’t go home for five years...It was really hard to make <u>phone calls</u> because we couldn’t afford the cell phone bills and things like that...” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>Going home regularly</p>	<p><i>“The funny thing is, I’ve been here for almost two years now, and I <u>go home twice a year, sometimes three times a year</u>...I’ve come to a point where I feel a tourist in my own country... all my things back home are either in boxes or I donated them for needy families...today, <u>when I go home, I live off of a suitcase</u>....When you go home to your own country, and you’re living off of a suitcase, everything is different. I mean also your friends and they move on and it’s wonderful to see them and catch up with them, but you sort of start feeling that there is some distance a little bit growing between the both of you...[Israel is] my base, but this is my home today. Because this is where my...official address is...I get my mail here and everything is here.” (Inbal, Israel)</i></p> <p><i>“I don’t have that feeling. I have a feeling now that I have <u>two homes</u>. One is here, and one is there. Friends here and friends there.” (Tatiana, Serbia)</i></p> <p><i>“It’s also fine that Romania is like a two hour flight or four hours.” (Annabelle, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“When we moved here, it was in ‘95...<u>we didn’t go home for five years</u>” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p>
<p>Support from your family</p>	<p><i>“...we locked down, but we had no money. We came here with 300 guilders and four children and we just had to start...my <u>husband’s grandfather</u> was here....the grandfather called him over and gave him 500 guilders. And I was like ‘ah, you know, we can eat! This is wonderful!’” (Sonya, Australia)</i></p> <p><i>“...if anything ever goes wrong...we always have someone to <u>fall back on. Mommy and Daddy and the family and the close people</u>. They’re always there and the door will always stay open to accept you...if you fail here, whether it is relationship, career, or whatever, and you decide to pack up your things and...move back...you can put your pride on the side and your</i></p>

	<p><u>ego and just go back to mommy and daddy and they will accept you with their arms wide open</u> – help you pick up the broken pieces from basic... My parents...[are] waiting for me...they're really happy for me, because I'm happy and because they are very <u>supportive</u>. But sometimes I feel like when I talk to them, and in the tone of their voice, it's like: 'When are you coming back?'...'Come on, stop with this crap'...I also wrote the 'support and understanding' and it's not only the <u>support and understanding of my boyfriend</u> living here and me moving to Holland for him. It's also the <u>support and understanding which sometimes I feel was even more difficult for me to cope with, from my parents' side</u>...I think that the support and understanding from all sides, whether it's your boyfriend, it's his <u>family or your family or your friends</u>, I think that this is also what <u>motivates</u> you to keep going and to continue and to sort of get a, establish a feeling that the choice you made to move here...is a little bit easier when you have the support and not...and not just difficult when everybody is telling: 'Oh, I told you not to do this'." (Inbal, Israel)</p> <p>"...we lived with my parents. And I had four kids...their grandkids... And we said: 'We're taking them away from you; we're going to move to the other side of the earth.' And they were like: 'No, you can't do that!' They didn't talk to us for ages after we left. <u>We had no support whatsoever</u>." (Sonya, Australia)</p>
<p>My children (Motivation)</p>	<p>"...<u>children....give you energy</u>." (Annabelle, Romania)</p> <p>"...You have four <u>children and you have to [survive]</u>...I had two in school and two at home. I had a 1.5 year old and a 3 year old at home...and two in school...And it's like: Do you wanna survive, do you wanna make these kids a positive...do you wanna <u>give them a positive experience?</u>...the woman controls the temperature of the house. You can totally make it so uncomfortable for your husband or your partner or whomever...to live in. Your children: You can make them absolutely miserable...you can be miserable...your children can be miserable, and there's no way your husband or your partner or whomever, can survive here....<u>you have to just take it on that you know, it's up to you to survive and make it the best that you can make</u>." (Sonya, Australia)</p> <p>"<u>Children are a big motivator to just survive</u>." (Magdalena, Ethiopia)</p>
<p>Previous expatriate experience</p>	<p>"...when I was a child we went and <u>lived in the States five years</u> and I grew up there...I said [to my parents]: '...you can't offer me the world and not expect me to use it!'... 'this is what you did to me, I'm out of here'...I said to my mom: '<u>You taught me to live this way</u>. You taught me to be independent. You taught me how to do it.'" (Sonya, Australia)</p> <p>"...<u>I lived in the States</u> and when I told my parents that I was moving to <u>England</u> a couple of years ago, my parents were like: 'Yeah, but you're leaving us!'...they were really playing with my conscience and I'm like, 'Mom, what did you do to your parents? You did the same thing! You took the grand children and everything and moved. Why can't I do it?'" (Inbal, Israel)</p>
<p>Cultural differences</p>	<p>"...<u>cultural difference</u>, because we are coming from <u>different cultures</u> and we are <u>confronted with Dutch culture</u>." (Tatiana, Serbia)</p>
<p>Identity</p>	<p>"...if we go deep into <u>who you are</u>, you can be two different things, or persons if you want, but then you have a card. You tell them, well, I work here, I do this, I live here...Your identity is challenged by the environment..."</p>

	<p>(Magdalena, Ethiopia)</p> <p><i>“...asking you who you were, the first three things you say is your <u>identity</u>. Because that’s what you identify with. So it’s either your job, or...”</i> (Sonya, Australia)</p> <p><i>“...there is a <u>core</u> that is not influenced. <u>You are you</u>, whatever you do, wherever you are...”</i> (Tatiana, Serbia)</p> <p><i>“...it <u>evolves</u>...and it is being influenced by the rest. Because we all change...”</i> (Annabelle, Romania)</p>
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CLARIFICATION OF MEANING (12 JUNE 2010)

Affinity	Description Evidence quotes
Miss cultural life from home (e.g. theatre)	<p>“...the <u>cultural life</u> here is not totally open to me; it’s mostly because of the language...I have the feeling that I cannot find information about it, and probably it comes from the language as well. I’ve found here a <u>beautiful cultural life</u> but I’m only open to a part of it...” (Gina, Romania)</p>
<p>Discovering excellent cultural life</p>	<p>“From my own experience with respect to <u>theatre</u>, I think you can find also lots of English-speaking performances and concerts and so on. So even if you don’t speak really Dutch fluently you can still go to theatre and cinema in English. Because <u>there is a lot in this regard</u>, especially in the Randstad area. We go there really often.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>“But that’s why I put an antagonic one that says there is a <u>beautiful and excellent cultural life</u> which I can benefit from. So it’s a plus and a minus. I see it as a plus and a minus.” (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>“It is true, <u>there is so much out there</u>. Especially I’ve only ever lived in Amsterdam so I don’t know how it is anywhere else in Holland but in Amsterdam, for me, being from a kinda arty background anyway. I think it is amazing how <u>many galleries</u>, how <u>many things to do</u> there are.” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“...I find it that it’s actually <u>very open</u>...I’ve been going to the <u>theatre</u> a lot. Of course it changes once you really start living here, but I’ve find my way around. I see it as <u>very positive</u> in that respect. And compared to where I come from, for foreigners would be only the local language in that respect. So no, I see it as a <u>big plus</u>.” (Monika, Slovakia)</p> <p>“...My observation from a lot of people is that there is so much English that it’s hard sometimes to learn Dutch. So I get the feeling <u>there’s enough English things to do</u>, that you might even not have enough time to go and try to pay attention to the <u>Dutch cultural things</u>. You fill up your life already with a lot of English stuff.” (Laura, Canada)</p>
<p>Main barrier language</p>	<p>“...I’ve been living here for 10 years. I spent a lot of time to study. I’ve spent some time to improve my conversation, of course the <u>Dutch accent</u> is Russian. But still in business life, I speak Dutch fluently, but I still feel that people would start saying <u>‘We don’t understand you, your pronunciation is a little bit not clear...’</u> and you always get it in your face.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“I have a feeling that it also has to do with the accent...people think always that I’m better at Dutch...which is not true. They are not listening...to the actual words that are being spoken...I’ve heard a number of people say that they’ve had responses, by trying just because of the <u>accent</u>. And I think that is unfortunate. Because I think that can be quite a <u>barrier</u> for people coming in. It’s not so much the <u>quality of the language</u>, it’s the how it comes out...” (Laura, Canada)</p> <p>“...very often if you do speak <u>Dutch</u> to people, and they hear <u>accent</u>, they <u>talk back English</u>.” (Monika, Slovakia)</p> <p>“I tried to learn <u>Dutch</u>. I graciously failed. I tried for one year. It’s <u>very hard</u>. And I think I stopped doing this when I <u>felt harassed</u>. So when you put all your effort and you try for one year to improve your Dutch...I sometimes</p>

	<p>shop in Dutch and then nobody turns back to me in English, they just nicely and politely say ok, I'm speaking slower for you...Of course it's hard after 6 months of Dutch, even one year of Dutch to go to work and immediately start speaking fluent Dutch. That will not happen. And I guess there is a sort of impatience...and there is a sort of oh, <u>she doesn't speak well enough</u>, so let's speak English. And then for me it's easy – I say ok, if you want to speak English, I want to speak English...” (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>“I have almost the same card saying that the <u>language is a big barrier</u> in I feel that I can't fully understand the way Dutch people think, the way the whole life is unless I'm actually able to <u>speak almost perfect Dutch</u>. And now, slowly I'm getting there. I probably have, my Dutch friends I can count on one hand. But I'm trying to like meet them every two weeks and just speak Dutch when we go for a beer for two or three hours and that already helps. But <u>you have to make such a big effort</u>, whereas if I would move to the South of Spain, nobody would actually speak English and so I would've probably learnt it in a short amount of time. So, on one hand you are really grateful for the fact that there's so much English around and you can quickly adapt to you know, new things in the environment and make friends. But on the other hand it's a minus in pushing you to actually learn the language quickly and being then able to just connect to Dutch culture...” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“When you try to <u>speak Dutch</u>, most of the time they speak English to you, but what I've found always is amazing for me is that the same Dutch people who always speak English to you, after certain time, they expect you to speak suddenly Dutch....after some time they realize “hey, but here it's still Dutch, and maybe foreigners should speak it.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
<p>Biking is bliss</p>	<p>“It took me a while before I could drive like on a daily basis...I am really bad when it comes driving any kind of vehicle. I was a bit afraid and I've seen people that when you don't bike, you see and they can even be aggressive – they always have priority... when I'm back home, I miss my bike. I miss biking because I'm so used to it. And now, when I speak of timing to meet someone, you know I'm always, ok I'm meeting someone, I say ok, I have 20 minutes. But that 20 minutes means <u>biking</u>. Not like, otherwise if I need to go to Vondelpark and take the <u>Public transport, it would take me twice as long</u>.” (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>“...if I'm <u>biking</u> back home, just maybe like a ride in the country side or on a road where there's no more other bikers...But I came here and it's like traffic signs and traffic lights and all. <u>It's a totally new experience</u>. But I love it; I don't think I can go without it anymore.” (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>“<u>Going on the back of your boyfriend's bike is so much fun!</u> And now I have to learn to jump on and jump off and they tell me that's very Dutch.” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“I came here, I had no idea [how to bike], <u>I had to learn, and then fortunately I forget</u>.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“I think <u>Holland is about biking</u>. And boats. It's water and bikes. It's a pity if you don't bike through Holland because on the bike you <u>discover a completely different Holland</u>. If you don't bike through Holland you really miss a lot. Secondly, it's a <u>practical, fast</u> way of getting where you'd like to get.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>“...it makes the city so much cleaner...oh it's such a relief! And I mean,</p>

