

## 1 Introduction

*“Coming back, it was very quiet; I didn’t really know the place. It feels bizarre.*

*I felt a bit like a fish out of water, you know. Like I didn't really fit in.*

*I felt a bit isolated...not that the place was drastically different,*

*I think it was me who had changed a bit.”*

--- Anonymous repatriate traveling spouse

With the increasing globalization, companies’ employees are sent all over the world to represent corporate goals abroad. These so-called corporate expatriates emigrate to work temporarily abroad in a foreign country. In this, expatriates will have to become acquainted with and have to adapt to their new cultural environment, which differs from their home-country environment. Besides, expatriates often travel with their families, meaning, that their entire families have to adapt to the new cultural situation as well.

The adjustment process of people who move abroad is often described as a U-curve pattern. Gullahorn and Gullahorn introduced this theoretical pattern in 1963. The U-curve pattern describes four stages in adapting to new cultural environments. These stages represent the cultural inconveniences that people may experience when emigrating. Already in 1960, Oberg introduced the term *culture shock*, a term that describes the experiences of people, who have to live in a new cultural environment that differs from their own (Szkudlarek, 2009, p.3).As more research was conducted on expatriates who returned to their home countries after their corporate missions abroad, a theoretical counter model was introduced, the W-curve hypothesis. Returning expatriates, who are called repatriates, have to deal with adapting to their home-culture environment, as well as their trailing spouses, and children. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) argue that the U-curve is also applicable to repatriation and that the entire process then becomes a W-curve. This curve describes the repatriation process of individuals who return to their home countries after they have been overseas and have to deal with adapting to their home-country cultural environment, representing a probable reverse culture shock (Black & Gregersen, 1991, p. 672).

Ever since multinationals started to send out expatriates from the early sixties, research on expatriation boomed. A reason for this could be the high costs that companies make. Black and Gregersen (1991) investigated the readjustment process of American managers and their spouses. They mention the high turnover of repatriates who leave the company within a year after their return home. They call it the *repatriate failure rate*. The average repatriate failure is estimated at between 20 and

40%. The costs of multinationals for each expatriate are estimated at between \$200,000 and \$500,000. This money is spent on training, relocation, and repatriation (Harvey & Moeller, 2009, p. 279). A high repatriate failure would mean that repatriates, who leave the company, represent a tremendous loss of money, knowledge, and skills because repatriates would take these goods with them when they leave the organization.

To control the high repatriate failure rate may be one of the reasons why companies support corporate expats in the emigration process by providing them with trainings and information on cultural adjustment before and or during emigration (Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 12). However, when expats return to their home-country environment, they are not as extensively facilitated with information on readjusting to the home environment. The reason behind this is that repatriation is far less understood and far less often seen as a problem than expatriation. However, that cultural transitions can be difficult has been proven, amongst others, by Black & Gregersen (1991) reporting on repatriation distress among American business managers and by Maybarduk (2008) among U.S. Foreign Service spouses. Research has suggested that providing repatriates with information in the pre-repatriation phase and during repatriation facilitates the adjustment process (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Bossard, 2005; Szkudlarek, 2009).

Another reason for the interest in repatriation is the realization that repatriation is significantly different from expatriation (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall 1992, p. 738). In their research among American expatriates, Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall found that the process of returning to the home country was not identical and from a different kind than the process of moving overseas (1992, p. 741). Mayburak (2008) and Sussman (2001) have established that expatriation and repatriation involve different cognitive processes, meaning that repatriation is psychologically different from the expatriation process (Sussman, 2001, p. 110). Theoretical frameworks used to analyze expatriation experiences may therefore not be applicable to repatriation analyses.

Although there has been an increased interest in repatriation of male corporate employees, repatriation experiences of female corporate employees and trailing partners have received little attention. It is often said that the success of ex/repatriation is, among others, dependent on the adjustment of the trailing partners. Stroh et al. state that “the partners’ attitudes are equally important in determining adjustment to being home and ultimately organizational commitment among repatriates (2000, p. 687). Additionally, Szkudlarek mentions that research has shown that “partners’ general readjustment patterns tend to positively reinforce each other” (2009, p. 9). Trailing partners could thus indirectly influence repatriate success or failure.