	<p>coming from Germany where we are all growing up a lot also with bikes...I find it <u>amazing</u>. Especially for a very closed city where there's lots of people living in a small space, it's just such a good way of <u>not having cars being stuck in the streets all the time</u>. All the smelly stuff, you know, it's <u>wonderful</u>." (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>"It's also <u>a way of embracing like the hosting culture you are living in</u>...So it's also easy to <u>understand</u> them much better because for them <u>everything is about the bikes</u> and they don't see life with no bikes so it's also a way to understand..." (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Good mentality of life</p>	<p>"I've found in this <u>way that people are a bit more</u>, though it's actually busy, a busy working environment and a busy life, but people actually are not so bothered about having a house and a mortgage for 30 years. The <u>working mentality</u> here is still kind of ok. People still like to work 9 till 5, of course sometimes they have to stay longer but they don't mind to work part-time, they are really trying to find time also for their <u>private life</u>, not only everything being busy with getting properties and work-work-work, but try to <u>enjoy life</u> also and in different ways...I find it is a good thing. People still find the <u>time to enjoy their life</u>. They are not always only obsessed with really having the properties and the job-job-job, but they also try to find some time to enjoy." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"...they're <u>more open-minded and free</u> because I think it's like the Dutch society is not more about showing off. Like in Eastern European countries at least, it is like a jungle of showing off how much you have and what you do. And it is nothing about that here. You can walk on the street and nobody actually points at you if you wear something which is out of, I don't know, different. So if you are different, nobody points at you or comes to you. So I think it's the same." (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>"Yeah, <u>showing off is not the main purpose of life</u> here." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"In Eastern companies in Soviet Union you <u>live to work</u>. And here it's <u>other way around</u>. Whether it's positive or negative I can't say. Because it's again, you need to be born here to enjoy it. Otherwise it costs years first to understand and then trying to adjust." (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>"For me it was one of the points I could <u>adapt very easily to!</u>" (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>"For me it's <u>one of the things I love</u>, I could <u>adapt to directly</u>." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"For me still it's some sort of a <u>question mark</u>." (Anushka, Russia)</p>
<p>Eating at restaurants – in San Francisco it was a form of entertainment, in Holland it was a recipe for frustration.</p>	<p>"...it's <u>expensive</u>, you go out and you basically have to give them your money because they forget you are even there. The <u>food is less than par</u> in most instances...it's a form of <u>entertainment that I used to enjoy</u> and when I try to do that here, and it just makes me want to go back home and eat at my own home and cook – it's cheaper, cleaner..." (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p>"...here you expect that you have to wait. You have to <u>wait quite a long time</u> and the waiters and waitresses are also 'I'm coming.' But the 'I'm coming' may be another 15 to 20, even 30 minutes in Netherlands. So I think it's different. Really cultural difference." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p>"...the reason for it is that people come to <u>restaurants</u> to communicate. So</p>

	<p><i>they give you opportunity to <u>sit and wait and talk</u>.” (Anushka, Russia)</i></p> <p><i>“But I want to have a cup of coffee during communication! [Laughter] <u>I don't want to wait another 30 minutes</u> and people still say ‘I’m coming’.” (Tracy, Hong Kong)</i></p> <p><i>“...I’m used to attentiveness where they know that you’re done with your meal and then they come over and say ‘would you like anything else’ and if not, then they bring you the bill. Here I feel like after you have your main course or dessert or whatever, you wait, and wait and wait...<u>after they finish serving you...you don’t exist anymore</u>.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“Maybe that’s why, because I just think sometimes Germany and Holland, The Netherlands are kind of close and I’m used to that you actually have to kind of make a sign that you want to pay, so in the end it means that you can just order something else, or you might sit there for another hour just chat and have a coffee afterwards or something...” (Sandra, Germany)</i></p> <p><i>“...it happened to me several times that we went for beers and then we wanted to pay actually and <u>they completely forgot us</u> so we just, sorry to say, but we just left. I mean, once, not every time [laughter]. But it’s like you say, well listen, well I’ve been here like literally for 35 minutes with our money, we’ve had a couple beers, with our money, so...” (Margaret, Spain)</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve <u>waited 30 minutes for a menu before</u>, so...it’s, it’s a very <u>frustrating</u> experience. And I think also when you start speaking English to them it becomes even worse...then the <u>Dutch people get served more promptly</u>.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“The <u>service seems quite relaxed</u>.” (Margaret, Spain)</i></p>
<p><i>Time to figure out the systems – damn KPN!</i></p>	<p><i>“But in terms of if you want service... I’d have to say that’s why I put that little thing about the <u>KPN</u>. I was like, aaah come on, just think with me and <u>get my service organised</u>. And I couldn’t, I had a really hard time sort of saying, just do it? Like why does it take a month and a half, three months and I have to call six times to have something... And sort of the <u>frustration</u> from I want it to be timely and I want it to be done and I want you to think with me.” (Laura, Canada)</i></p> <p><i>“Any time you set up like, you know, your <u>utilities</u> or things like that, <u>something goes wrong</u>. You know, it’s, nothing is simple, you always have to call them back, they always have to come over again and reset something...or, you know, check in your new box. Or your telephone stops working...it’s just, <u>nothing ever really runs... smoothly</u>.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“I find it a <u>blessing</u>, I’m sorry! [Giggles] I’m coming from a country where if you want something, you probably queue for three hours to get a paper. You know, so here I take a number and they call my number and I just sit nicely waiting in the air-conditioned room. I’m coming from a different experience. It’s a different experience and of course we are from a country where everything happens very quick, but once you know that it’s going to be like four weeks, you can say, ok, to <u>install my phone</u> it takes two weeks. So I don’t expect anything else to take less than that. I was once in my kitchen and it was water leaking from my ceiling and I called a guy and I said ‘look its water leaking from my kitchen’ and he said: ‘When do you want to have the appointment? Today, next week...?’ And I was like...its water leaking on the kitchen right now! I would like to have it right now! But I know already that <u>‘right now’ it’s not possible</u> – it’s a way that I’m adapting.” (Gina,</i></p>

	<p>Romania)</p> <p><i>“...what I already <u>adopted to the system</u> because when I came, also it was like...I think here you have to <u>initiate it yourself</u>. Here you have to...if you say ok, if they don't do something correct, you have to be very pushy, you have to say 'then and then I want to have it done and that's it'. You can even threaten them a bit and then they do it.”</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>“But I agree with that. You really have to make <u>initiation</u>, you cannot just...they will say you wait, and then you really wait, then you will <u>disappointed</u>.”</i> (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>
<p>Getting my point across (e.g. medical system)</p>	<p><i>“If you don't really do it and the same goes with the doctors. If you want to have some check up that is not really necessary, you have to <u>ask the doctor for it</u>. <u>You have to here, initiate</u>, you have to yourself say 'ok, I want this, and this, and this...' And then if you're a bit sure and you know clearly what you want, then there is a bigger chance they will [unintelligible].”</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>“This is a <u>very funny system</u> in the world, I think. In the Netherlands.”</i> (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p><i>“Well, I'm the one who wrote that and...to me what it was, was I was used to being Canadian and saying something understatedly and that being enough. And having two or three things where I'd go in and how long it took before somebody actually paid attention to me. So that's what I mean about getting to <u>know the system</u> in an adaptation process. That has been the thing that's been the challenge. To sort of say, ok, <u>how do you do it and be effective</u>. In Canada you wouldn't say 'me, me, me, me!!'...growing up in Canada the other way, and came here and had a harder time saying 'no, I want you to take care of me now.'... Not necessarily rude, but...[that] process I think, made an impact on...how quickly you adapt or not. Or how quickly I got what I needed...”</i> (Laura, Canada)</p> <p><i>“It's also for me, from the experience, I missed it, from Czech Republic you can have lots of preventive check-ups and this kind of stuff is not working here. Then I figure out myself, if I ask, if I say what I want, you get it. And they are for the rest, for me, when I'm somewhere at the <u>doctor or hospital</u>, I mean I have to say, they are always professional, they are nice and explaining things why it's necessary to do all these kind of stuff, so from this point. But again you have to do....if it's something a bit a vague area or you want to have something, <u>you have to be specified</u>: 'Ok, can I have this check-up, and this?' 'Of course, not a problem, we'll do it'.”</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>“You have a good doctor. <u>Some doctors refuse to do anything</u>. I think you guys all have the same experience when you complain you have cold, you have fever and they always send you back home.”</i> (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p><i>“...I heard and actually from my Dutch teacher who is Dutch...she said this is one of the things, because she's Dutch but she's lived in other countries that really, really annoys her about the <u>Dutch medical system</u>. Is that in the beginning, first she had an infection of her eye and the doctor sent her home three times with some ridiculous medication that would not...just to see 'it might get better by itself' and then this is kind of the approach. And if it gets worse, well then just come back in two weeks. And then, you know, because I, coming from Ireland where all they do is give you antibiotics, it actually</i></p>

	<p><i>made me cherish...the German health system..." (Sandra, Germany)</i></p> <p><i>"Once I spoke to Dutch secretary working for Russian company. And she asked me: Why all Russians, when they got some problem with their teeth, they go not to the dentist, but they go immediately to buy a ticket to Moscow. Fly to <u>dentist</u> there. First of all, it might be a little bit cheaper, that is our style, and the second one, you got service immediately. And it's applicable not only for the dentist here..." (Anushka, Russia)</i></p>
<p><i>Dutch "coldness" can be tough</i></p>	<p><i>"I actually meant this...<u>coldness</u> as in...it doesn't have to do with weather, it has to do with <u>people</u>...I haven't lived in Germany for a while and I moved here from Ireland. But in Ireland you go to a pub and I feel home in a pub...you go there and you actually have people talking to you and then there's no problem in saying, oh look I'm just here with my friend, I don't actually want to talk to you. But there's no barrier, people are so welcoming and friendly. And here, me and Margaret have left...three times we've actually left a place and we drank our beer outside, finished it and left...Because we felt so completely <u>out of place</u>. We were the only people speaking English in the place, which of course immediately put us in the thing of being the foreigner. There were people leaning over us talking to each other, because there was one group and there were other friends coming and we were actually sitting there. And at some point we were like this [gestures with her hands], people talking over our heads, leaning over us and you're just like, ok, I'm sorry I'm actually, I feel I don't belong here, I'm not supposed to be here, we just go...It was like as if we weren't there. They wanted to try to go through us. But they couldn't because we were sitting there...I think they probably just sat right down on our seats when we left and...this was something that never happened to me before. And maybe it's a big difference to Ireland, but it was something that, it's just very <u>hard to deal with</u>..." (Sandra, Germany)</i></p> <p><i>"...I don't think to me that well, they're <u>cold</u>. But more it's when it comes...is the <u>directness</u>. When they're so <u>direct</u>. They just don't have problem sometimes. That's what I feel like...And something that you learn, like that they are like this and sometimes I think it stopped bothering me." (Margaret, Spain)</i></p>
<p><i>Too much talk about nothing</i></p>	<p><i>"I would split up the communication here in Holland in private life and business life. In private life it's I think it is very much about, you always speak about...maybe it's more Russian culture to speak about feelings rather than about facts. It's something what I really feel. <u>People here are speaking only about facts</u> [gestures with her hands] and finally <u>after hours of talking you have nothing. Simply you list something.</u> But in business life it is a little bit different. From one side people say yeah, we are there, but it's not always true. Because what I did discover a lot of times...You are sitting together and you solve this problem. What happens with Dutch people very often, they start writing letters to your boss or to somebody else, saying, 'Yeah, talk, talk, I didn't understand once you told me.' It's really true. You know, and sometimes it's even, ok, if you're so direct, come to me and say: 'I don't understand, explain me again...because I don't understand.' And it never happened. So this is something frustrating about the country." (Anushka, Russia)</i></p> <p><i>"Because you know in business life, some <u>issues can be solved in five minutes</u>, yeah? This is the issue and this is how we are going to solve it. Five minutes. Sometimes it took <u>one hour, two hours to discuss</u> because</i></p>

	<p>everybody should say their opinion and show how smart she or he is, how good their thinking. And it's... and you are sitting one hour and simply keeping silence because you simply lost yourself. So, I, you know, it's <u>not really a business solution.</u>" (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p><i>"But I think also, I haven't experienced that in the business environment. Where, I think maybe it's because they do get to know you a little bit more than...there is like this <u>talk about nothing</u>, but I feel it's not applicable to my business environment because it's very, you know... it's very international."</i> (Bonnie, USA)</p>
<p>Not solution-oriented</p>	<p><i>I thought...the not <u>solution-oriented</u> I feel is more <u>non-business related</u>. I feel like when you go somewhere and you ask at a shop...you know, I asked for 'Can I buy this here' and she said: 'Oh, that's not possible.' But ok, well, where do I buy this at? You always have to ask the next question to get your answer and they will only respond to what you ask."</i> (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p><i>"You have to more, you have to ask <u>always for an information</u>."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
<p>Difference in a woman's role in society</p>	<p><i>"Yeah, it's me...I came from a <u>society</u> [Russia] where <u>women play a great role</u>, especially historically. I think women played, if you're a manager of a company its fine. Here, first of all it is more like a <u>men's society</u>. Sufficiently more men [unintelligible] than women. And I think it is based historically because a lot of Dutch women were sitting at home. So here you can't play such roles. Your country, it plays also a great role. And even I did experience it a couple of times that I've been told 'you are a woman; we're not going to accept you for a job'."</i> (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p><i>"It's also what business are you in. I'm in finance and they told me from the beginning that in the Netherlands, in Finance, there are <u>mostly men</u>. In my country [Romania] in finance there are <u>mostly women</u>. There I'm one of the many, here I am a percentage...In our company they encourage women because they have to have a certain percentage – it's 'good' for your organisation to have a <u>certain percentage of women</u>...But I had the same feeling, that I'm a woman, so I'm a little bit odd and awkward in a multitude of <u>men</u>."</i> (Gina, Romania)</p> <p><i>"...even if the rules to put women in the business life regarding some percentage of women; it already shows that <u>women doesn't play a great role</u> because they use that woman somewhere else."</i> (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p><i>"I think the way it is being done here is very <u>practical</u>, women can have a <u>part-time work</u>. They are staying at home; they can <u>stay home with their kids</u>, but not long-term. So it's up to them. So I mean the <u>system</u> is set up in such a way that women can normally participate in the working environment."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>"From my experience, I also hold a management position in my company and we have also always had a lot of <u>women</u> in management positions, so it might be dependent on the company – how they are looking. But I also have lots of women who are in management positions."</i> (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p><i>"In Russia, not...I've been working with a company that deals a lot with Russia. And I travelled there with my manager and it was a very nice guy, but he told me: 'I'm very surprised that people, men were talking to you. Russian men were talking to you. They take you seriously.' And I asked why they shouldn't take me seriously, and he said '<u>because you're a woman</u>'. It</i></p>

	<p>was a very nice conversation with my manager and the first time I've been rejected by the company was because <u>they wanted only men to be in a certain position.</u>" (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>"I think it's really related to which field you are working in. You are something engineering. You are something really <u>male-dominated</u> finance. Like in Social Work – if you are not woman, then you are in trouble. We only have little men there and they are always being protected and surrounded by at least 100 women. So I think it's really in the...[field]." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p>"I know, but my point was that in our <u>society</u> it's already like that, and here they are starting to develop and for me it was also a little bit, yeah you're one of the big European countries and they still try to <u>increase the role of women</u> and you need to fight against..." (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>"...as a Canadian, what struck me is that I don't know any man here calls themselves a feminist, or females who call themselves a feminist. And in Canada, everybody I know calls themselves a feminist. There's a good thing, feminists, of course we are! And here if you say that word, it's like 'whoa' [gasps]. So I don't see this as necessarily the working floor, I see it more in the <u>attitude towards the rights of women</u>, sort of, and that's maybe how I interpret it..." (Laura, Canada)</p>
Boys' club	<p>"I think yeah, to some extent there is... you know I'm one of the <u>only women</u> in the finance department in my office and there's only two that are not...administrative assistants. The rest, everybody else, is in admin. And there will be e-mails going around, and it's kinda like the <u>boys' club</u> sometimes at the office, and my name will be in the e-mail, but it will be addressed to 'Gentlemen'... I don't mind, but it is kinda that this is the 'boys club' and you know, you sit there and sometimes you hear these jokes and think 'oh God', you know...[giggles] incredibly inappropriate and they usually refer to HR and it's like 'hahahaha' you know, we're the men." (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p>"I like being the only one there." (Bonnie, USA)</p> <p>"I think it depends on the sector. Because I've been working for at least six years in the financial area and we had 40 people in the financial department. And I think we are about 18 women, 22 guys so we are almost half-half and the manager was female actually, so I think it all depends." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"...And indeed because it's finance, It's <u>Dutch boys</u>. So I often felt that there is a <u>discrimination</u> there..." (Gina, Romania)</p>
I often have the feeling that I need to be ten times better to be promoted	<p>"Maybe it's increased by the fact that I am a woman, but I never thought about it before, because I try to think that I am equal and that because I'm in a men's world, I'm a woman, now I reached a good position...but since I came here, I...not struggled, because it was something that came very easily, but when it's about <u>promoting</u>...and you are like 'oh but... you come here and it's like, it's already a prize that you are here.' And I'm like, no it's not a prize that I am here. I'm here because I'm good, I'm here because you chose me, so if you want to offer me a grow, you should give me support...As much as you would support...Dutch nationals. Because that's what I see. It's more Dutch nationals. And indeed because it's finance, It's Dutch boys. So I often felt that there is a <u>discrimination</u> there...I came here via the company and they said 'oh, but it's already something that you achieved to come here'. No, I achieved to come here because I was good enough to come here. So if you said that the first time, why not groom me as</p>

	<p><i>much as you groom the others? ” (Gina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“That’s why you have to <u>execute</u>. That’s my personal experience. I also come from a men’s world. It is an international environment but it is turning more Dutch now, more orientated, so because of that kind of Dutch community that they are creating right now, <u>I have to prove myself ten times more</u>. But at the same time I’m female, but you have to execute, that’s what I learned. If you don’t fight for it, not really necessarily fighting but making sure, huh...’hey, I’m here amongst all the others’.” (Monika, Slovakia)</i></p> <p><i>“I want to point out something, because these two comments might look like frustration comments, but <u>I’ve been promoted</u> this year, and I am on the <u>talent list</u> so they are doing things for me, but at a <u>certain extent</u>.” (Gina, Romania)</i></p>
<p><i>Work-life balance – work from nine to five and then have home and family time</i></p>	<p><i>“...some of them, they would just say ok <u>nine to five</u> and then <u>no more overtime</u>, no matter what, there is a project to be handled, whatever, don’t mind. But then...maybe it’s the government who kind of promotes like <u>life time</u>. Because I think it was once that here in Holland was actually the highest rate of women that work part time, but they are allowed by law I think. I don’t know, someone said that to me once at work. That they are allowed to ask after a certain time working in the company, to work maybe 36 or 32 hours per week and then have more free time, and even divide their times over the days of the week, just to be able to be...with kids and to take them to school and all that....I think they also protect the <u>family life</u> in a way.” (Margaret, Spain)</i></p> <p><i>“...I really like that part of the <u>work-life balance</u> because I came from the US where...I would work from eight till ten at night, and you know, feel bad to go to lunch break or dinner break...your personal life suffers tremendously at the same time...when I came here, it was <u>nine to five</u> and it was ‘oh and give us your <u>holiday schedule</u> in advance...then...make sure you plan your holidays...’ and nobody calls my cell phone after you know six o’clock, but at the same time you know, when I had my partner, it was great because you get to experience that time with them. You can go home in the evening. But then when I think when you are single, you want to also try and interact with your colleagues after work. I mean that’s a very US kind of mentality. You go for a drink or whatever...but then there’s also that <u>separation</u> at the same time. You know, it’s ‘Ok now I’m going home to MY family.’ So it is a blessing and a...it’s the two-sided coin again.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“The <u>working mentality</u> here is still kind of ok. People still like to <u>work 9 till 5</u>, of course sometimes they have to stay longer but they don’t mind to work <u>part-time</u>, they are really trying to find time also for their <u>private life</u>, not only everything being busy with getting properties and work-work-work, but try to enjoy life also and in different ways.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p> <p><i>“...if you are <u>off at five</u>, you leave, you stand in front of the elevator at five to five and there’s no... If someone else will be coming then you just, you know, there’s maybe, like this is just generally speaking, but there’s other cultures in general that probably would say ‘oh sure, you know’.” (Sandra, Germany)</i></p>
<p><i>Poor family life</i></p>	<p><i>“This is from my experience, but this is more related to the <u>family</u>, not like a system in the country or conditions, but more <u>the way how the family is</u>. What I’m used to of course from my culture, the families are more warm and more open, it’s a bit more like ok, big families, people are meeting always, this kind of thing. And <u>here it’s not so much the family</u>. They always keep the</i></p>

	<p><u>small family</u> or it's not so much really like, ok, it's not so much the focus on the family...Actually, also they have it in the Dutch language I think they have two words for it: '<u>Gezin</u>' and '<u>Familie</u>'." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"But you <u>can't count on your family</u>. Because for example, my husband has about 50 relatives. We see them twice a year, maybe 3 times a year... I know already that I will get three rounds the same questions, so I already prepared the answers...but it's <u>never very open communication</u>. They would <u>never offer you some help</u>. It stays at the surface with the facts, and then 'see you next time'." (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>"... I think the <u>family life isn't poorer, it's just closer</u>, like a smaller...I don't know how to say that, but I feel that, uhm, if it's judged by the amount of family you include into your family life, then I don't think that's really fair. Because then in countries where you are from...I know from you in Spain [points to Margaret], I know it's just very different, but that is just the difference, but it doesn't make it better or worse, or...Because where I come from also, families are generally a bit smaller and I would have uncles and cousins that live somewhere in Germany... But I mean that would include maybe then from your background the whole bigger family, and in Germany that would also, the help you'd expect, would also just be like a closer-knitted circle and not like my second cousins or something, or people that I know that Margaret calls cousins, they're not really her cousins. They're like somewhere along the family tree but not really the cousin, but they're all included. And this is kinda different in Germany as well, so I would connect more to the Dutch thing and I wouldn't see it as such a...it just felt like it was a bit, you know, pessimistic. A negative point of view..." (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>"...I think it is that we are <u>used to different family lives</u> in Eastern Europe – more warmer, a bit warmer, and here you already see you and you [points to Laura and Sandra] it's already different. You are already more used to the system. It's <u>not about the size</u> of the family, it's really how the family gets together. <u>How the family is together</u>. You know, when the family meets there is really a <u>nice, happiness</u> and here it is sometimes like you just come to visit because you are the family. You know, it's like, ok we are a family, so we have to see visit each other." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"I still feel like even though my family is smaller, it is still <u>warm</u>." (Sandra, Germany)</p>
<p>I miss home, but I am missing the international part when I'm back home</p>	<p>"That is, it's the same concept with or without your family...sometimes I really feel like I don't want to settle down here forever or abroad...like I've been jumping through a few countries now, so sometimes I feel like oh I really want to <u>go back to Spain and settle down</u> there and have my roots there and all...But I know [sighs], <u>when I'm there, you can see how time has passed by and people have evolved in a different way that you have</u>. And you also kind of see how the <u>international part</u> is in you now, and you can see things that people can't see...and then you kind of don't understand them the same way you used to understand them. I know it's a bit of a <u>contradictory feeling</u>." (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>"You know it is <u>not only applicable for people being here in the Netherlands</u>. I worked a lot with Americans working in the former Soviet Union...who never could come back to the US after living in the Soviet Union. I know that two people have been staying now for years in Russia because they <u>simply changed</u>." (Anushka, Russia)</p>

	<p>“...I read this article about...it scared me a lot...because it was about like, uhm, having adaptation problems when you have lived abroad and then you come back and then <u>everything has changed</u> and you still think everything is kinda the same and <u>everything you missed</u>... Because <u>you don't belong</u>, you feel the same, but you don't belong to the same country anymore in your home country. But also it's like, oh then what am I going to do? Am I going to go to a foreign country in which I don't belong either? So it's like...It's a bit weird so...” (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>“You feel it with your friends. I'm going home right now and we don't have <u>subjects in common anymore</u>. It's like I am going home and they are my friends and I'm like... ‘What are we going to talk about?’” (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>“I actually don't think I could go back to live there again like, forever. I'm actually getting to the point where I think maybe I always wanted to go back to Germany, because there's <u>things that you start missing</u> and <u>when you go back you can cherish them much more</u>, but then at some point I think maybe <u>I'm not going to be able to</u>, but you know... We need to make a new country for people from around the world.” (Sandra, Germany)</p>
<p>Expatriate community only</p>	<p>“It's just that I sometimes have the impression, well; it's actually a fact that I just live in this <u>expat bubble</u> and I don't know anything sometimes around it. But I'm starting to get more contact with not Dutch people, but like people who have been here for longer. Or like, seeing sometimes my friend who is half German, half Dutch and then sometimes you get to talk to her about, I don't know, politics, now with the whole election thing and everything. But I have the impression sometimes that I'm not totally...Because I don't speak the language. That's going in relation to the language barrier because I don't speak the language. And sometimes it's really difficult just to know what is going around. You know when they send you, you know how like Dutch people are really into, at least in Amsterdam with the ‘Gemeente’ and with the...they kind of do even like uhm, not parties, but they just go so that all the neighbours can meet and all. I feel so, so like <u>left behind</u> because before I would just like get the letter – ‘oh you are cordially invited’... whatever, but I could just guess that was what they were saying. I need to go to the woman translator and then, yeah, and then, I never dare to go because then probably they will speak Dutch, maybe, you know, and I feel a bit, like, ‘foreigner’ living in...You know? And that's what I meant by <u>expat community only</u>. Because I'm always around expats.” (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Understanding my own culture and respecting it</p>	<p>“Yeah, it's not me but I started to <u>respect Russian culture</u> sufficiently more when I started living here. I became sufficiently more Russian nationalist.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“Because you <u>realise what you miss</u>. You actually realise that you are missing things that before you were kinda like ‘oh, they're just there’. And you take them for granted. And then when you go and live somewhere when you are away, that is when you realize that some things may be running actually well in your country. Before I was one of the complaining Germans, and now I'm thinking ‘people you just really have to realize that the things that are good. And you know, don't complain all the time.’” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“Yeah, the value, <u>you have more values and you see them</u>.” (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>“...but that can be, also like a bit dangerous, because, uhm, when you go</p>