The difficulties caused by repatriation are often unexpected to repatriates and their families. After expats have accomplished their corporate mission abroad, they either have to return to their home countries or take on another corporate mission abroad. Returning home is never easy perhaps, but having lived in a different cultural environment for several years may exacerbate the returning home experience. Many repatriates underestimate the psychological consequences of moving back home because they may think it is a transition to known territory, to home. However, what used to be home may not be home to them anymore as the home-country environment could have changed. Sussman notes, "it does not seem immediately obvious to sojourners that returning to one's home country should be accompanied by cognitive or behavioral discomfort" (2001, p. 111). Many repatriates may not expect repatriation difficulties and encounter repatriation distress. Already in 1981, Adler discovered that expats who returned home did not have a realistic or representable image of their home country. Adler also found that expatriates were of the opinion that it was as difficult, if not, more difficult to adapt to their home countries than to the host countries (Adler in Black & Gregersen, 1991, p. 674).

The present research project will zoom in on the readjustment process and repatriation experiences of trailing spouses. Since this subject has received disproportionate attention from repatriation scholars, the present study contributes to this novel field of research. The focus of this research project lies on the comprehension of transformations undergone by trailing spouses during international postings by attempting to answer the following research question: What is the impact of cultural identity on the repatriation process of trailing spouse? Sussman's (2000) Cultural Identity Method (CIM) will be used to identify cultural identity changes and decide whether these changes can predict repatriation difficulties. The CIM can be applied to predict repatriation distress by using four identity alteration types. According to Sussman, identity alterations "come as a consequence of behavioral and social adaptations made in the host-country environment, which become salient upon return to the home-country" (Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 4). The present research project investigates the experiences of trailing spouses with cultural adaptations both in host and in home countries. Applying the Sussman's CIM may provide insight into the way in which individuals from different cultural backgrounds cope with readjusting to new cultural environments. This could be useful for preparing repatriates before and guiding them during repatriation. Cox's (2004) theoretical viewpoint on the effect of cultural adaptation will also be tested. He found that strong cultural adaptation in the host country is positively correlated with repatriation experience of the repatriate. Cox also proposed four identity alteration patterns that could occur during cultural adaptation. These patterns partly correspond with Sussman's alteration types. The present research project will compare and contrast these two

theoretical models in order to comprehend the complexity of repatriation and to investigate the relation between repatriation and cultural identity. The following sub questions will also be answered: What is the effect of visits to the home country during postings abroad on repatriation? And, What is the effect of multiple sojourns on repatriation?

Instead of a quantitative analysis, a research method that has been used in the past to test the Cultural Identity Model (Sussman, 2001; 2002) and Cox's theory, the present study will use qualitative research for analyzing identity shifts of repatriate spouses. A fellow MA student in Intercultural Communication at the University Utrecht, Janneke Burks, collected the data used in the present study in October 2013. The data consist of biographical interviews that were conducted by Burks. She has interviewed eight native Dutch repatriate spouses and seven non-native Dutch repatriate spouses. Their partners work or have worked for Royal Dutch Shell and they have all lived abroad for at least three years in countries that have oil industries. In addition, they all have had a posting in the Netherlands. Burks recorded each interview and used the interviews with the native Dutch repatriate spouses for her analysis. The data used for this thesis consists of the seven interviews with the non-native Dutch spouses. All seven non-native Dutch spouses were born in an English-speaking country: three were born in Scotland, two in the United Kingdom, one in the United States, and one in Australia. In total, the seven interviews have a total length of 7 hours and 35 minutes.

**2****Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents a number of terms and theories related to the repatriation process. The theoretical models presented in this chapter are developed to obtain a better understanding of the complexity of individual cultural adjustments and to predict repatriation difficulties.