	<p>abroad... I just hate these people who start complaining about...I mean, they realize at some point, but for them, they don't kind of connect that well with this host society, for example the Dutch society, and then they start complaining: 'Oh, because in my country we do it that way, in my country we do it that way...' And then that can also be a bit dangerous because, of course it is nice just to realize the <u>good things from your own country</u>, but also picking up the <u>good things from the new country</u> so in the end you can get a balance because...I don't like people when they just go and say 'oh because in my country we do it that way...oh, that would never happen in my country...' and it's like, yeah, but just take it or leave it! I mean, that's the way it is, either you embrace it, or you just go back home..." (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Discrimination</p>	<p>"Well, I don't know, personally I don't have any experience of being <u>discriminated</u> [against] here because of my origin, where I'm coming from, or my age or being a woman or whatever...And with respect, I think, yeah, when I first came to here, everyone was saying that Dutch people are...they accept foreigners. I think they do accept them from my experience, but they are not open for them. And I think there is the difference. They accept them, but then at a certain point there is the wall and that's it...Like they accept...when they meet you they greet you, they are nice and everything, they are also interested in asking this and this, but from my experience it is always a bit difficult to get really close to Dutch people." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"But coming back to the <u>openness to immigrants</u>. I've been working with Dutch since '97 and I came here several times before moving here. And I came here because my best friend got a job here in 2000 and I've been invited to her and her parties and I think in the past there was much curiosity about people from other, like genuine curiosity about people from other countries, than what I experienced since I moved here in the later years. Like Genuine, not that 'oh, oh, you're a foreigner'...I think the opening of the European Union and the fact they've been bombarded by a lot of other people coming, made them <u>closed</u>...more than they were before. I accept them being different, but I generally felt this during these years." (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>"...I simply would share with you a couple of examples from my conversations with several recruiters. One was Australian, finance director of a big recruiting agency. He invited me and told me immediately: 'You know, I <u>never met such an animal as the Soviet Union people</u>, so I'd like to see you in person.'...It was...one example, it's one person. He was finance manager of a very big international recruitment company. The second example...maybe I take it a little bit differently to what he meant because he was Australian, I'm really telling you what I experienced. No translations, really the words he gave me. The second example, sometimes you can get into really open conversations with Dutch people, and I do remember I asked about discrimination and he told: 'You know, I can talk to you openly/honestly, but I'll provide you one example. Just now I had a position, and I had 3 candidates. One was excellent; he was from the Turkish region an honest and nice candidate. The second was French, more or less acceptable, and the last was Dutch and he was absolutely unacceptable. It was an international company. Who do you think they chose for the job? <u>They took the Dutch person.</u>' It was again a story which was told to me by recruiters. I don't like to continue, <u>there are a lot of stories, but I can provide</u></p>

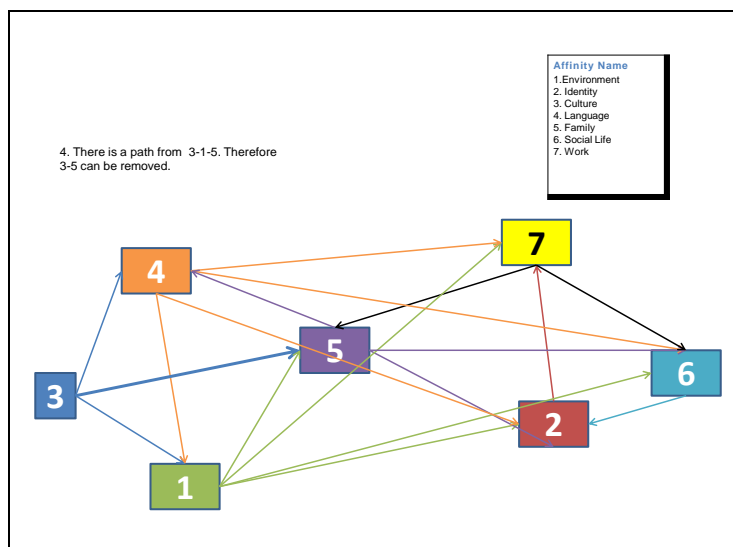
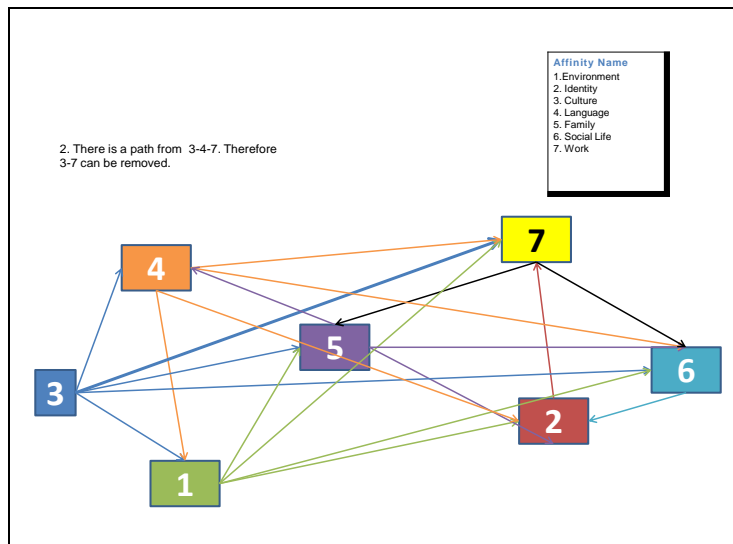
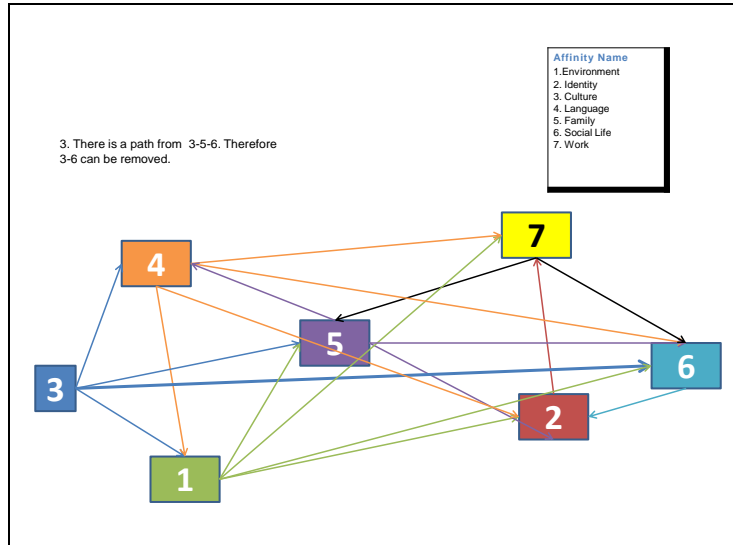
	<p><u>them.</u>” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“...I did experience it a couple of times that I’ve been told ‘<u>you are a woman; we’re not going to accept you for a job.</u>’” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“...And I asked why they shouldn’t take me seriously, and he said ‘because <u>you’re a woman.</u>’ It was a very nice conversation with my manager and the first time I’ve been rejected by the company was because <u>they wanted only men to be in a certain position.</u>” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“But I always get it from the colleagues: ‘<u>we don’t like foreigners.</u>’. One time I did experience it that I’ve been told ‘we don’t like to work with you because you are foreign’. It doesn’t matter that you speak Dutch and understand everything, you are foreign.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“There is also a law that at a certain point they have to give <u>priority to Dutch people.</u> There is a law on it.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
<p>Hard to make Dutch friends</p>	<p>“...Dutch people are not very much culture oriented also. Some parts of society, but even if you even meet the <u>friends,</u> it is my feeling, you <u>speak always about facts,</u> it’s terrible. You speak only about facts...You never go deeply in your feelings, you can’t discuss anything. It’s only your country people to whom you can really talk.” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“But it’s again we just <u>don’t have a lot of communication with Dutch on a friendly level.</u>” (Anushka, Russia)</p> <p>“For me also it was influenced by the fact that I <u>couldn’t get too many Dutch friends.</u> So I don’t have a Dutch environment that I’m living in; I’m living in this <u>international environment.</u> My boyfriend is Canadian, all my friends are English speakers, so I’m not helped by that.” (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>“I probably have, <u>my Dutch friends I can count on one hand.</u> But I’m trying to like meet them every two weeks and just speak Dutch when we go for a beer for two or three hours and that already helps.” (Sandra, Germany)</p>
<p>Having Dutch friends is a little hard (language and cultural barrier)</p>	<p>“What Dutch people consider a <u>friendship,</u> you know what Dutch people consider a friendship, for me this is <u>not still the real friendship.</u> So I think it’s more interculturally the way they are used to it. Because I for instance come from a different background, so I’m used to being a little bit more spontaneous, a little bit more open. I always think it is culture...Because sometimes when I see how Dutch people describe their friendship, it’s different than what I’m used to calling as a friendship. I’m used to it being more open, more spontaneous and here it is more a bit closed. Sometimes what they describe as a friendship...it’s <u>superficial.</u> That’s from my experience.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</p>
<p>When you break through the exterior, Dutch are lovely, warm and helpful</p>	<p>“I used to think that, until my more recent experience of my separation with my partner. Not to get into too much detail, but it was fairly traumatic. He said: ‘get out the house’. Cut off the joint bank account...The CFO at my office, who is a Dutch man, saw me at the office, going ‘what, you look horrible, what’s going on?’ And I told him what happened. He is now paying for my home for the next three months. So...And he’s paying for corporate housing, they got me a company car, they’re now saying without giving me the money, to go and start your life over again. I was just alarmed at the <u>generosity and the genuine interest in your well-being.</u> So I think up until that point I did feel this kind of <u>cold feeling</u> from them, but then this one instance just kind of changed that for me. That there really is the <u>capability for</u></p>

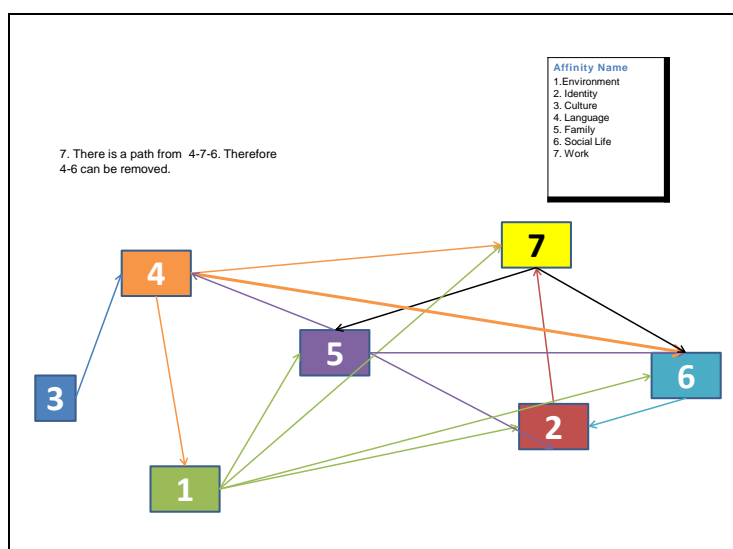
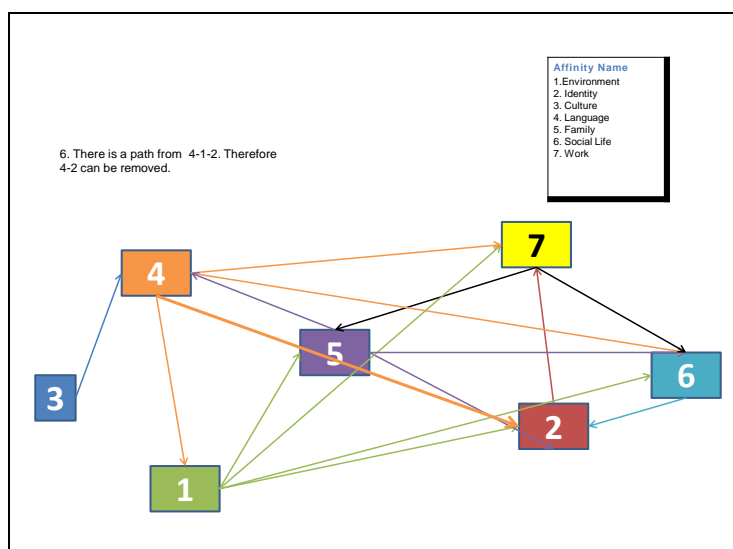
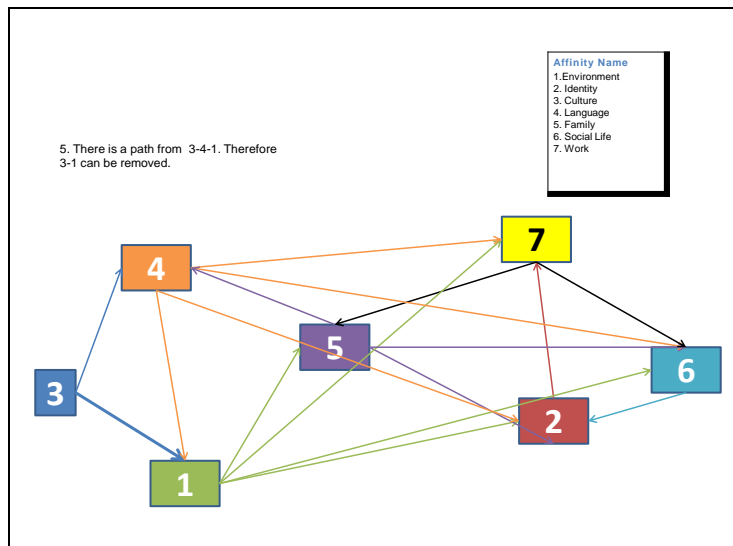
	<p><u>compassion once you get to know them. When it matters, they come through.</u>" (Bonnie, USA)</p>
<p>Bias (work: Not here permanent – "in development")</p>	<p>"That's another thing; I think that's a <u>bias</u>...I'm on a <u>permanent contract</u>, but...I happened to want a job recently and the reason why I was not given that job is like 'Yeah, but you're a foreigner and you're probably not going to be here forever. Or maybe you are going to leave in one or two years'...and it's like 'yeah, but I think you have to give me the same...the chance.' Everybody can leave. Even Dutch people can get an international contract and leave. So even the Dutch person that you hired, because you are a multinational company, in one year's time can get an expat contract and go." (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>"Foreigners were more based in a...<u>non-permanent contract</u>. So we have to prove ourselves. That was my mentality at least. I had to prove myself that I was there...oh yeah, but if you need to stay, of course you stay and everything that would be nice for the company." (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>"Yeah, for me it happens like when I first came here, my boyfriend was already here, so I was just in Ireland and I didn't want leave before I got a job here. So I got a couple of interviews and uhm...they didn't make me feel really...It was a translation company first of all, so they were looking for foreign people, for like Spanish translation was the position. And the guy at some point, he was asking me, kind of like... 'So, [tut] I see...uh...' He was looking at my CV, and he was like 'oh, yeah, I see that you have had a few jobs in Ireland...' Because in Ireland the job market was so big, that sometimes you would just change pretty often. Maybe here it was not the case but yeah...And then it was said 'are you sure you want this job, or <u>do you just want to use this job to get into the country</u>'. As if I was like...I was like 'hello, I'm European, I can be here even if you don't give me this job!'" (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Different communication styles: Direct (Dutch) Semi-Direct (Me)</p>	<p>"If you give them more flexibility, then you are lucky if they will do it the way you want directly. You have to just directly put your...say ok, this and this and this, <u>be directly straight</u>. That works more here." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"When they're so <u>direct</u>. They just don't have problem sometimes. That's what I feel like. First day at work I just got...this colleague who was actually being <u>really direct</u> to me, my first day at work and I was <u>trying to be very nice</u> with a smile, 'oh would you mind let me know why you did...' I don't know, something for work. And he was like 'well you just keep wasting my time'. I mean, you know, it's not nice and then they just keep like 'oh yours' but I don't know...And something that you learn, like that they are like this and sometimes I think it stopped bothering me." (Margaret, Spain)</p>
<p>Dutch do not really know how to praise</p>	<p>"Because I feel that in Romania if you do good things, <u>people praise you</u> and...see you and say 'ok, this is a person we have to grow'. Here it's indeed...I actually told my boss, ok, you want me to prove you? Give me one year and you give me everything you want me to prove, and then I put it on paper at the end of the year. And he said 'jajajaja, you actually did it'. Ja, I actually did it! And I'm doing this since I came here. And just because I don't say 'me, me, me, me!' and put my hand and...uh...<u>show off</u>...like when a hen lays an egg...'oh, this is what I did!'" (Gina, Romania)</p>

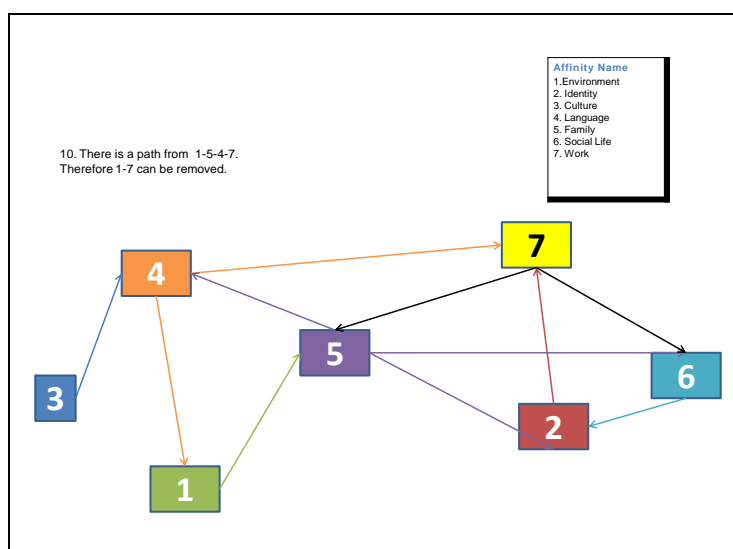
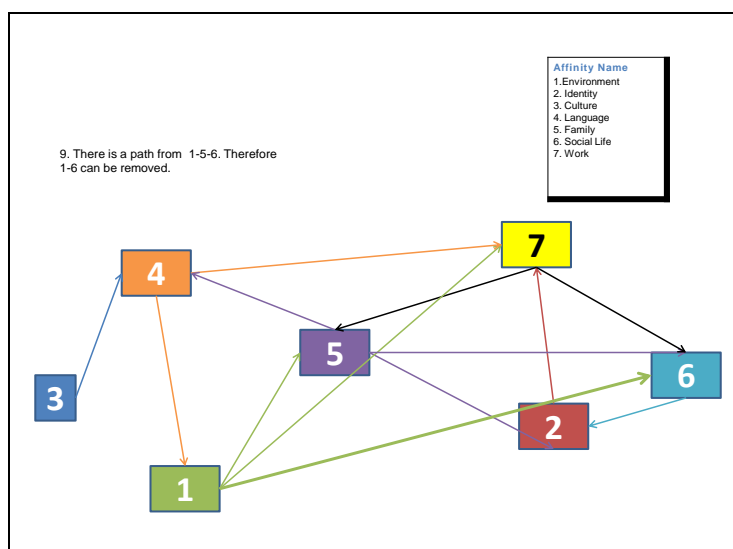
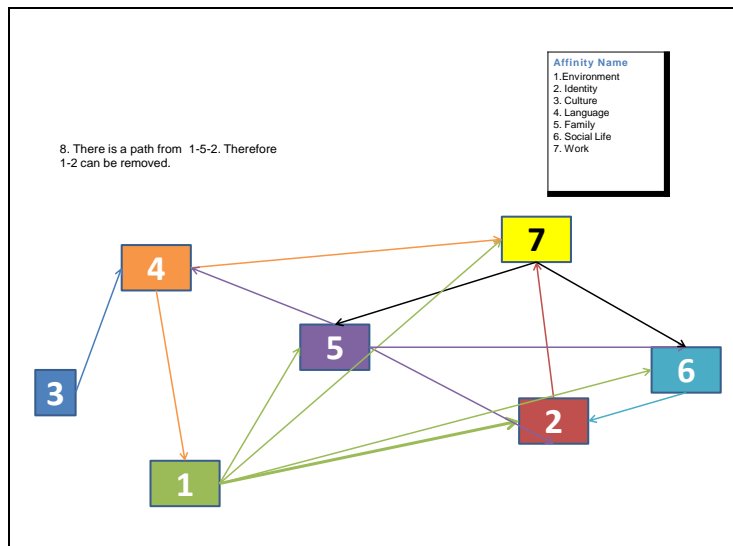
<p><i>Easier to be happy when you know people here already when you get here</i></p>	<p><i>“I’ve had a little bit more <u>support</u> than probably any of you have had with coming here, in terms of having <u>family here</u>.” (Laura, Canada)</i></p>
<p><i>Missing spontaneous life, fun</i></p>	<p><i>“Because I for instance come from a different background, so I’m used to being a little bit more <u>spontaneous</u>, a little bit more open. I always think it is culture.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p> <p><i>“I’m used to it being <u>more open, more spontaneous</u> and here it is more a bit closed.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p>
<p><i>Dutch bureaucracy is crazy and annoying sometimes</i></p>	<p><i>“I got to the city hall and I’ve been trying to go from the one city hall to the other...it’s so much <u>bureaucracy</u> and...by the book, and this is law and there’s <u>no room for being human</u>.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“Maybe one thing should be the whole, the general organization of society here...everything is very <u>bureaucracy</u> and all of the <u>rules and regulations</u>...” (Sandra, Germany)</i></p>
<p><i>Holland is a double-sided coin</i></p>	<p><i>“For me <u>Holland is a double-sided coin</u>...I think it comes even from religion, because from one side they show that they are simple, but at the same look at their houses, ja, normal houses – it’s very big...windows. First three months I really couldn’t bear it...but then again when you come to house, it is still very closed. You never come very close to Dutch people. So it’s always double coin.” (Anushka, Russia)</i></p> <p><i>“So in the <u>double coin</u>, it depends on what you’re looking for and it depends on what you want.” (Laura, Canada)</i></p> <p><i>“You go for a drink...but then there’s also that separation at the same time. You know, it’s ‘Ok now I’m going home to MY family’. So it is a blessing and a...it’s the <u>two-sided coin</u> again.” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p>
<p><i>Post-expatriation career</i></p>	<p><i>“...here in the Netherlands I’m trying to somehow <u>develop my career in finance, but not really with high success</u>.” (Anushka, Russia)</i></p> <p><i>“I’m a finance manager for [name of company], so it’s essentially a huge <u>promotion</u> for me <u>from what I was doing in the States</u>...” (Bonnie, USA)</i></p> <p><i>“...I have a <u>job since February...as a gallery manager in the Nieuw Siegelstraat</u>...but also kind of set it up as a freelance business so I’m actually just looking to do Art and Event management for different galleries and just kind of be freer.” (Sandra, Germany)</i></p> <p><i>“I came here and I got a job as a project manager for a translation company so I’m a <u>translator</u>.” (Margaret, Spain)</i></p> <p><i>“I came here for work. I’m working with ING for now twelve, thirteen years. And in 2005 they offered me a <u>new position in the head-office in Amsterdam</u> so I moved here because...my work moved here.” (Gina, Romania)</i></p> <p><i>“My last job was as a manager in the Call Centrum and at this moment I stopped it and am looking for a new one. And at this moment I’m actually <u>helping my friend to set up his own business</u>.” (Lana, Czech Republic)</i></p> <p><i>“I’ve been <u>working in treasury field</u>, my focus is cash management. That’s what I’ve really been doing for some time and living here...” (Monika, Slovakia)</i></p> <p><i>“So when I came here uhm yeah, it’s a...I feel a little bit <u>difficult to find a job</u> because how could a Hong Kong lady be a probation officer here?”</i></p>