**2.1 Defining terms****2.1.1 Culture**

In the existing literature on repatriation, the terms home culture and home countries are used interchangeably. This may suggest that cultures are equal to countries. In the present study, culture is regarded as heterogeneous. The following characterization of culture indicates the role of culture within this study. According to Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, the essential features of culture are that cultures are individualistic, affect behavior, and are established through interaction with other people (2009, p. 15). The essence of culture is that individuals do not just belong to one culture but are members of various cultural groups. Even within a cultural group, subgroups exist. Therefore, people have different cultural identities that they acquire through interaction with others and by participating in different cultural groups (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 163). Who decides whom or what is part of a cultural group is dependent on the dynamics of group interaction (Berry, 2006, p. 35). Thus, culture is not something one does alone but rather in agreement with others. People may not be aware or identify themselves with a certain culture, which indicates that culture can subconsciously affect behavior. In addition, culture is not a rigid but a dynamic concept that is constantly changing by anticipating to changes in the social milieu, reformulates, and reinvents itself continuously (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 164).

**2.1.2 Cultural identity**

The main objective of this thesis is to understand how cultural identities of trailing spouses influence repatriation. A description of cultural identity will therefore be provided. The emphasis of this study is on intercultural identity because investigating the self, the self-concept, and cultural identity may elucidate the relation between cultural transitions, such as repatriation, and psychological distress (Sussman, 2000, p. 356). Transitory movements, which can be short-term as well as long-term cultural transitions (5 – 30 years), trigger cultural adjustment. Repatriation involves moving to a new cultural context, which requires adapting to new cultural situations. The repatriation process may cause spouses

to adopt certain traits of cultural groups, which may alter their cultural identity. Cultural identity is, according to Kim, an accumulation of old and new experiences that add up to new concepts of identities. This is often indicated as a hybrid representation of identity. The new concepts are established through intercultural interaction, or by, how Kim calls it, “becoming intercultural” or “intercultural personhood” (2001, p. 196). According to her, “the process of becoming intercultural is not one of having to replace one culture with another. It is, instead, a ‘working through’ of all cultural experiences, so as to create new constructs – that is, constructs that did not exist previously” (2001, p. 196). With new constructs, Kim refers to a new establishment of an individual’s cultural identity. Transitory movement may thus be influenced by old and new experiences with adapting to new cultural situations, which may alter individuals’ cultural identity. The description of cultural identity used in the current study joins several definitions given by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin in their book *Intercultural Interaction* (2009). Identity is regarded as a multi-faceted, dynamic concept that is established through social interaction (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 160). This corresponds with the description of culture, highlighting the strong connection between culture and identity. People can have multiple identities, which are employable depending on the social and cultural situation. Having multiple identities can be troublesome because it can create contradictory feelings. “Where do I belong?” is a question many people struggle with, especially in new cultural contexts causing insecurity and internal conflicts (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009, p. 163).

The difficulty of repatriation lies in the fact that sojourners may not recognize that their cultural identity has changed. According to Sussman, culture affects behavior but people are often unaware how effective it is. She states, “self-beliefs, evaluation, structure, and self-motivated social behavior all may be shaped by culture, yet culture’s consequences and thus the cultural identity itself may be unrecognized by its members” (2000, p. 358). On the other hand, residing in a different social and cultural environment can also create awareness of the home-culture identity. Spencer-Oatey & Franklin; however, state that the exploration of the host culture “results in developmental changes in their [sojourners’] sense of identity, not just a clearer awareness of their existing identity” (2009, p. 164). Realization of cultural identity changes can occur both in the host country and upon return in the home culture. New acquired cultural identities do not match with the native environment, which causes conflicts. When repatriates return home, they come to realize that not only has the home country changed, but they have changed as well.

### 2.1.3 Repatriation

Repatriation is defined in a variety of ways in repatriation research. Many different authors use diverse terms to describe the process of repatriation. For example, Werkman (1979) uses the term *re-entry*, Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall (1992) use *repatriation adjustment*, and Maybarduk (2008) uses *re-entry adjustment*. Returning home to the country of origin after working and living abroad in a different cultural environment is Sussman's definition of repatriation as a logical extension of expatriation (2000, p. 356). She has a strong preference for repatriation as re-entry has a negative connotation, according to her. The term used in the present study to refer to the process of returning home after a sojourn abroad will be repatriation, as the direct opposite of the term expatriation. Expatriation is the process of individuals, here corporate expatriates, moving abroad to a different cultural environment to represent corporate goals. Both expatriation and repatriation involve adjusting and adapting to new cultural environments. The new cultural environment of an expatriate is the host country and for repatriates the new cultural environment is that of the home or native country.