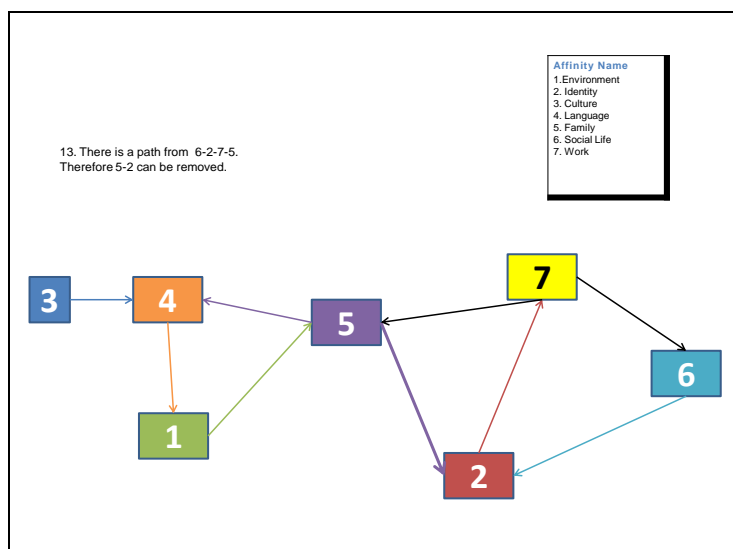
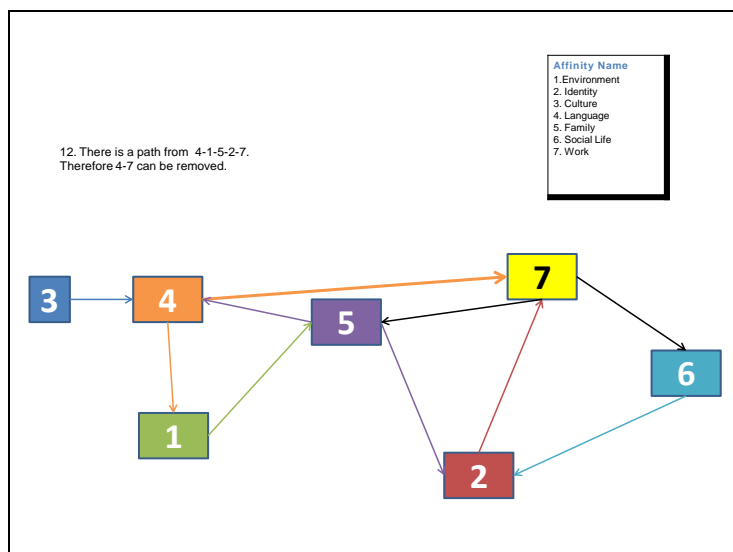
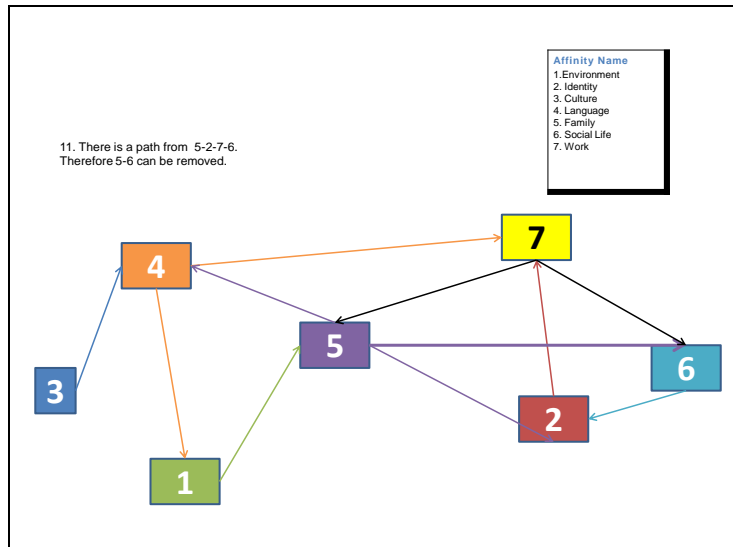
	<p>So...therefore I'm still looking for a job..." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>
Pre-expatriation career	<p>"When I was in Hong Kong I studied Social Work for my Bachelor Degree. I studied the child development for my Master's Degree. So I have been, all my life worked for the Hong Kong government...they kept on posting me, so my last six year in Hong Kong I was a <u>probation officer</u>. To supervise the juvenile criminals. And then I also, I was a welfare officer. I mainly looked after some orphans until they reached 18 years old. And also I take care of some case for...abused wife and also abused children. So I have to manage their life and...arrange what is the welfare plan." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p> <p>"...from my working experience, I've been working all the time that I'm here <u>Help Desk Service Industry</u>." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"...my education is a PhD in <u>Civil Engineering</u>...And then I got a <u>financial background</u>." (Anushka, Russia)</p>
Reason for expatriation	<p>"...I came to Holland...<u>because of Margaret</u>...Margaret decided to go to Amsterdam. And then at some point me and my boyfriend decided that we wanted to leave Ireland and have some better weather..." (Sandra, Germany)</p> <p>"...my <u>boyfriend</u>...he kind of got a job here so I decide, because we both wanted to leave, ja, like you're saying, we didn't want to stay in Ireland forever, so I decide to follow him afterwards so...after three years we separated...but I'm still here." (Margaret, Spain)</p> <p>"...I came here for <u>work</u>...they offered me a new position in the head-office in Amsterdam so I moved here because...my work moved here. And...I had a lot of friends living in the Netherlands." (Gina, Romania)</p> <p>"The reason why I came here is because outside of Holland I met a <u>Dutch guy</u> at the time so we decided to come to Holland." (Lana, Czech Republic)</p> <p>"...came here because of my <u>husband</u>. Well, actually I came for holiday and it became a nice long holiday..." (Monika, Slovakia)</p> <p>"...my <u>sister</u> came...and migrated to the Netherlands fourteen years ago...and ten years ago I came to visit her and I didn't go back either." (Laura, Canada)</p> <p>"I came here because I married a <u>Dutch man</u>." (Tracy, Hong Kong)</p>

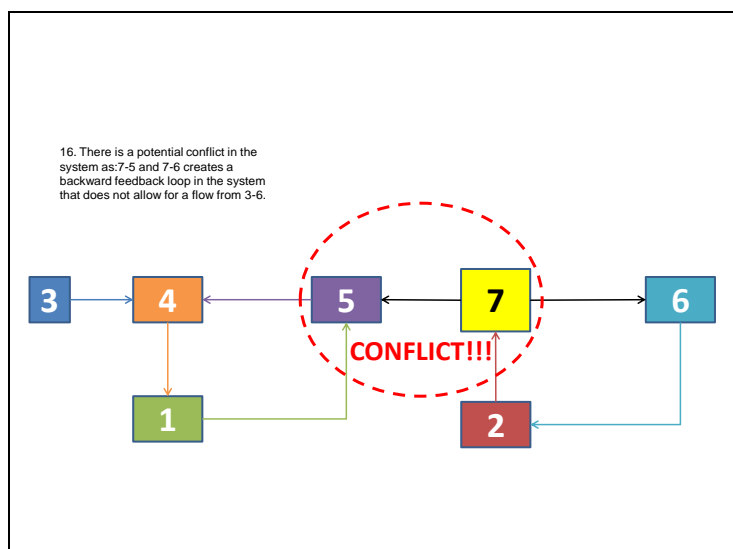
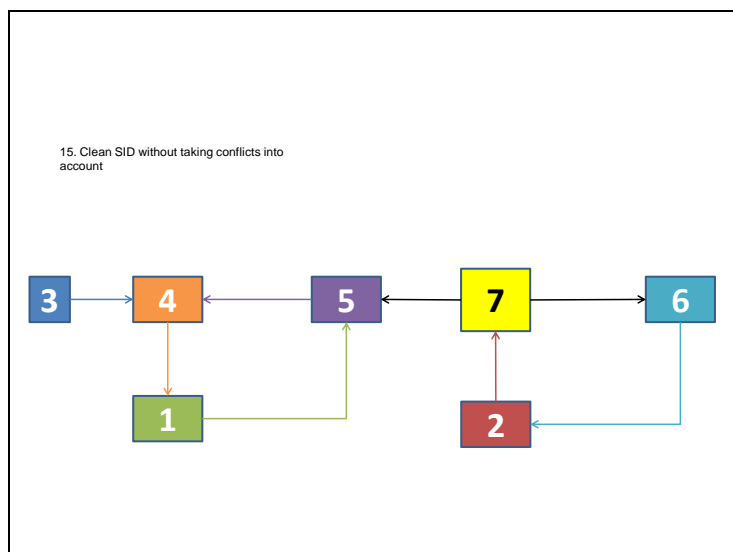
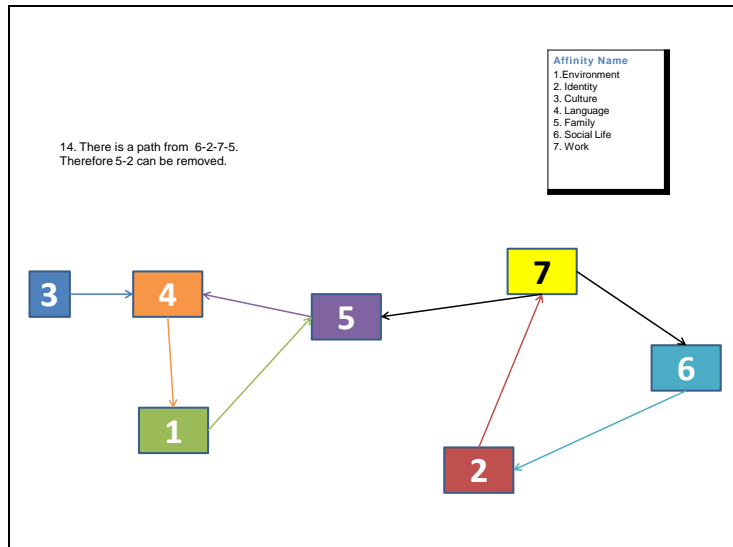
PROTOCOL FOR DEVELOPING FINAL SID FOR FOCUS GROUP 1 (24 APRIL 2010)



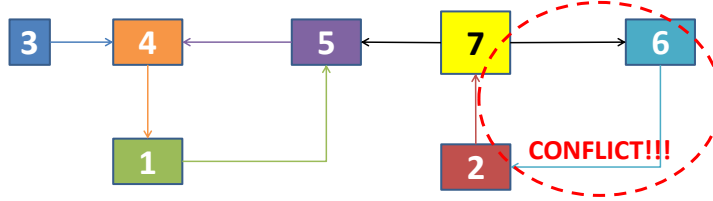






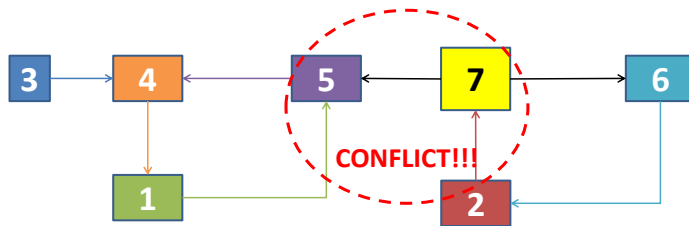


17. There is a potential conflict in the system: 2>6 should be incorporated as a feedback loop based on the high number of votes for this relationship.



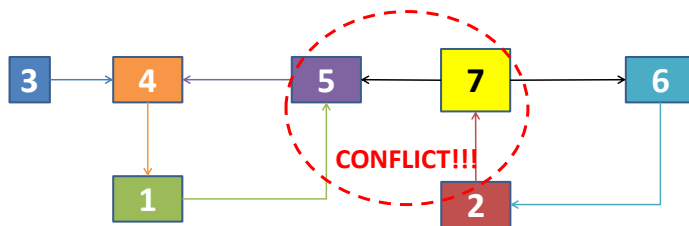
18. There is a potential conflict in the system: 5>6 should be incorporated as a feedback loop based on the high number of votes for this relationship.