Expatriation experiences are often described using the U-curve model and by labeling experiences with the term *culture shock* (Oberg, 1960). Repatriation experiences are described by applying the theoretical W-curve model and linking experiences with reverse culture shock (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963). These theoretical models describe the processes that occur as well as the psychological consequences of cultural transitions. It is crucial to state that repatriation is distinct from expatriation because it underlines the importance of repatriation research. Repatriation does not correspond with the psychological processes that occur during cultural adjustment. Adjusting to the home culture involves different "cognitive processes that appear to make repatriation psychologically different from behavioral, cognitive, and sociocultural adaptation" (Sussman, 2000, p. 360). For instance, Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall state that when repatriates return home, they may have formed inflexible expectations, which may impede their repatriation process. In addition, they conclude: "returning home is a difference in kind, not in degree, compared to being sent overseas" (1992, p. 741).

Already in 1984, Martin describes the differences between repatriation and expatriation. These findings are also supported by Maybarduk (2008), who bases these differences on former research on repatriation of students (Yoshida, 2003; Gaw, 2000), teachers (Sussman, 2001), and business managers (Black & Gregersen, 1991; Sussman, 2002). A difference is that repatriates do not expect adjustment difficulties whereas expatriates do expect this. The idea behind this is that people who return home do not consider the fact that the home country has changed, which causes a mismatch between repatriates' concept of the home culture and reality. Second, repatriates may not be fully aware, or have not realized

yet how the cultural transition has affected them. As abovementioned, intercultural contact can change people's cultural identity. Lack of awareness of these changes can cause repatriation difficulties (Cox, 2004, p. 205; Maybarduk, 2008, p. 17).

Maybarduk distinguishes between negative and positive outcomes of cultural transitions. Positive results of modifications made during cultural transition are "personal growth in patience and objectivity, improved language skills, greater human understanding, tolerance and openness to others and cultural differences, and the ability to synthesize intercultural experiences into a 'tapestry of life.'" Negative effects are "an overall sense of feeling different, changed friendships with loss of support from previous friendships, loss of place and sense of belonging, and the negative effects of increased psychological distress" (2008, p. 24). Maybarduk's findings were based on research on repatriate students; however, the present study demonstrates great similarities in repatriation outcomes of trailing partners.

## **2. Sussman's Cultural Identity Model (CIM)**

To answer the research question of this study, Sussman's Cultural Identity Model of repatriation and Cox's cultural identity shifts are tested. The following two sections subsequently describe Sussman's Cultural Identity Model and Cox's theoretical viewpoints on the effect of cultural identity shifts.

The Cultural Identity Model is based on a new paradigm that predicts repatriation experiences. Sussman presented her model in 2000 as a reaction to the then current idea of cultural formation and change. The model describes the social psychological-process of cultural transitions and she attempts to clarify the connection between cultural transitions, the self-concept, cultural identity (2000, p. 355). Sussman states, "theoretical writings on self, self-concept, and in particular cultural identity may provide insight into the repatriation problem and contribute to an emerging social psychological analysis of cultural transitions" (2000, p. 356). The model could thus be used to predict psychological reactions to repatriation. The underlying assumption of the model is that behavioral and social adaptation in the host culture of repatriates causes identity shifts and influences repatriates' "sense of belonging" (Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 4). Sussman's model depends on three aspects that interact during cultural transitions: *identity salience, sociocultural adaptation, and self-concept/cultural identity change* (2000, p. 362). These aspect and their relationships are depicted in Figure 1.