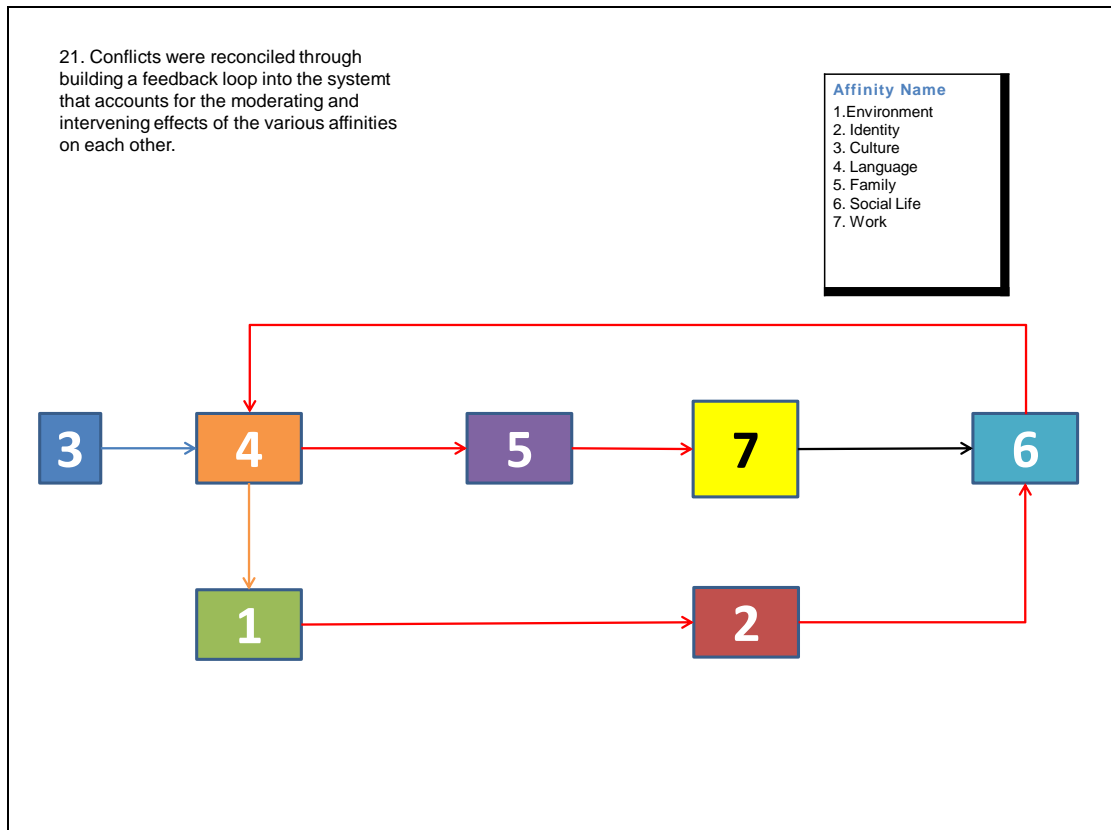
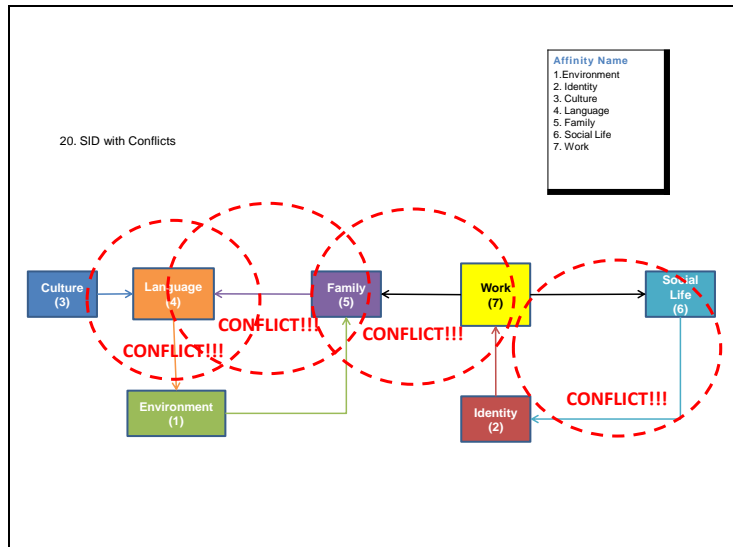
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1. Environment
2. Identity
3. Culture
4. Language
5. Family
6. Social Life
7. Work



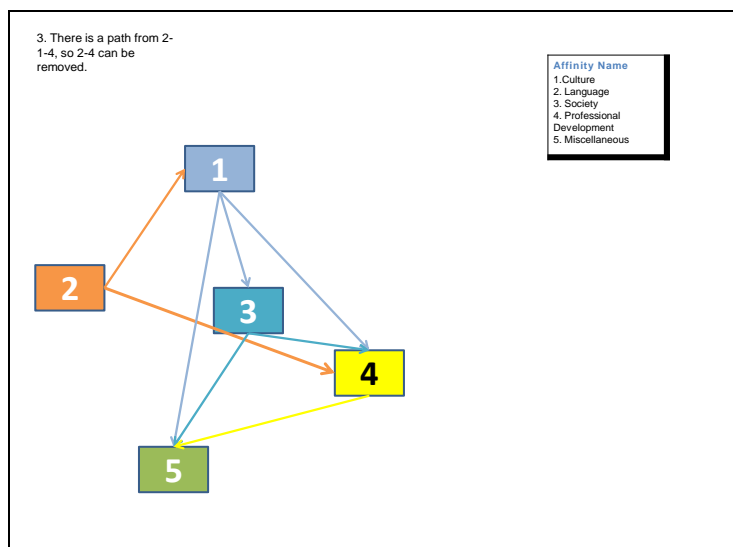
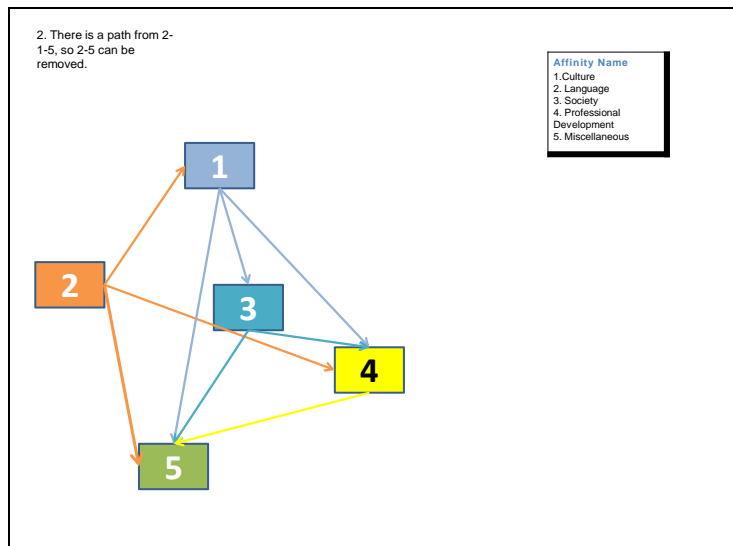
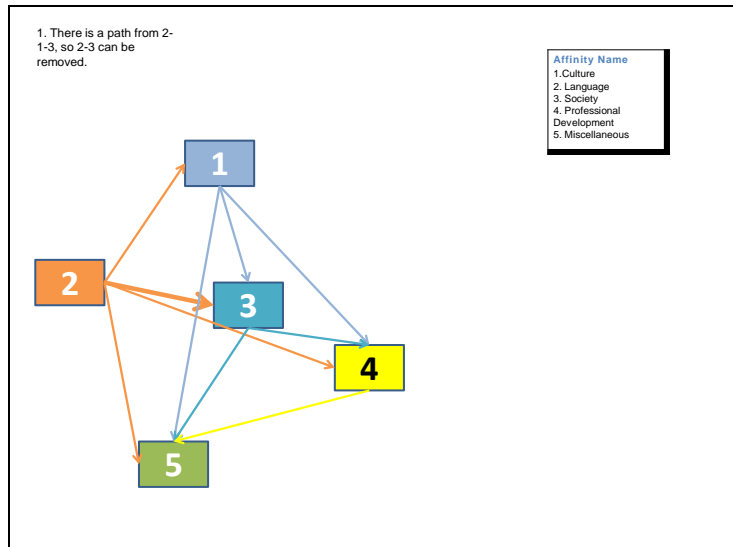
19. There is a potential conflict in the system: 5>7 should be incorporated as a feedback loop based on the high number of votes for this relationship.

Affinity Name
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2. Identity
3. Culture
4. Language
5. Family
6. Social Life
7. Work

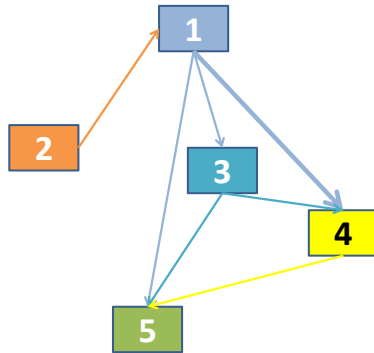




PROTOCOL FOR DEVELOPING FINAL SID FOR FOCUS GROUP 2 (12 JUNE 2010)

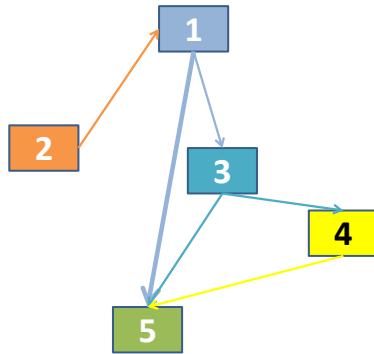


4. There is a path from 1-3-4, so 1-4 can be removed.



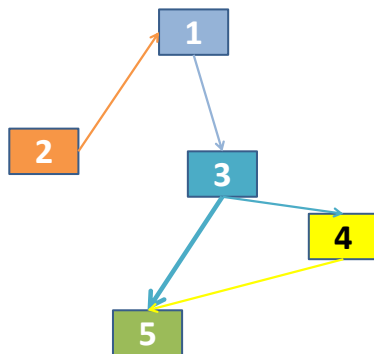
Affinity Name
1. Culture
2. Language
3. Society
4. Professional Development
5. Miscellaneous

5. There is a path from 1-3-5, so 1-5 can be removed.



Affinity Name
1. Culture
2. Language
3. Society
4. Professional Development
5. Miscellaneous

6. There is a path from 3-4-5, so 3-5 can be removed.



Affinity Name
1. Culture
2. Language
3. Society
4. Professional Development
5. Miscellaneous

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS SUPPORTING CONCEPTUAL CAREERS MODEL

Pre-expatriation career	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
Accumulation of career capital	<p>Education; work experience; knowledge, skills; and previous overseas experience (Tharmaseelan <i>et al.</i>, 2010:221).</p> <p>Not always relevant or tradable in the host country (Al Ariss, 2010:228).</p>	<p>Previous experience in a foreign country influenced participants' choices in opting for international mobility at later stages in their lives. Inbal and Sonja both spent a significant part of their childhood in the United States.</p> <p>Participants in their mid- to late 20s (Margaret, Sandra, Bonnie, Jay) felt that multiple international experiences left them with a sense of displacement and uncertainty. The question of whether they would continue to "jump" from country to country and remain a foreigner for life, or return to their home countries was a key question. The foreign experience brings with it the possibility of seeking wider horizons, but also leads to the difficult dilemma of returning "home", the questions of "what/where is home?" and "who am I?"</p>
Embedded career identity	<p>Career choices are guided by role identities embedded in various social networks in the home country (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:62). Embedded networks help to facilitate a clear identity.</p>	<p>Participants from former Eastern European countries emphasised the role of gender equality in socialisation and career development. They valued their career development and voiced a strong aspiration to find success. The equal role of women in society and the business world was not something to be questioned, but an accepted fact which afforded an opportunity to grow and develop one's career without any limitations: "...women play a great role...If you are a manager of a company it's fine" (Anushka, Russia).</p> <p>Feeling rooted and having strong support from parents, friends and family members helped participants shape their careers and feel confident in their abilities. Interestingly, rootedness had different connotations for the younger participants, who emphasised country and culture as components of stability. For women in the 35- to 40-year range, rootedness was embedded in social networks and their careers in their home countries – they knew who they were and were sure of what they wanted from life and their careers: "<i>I was very confident, very together...I knew where I was in my life...everything was...established and I was fine tuned</i>" (Bonita, USA).</p> <p>Having social support structures at work and at home helped to reinforce women's sense of self and confidence in their ability to succeed.</p>
Structural constraints (home)	Socio-political context, occupational and organisational	The socio-political and legal situations in the home country were determinants of the career options available to women. For example, paying for childcare and

Pre-expatriation career	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
country)	demography and the national culture of a country (Volpe & Murphy, 2011:61).	<p>domestic help enabled women in some countries to pursue professional full-time careers, whilst others felt that flexible work arrangements were a blessing for mothers who would otherwise have to stop work completely.</p> <p>Societal opinions and cultural attitudes toward child-rearing practices were also mentioned as a determinant of the structural solutions available to women. Inbal pointed out that, in Israel, children are sent to school and day care as an essential part of their development.</p>
Self-initiated expatriation	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
Motives	<p>Exploration Escape Family-building Financial betterment Career-building Partner/spouse (Mahroum, 2000:25-28; Mc Kenna & Richardson, 2007:311)</p>	<p>Exploration and adventure Bonnie, Margaret and Sandra are examples of participants who decided to yield to the call for adventure and find work as SIEs in the Netherlands. Both Margaret and Bonnie experienced two decision-moments where their motives changed: first they decided to come to the Netherlands with their boyfriends for the adventure. Then, after breaking up, they decided to remain in the Netherlands instead of returning to their home country (where they would be surrounded by familiar support structures). This theme also emerged among other participants who initially came to the Netherlands for other reasons (for example, Katharina, who initially visited the Netherlands as a tourist seeking adventure. After falling in love with a Dutch man, she decided to stay for family-building reasons).</p> <p>Family-building Nine of the women who participated in this research were motivated to pursue self-initiated expatriation to the Netherlands for personal reasons (family-building in the host country). These women were not trailing spouses and fell into the category of SIEs referred to by Vance (2005). It should be noted that although the primary motivation for this move may have been family reasons, the majority of these women had previously pursued other international assignments motivated by their careers. The evidence from the focus group research results provides only a snapshot of the very complex patterns and motives that drive the boundaryless career moves of SIEs. The influence of freedom of choice as a motive for international mobility was an important theme for both focus groups. However, choice was seen as a double-edged sword – both a freedom and a barrier: “...coming here was an intrinsic choice. Before...my moving choices were based on career, and this time it was based on a</p>

Pre-expatriation career	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
		<p><i>man and it felt wrong for a long time.” (Rina, Romania)</i></p> <p>Financial betterment Participants like Adri and Annabelle came for economic reasons: obtaining a degree in the Netherlands and better job opportunities than those available in their home countries. Jay had already been awarded a bachelor’s degree in South Africa, but was willing to work as an au pair, below her qualification level, heeding the call to adventure as a stepping stone to gain international experience (similar to the great Overseas Experience pursued by students in Australia and New Zealand, see Inkson & Myers, 2003).</p> <p>Career-building Sue and Magdalena considered their husbands’ acceptance of local contracts in the Netherlands an opportunity for their own self-initiated career moves.</p>
<p>Social integration</p>	<p>Maintaining own culture Adapting to host culture Social support from significant others in home and host country (Tharmaseelan <i>et al.</i>, 2010:221)</p>	<p>Maintaining own culture The role of individual choice in maintaining aspects of the home culture as integral to one’s sense of self and identity emerged as a significant theme. Participants felt that it is important to remain true to themselves and the values they grew up with. They were willing to adapt to some customs and the culture in the host country but emphasised that adjustment should be a two-way process.</p> <p>Adapting to host culture The process of adjustment to the host country was considered an important part of living and working in an international context. Learning to change one’s point of view and being able to expand one’s repertoire of values and behaviours was considered a key reward of an international lifestyle. Recognising that one has changed and that one’s views have changed further facilitates the adjustment process: <i>“Simply a changed point of view and to...realise that you’ve come to this situation...value for what you had and what you have now” (Anushka, Russia).</i></p> <p>However, arriving at a point of acceptance of the host culture and becoming effective in the host society is a long-term process that affects all spheres of a person’s life. At a practical level, dealing with day-to-day life (for example, setting up utilities or making oneself understood in the medical system) can be a major source of frustration, but once a person understands the system, it is easier to manage expectations and navigate one’s way around the system (Caliguiri & Lazarova, 2002).</p>

Pre-expatriation career	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
		<p>Participants did not seem to take the psychological effects of adjustment to the host country into account prior to their move, and for many the shock of living in the Netherlands was much greater and lasted much longer than they had anticipated: <i>“It’s a big shift and it takes time. It’s a process and I think I just couldn’t prepare for that. I knew that it would be difficult and that I would be emotional, but I didn’t know how much, how constantly and how long!”</i> (Bonita, USA).</p> <p>The adjustment process also had a significant influence on the identity formation of participants. To some extent, reassessing their basic assumptions and learning a new language influenced how participants saw themselves. Expressing their personality in a different language left participants feeling like a <i>“double person”</i>. Inbal summarized the adaptation process by comparing it to loss of identity: <i>“If you want to become fully adapted, you lose a little bit of who you really are”</i> (Inbal, Israel).</p> <p>Social support from significant others in home and host country</p> <p>Participants emphasised the value of having strong friendships and support from the international community and fellow countrymen, but at the same time saw the continuous movement of people in the international community as a barrier to building deep relationships. Finding a balance between friends in the local community and ones in the international environment is very important, as leaning too much to the one or too much to the other may leave one feeling deserted and out of place, as Adri experienced during her time in the Netherlands:</p> <p><i>“...at the beginning I only knew expats who all left after a year or two. So I started adapting and integrating and after 8 years I have a Dutch friend base, but now I start missing the international friends”</i> (Adri, South Africa).</p> <p>Support from family in the home country makes the transition easier, but also poses a potential barrier in helping women establish their career identities in the host country. Significant others in the home country cannot always relate to the experiences of SIEs and hence cannot provide the support sometimes required for taking next steps.</p> <p>Some of the career women in the group actually found that living abroad resulted in more frequent contact with loved ones in the home country (busy schedules and frequent travel meant that they had little or no interaction</p>

Pre-expatriation career	Definition from the literature	Evidence from IQA
		<p>with their local support networks while they were in fact nominally living in their home countries). Social media and VOIP Technology such as Skype are also potential enablers for helping to reinforce one's identity.</p> <p>Employing organisations can also affect an SIEs transition into the host culture. Bonnie's experience illustrated the instrumental role that organisations can play as formal support structures where personal social support networks fail or are not yet available. After her traumatic break-up, it was her colleagues and managers who helped her get back on her feet and enabled her to continue her employment as an SIE in the Netherlands by supporting her with corporate housing and a company car: "...they're now saying without giving me the money to go and start your life over again...when it matters, they come through" (Bonnie, USA). The role of social support, from both significant others and the company for the successful adjustment of women, seems to echo the findings of Caliguiri <i>et al.</i> (1999) and Caliguiri and Lazarova (2002).</p>
Social network	<p>Networks can reinforce the career role identities for women in their local settings (Volpe & Murphy, 2011) – the long-term effects of a clearly defined identity embedded in a network of likeminded professionals can have a positive impact on the eventual career success of women SIEs (Fitzgerald & Howe-Walsh, 2008).</p>	<p>Mentors and career counsellors Finding someone who can help one understand one's own competencies and provide positive reinforcement for the career identity that women are trying to develop were seen as important support factors for a post-expatriation career. The double-edged sword of career success abroad is reflected in the tension between individual responsibility and a need for external support and information to empower individual success: "<i>We have to make the choices. We ourselves are our best career counsellors. Someone else can help us gain insight but we are the ones who have to make choices and take the steps to get what we want</i>" (Annabelle, Romania).</p> <p>Making sure that you are recognised It seems that the barriers women were facing in achieving career success served as a motivator to increase their determination to achieve success, proving that, against all odds, one can and will be successful by setting oneself apart: "...you have to execute...If you don't fight for it...making sure... 'Hey, I'm here amongst all the others'" (Gina, Romania)</p>
Structural constraints	<p>Organisational and occupational demography, socio-political context and the culture of the host country may impose significant limitations</p>	<p>Language Mastering the language of the host country at a professional level proved to be a major challenge for participants, often associated with unrealistic expectations by colleagues and employers. Participants working in international environments experienced a significant sense of isolation from their colleagues due to their</p>

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	<p>on the career outcomes of SIE women (Volpe & Murphy, 2011). Attitudes toward women, discrimination and stereotyping and prejudice may pose further barriers to the success of migrants in the host country (Tharmaseelan <i>et al.</i>, 2010). As a result, continuous negative feedback may lead women to surrender themselves to a negative self-fulfilling prophecy, ending in a negative spiral which may lead them to opt out of their careers (Wood, 2008).</p>	<p>inability to speak the local language. In the first few weeks, their colleagues would switch to English during meetings and breaks, but after a certain (often unrealistic) timeframe, they were expected to be able to speak Dutch fluently. The fact that colleagues and locals tend to switch to English whenever a person is not fluent in the language is one dubious benefit participants experienced in the Netherlands. On the one hand, it is a welcome relief that so many people are willing to switch to a common language and one can be understood. On the other hand, one may become less motivated to learn the language and also find it more difficult to learn and practise the language regularly. The influence of language on job opportunities was also a source of concern for participants, as is reflected in Bonita's words: "<i>How do you find a job if you aren't fluent or can't find something that's going to cater to your native language?</i>" (Bonita, USA).</p> <p>Male-dominated culture Many participants have never really considered the possibility of gender discrimination – despite the views that they have on the place of women in Dutch society and their representation in higher management positions: "<i>...I am equal...I'm a woman and I reached a good position... But...I'm a little bit odd and awkward in a multitude of men</i>" (Gina, Romania).</p> <p>The "old boys' network" was another source of frustration for the group – participants felt that they continually had to prove that they are good enough for promotion. It seems that many companies and industries do not respect the authority of women, let alone women from abroad: "<i>I travelled [to Russia] with my manager [male]he told me: 'I'm very surprised that ... Russian men were talking to you. They take you seriously.' And I asked why they shouldn't take me seriously, and he said: 'Because you're a woman.'</i>" (Anushka, Russia).</p> <p>Attitudes toward foreigners The general discourse in the Netherlands around foreigners and stereotypes has created a general sense of animosity towards foreigners in the society. Participants agreed that their status as a foreigner (regardless of their country of origin) significantly hampered their career options. There is also a reluctance among employers to provide fixed contracts to foreigners: "<i>Foreigners are more based in a...non-permanent contract</i>" (Margaret, Spain).</p>

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		<p>Contrary to expectations that this discrimination would be based on constraints such as work permits and visa requirements, participants from the EU and Schengen states also encountered discrimination: <i>“And then it was said ‘are you sure you want this job, or do you just want to use this job to get into the country’. As if I was like...I was like hello, I’m European; I can be here even if you don’t give me this job!”</i> (Margaret, Spain).</p>
Career success	<p>Subjective career success is the satisfaction an individual relates to his/her career at a psychological level through the fulfilment of personal values (Cabrera, 2009). Women tend to focus on a seamless integration of various life spaces and tend not to regard their “careers” as separate entities (Mäkelä <i>et al.</i>, 2011; Myers & Pringle, 2005). The pursuit of a balance between their personal, work and family lives can also be considered a measure of career success for women (Myers & Pringle, 2005).</p>	<p>In terms of post-expatriation career success, participants indicated that despite the challenges they faced, they experienced satisfaction in their careers and experienced opportunities for growth: <i>“I’ve been promoted this year, and I am on the talent list so they are doing things for me...”</i> (Gina, Romania).</p>
Career exit	<p>Career exit may be related to aspects such as discrimination and segregation, exclusive staffing policies that do not provide many opportunities to foreigners and women, economic circumstances or the fact that career capital obtained in the home country is</p>	<p>Participants who “opted out” of their careers had a different subjective definition of career success. Despite the fact that all three participants who considered themselves as “opting out” of careers were employed in their own businesses or part-time, they did not consider themselves successful career women. Magdalena and Sonya, who both run their own businesses successfully from home, describe their career choices as follows: <i>“I’ve done that choice a long time ago, so I’m not pretending to be a career woman”</i> (Magdalena, Ethiopia). <i>“...I think it still really comes down to choice. But I know I’m different, I’m not a career woman, I chose for my children”</i> (Sonya, Australia).</p>

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	<p>not accepted as relevant in the host country (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Felker, 2011; Mäkelä <i>et al.</i>, 2011; Tharmaseelan <i>et al.</i>, 2010; Volpe & Murphy, 2011).</p>	
<p>Continuous career and personal development through adjustment, adaptation, acculturation and CQ</p>	<p>Expatriation experiences of women lead to a “rearrangement of the self” (Hartl, 2004:43). The career self-concept (“internal career”) is subject to re-evaluation when an expatriate is exposed to a different reality (“external career”) in the host country (Hartl, 2004). Thus, considering the metaphor of the SIE career path as a “meandering river” (Crowley-Henry, 2012), identity development is a life-long process that is critically intertwined with the career paths and career choices of SIE women (Volpe & Murphy, 2011).</p>	<p>Participants indicated that the SIE process is a journey of adjustment during which one continuously has to evaluate and re-evaluate one’s existing frame of reference and basic assumptions. Through reinventing oneself, one can respond more effectively to one’s environment and consequently incorporate new values into one’s value system. Reflection and meditation are important tools to help clarify one’s goals and identity: “...to appreciate the things in the Dutch culture that I did want to take on board and try and integrate myself into, and the things that had to do with my core values and norms and me, that I was not willing to compromise on” (Sue, UK).</p>