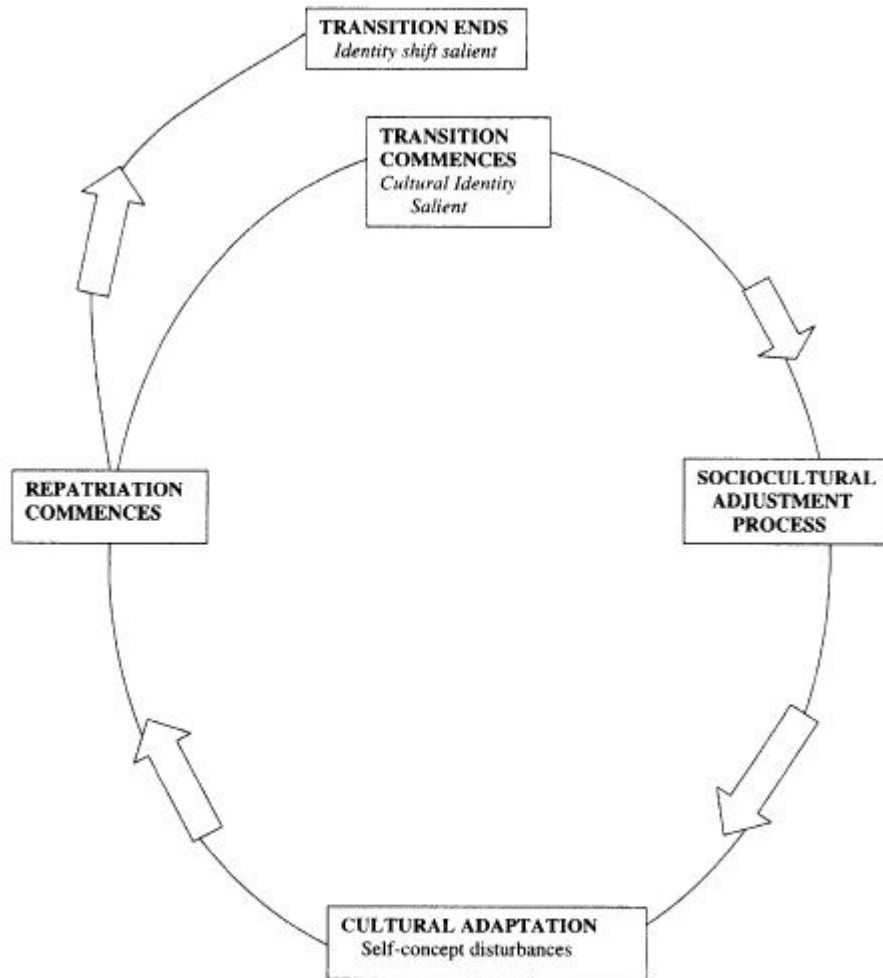


Figure 1: Cultural identity shifts during cultural transitions Sussman (2000)

This figure illustrates the phases related to cultural transitions. When sojourners move abroad, the cultural transition starts. During this phase, the Sussman's theory suggests that sojourners become aware of their cultural identity. A new environment may trigger this emergence because "in a new social environment where behavior and thinking diverge from one's familiar cultural context, awareness of the profound influence of our culture on behavior begins to grow" (Sussman, 2000, p. 363). Because sojourners' cultural identities do not fit with the host culture, cultural identity awareness may also trigger the sense of out group membership (Sussman, 2000, p. 363).

This out group membership feeling could initiate the next phase that occurs during cultural transitions, which is the sociocultural adjustment process. Repatriation involves adjusting and adapting, thus these terms require a definition as well. Sussman defines adjustment as “the motivational process whereby sojourners attempt to modify both cognition and behaviors to decrease negatively valenced interactions and experiences and increase positive ones” (2000, p. 355). What she means is that adjustment originates from sojourners’ motivation to alter their behavior to the host culture. Adjusting to the new cultural environment involves attempting to become acquainted with the new cultural environment by actively exploring the new sociocultural environment and changing behavioral actions to facilitate interaction with people from the host environment. In addition, adjustment involves actively anticipating to different communication strategies and relational cues, thus psychological and social-cultural modifications. This demonstrates cultural flexibility and resilience (Sussman, 2000, p. 360). In the current study, cultural adaptation follows personal adjustments that sojourners make in new cultural environments. Adaptation becomes visible when, for instance, cultural habits of the new sociocultural environment are incorporated in sojourners’ daily activities.

Sociocultural adjustment consists of three elements: *task centrality*, *cultural identity centrality*, and *cultural flexibility*. Sussman defines task centrality as “the motivation to succeed in the overseas task” (2000, p. 364). In the present study, it refers to the motivation of repatriates’ trailing partners to succeed in the overseas assignments; that is, adapting to the new cultural environment and the home-country environment. The second element related to sociocultural adjustment is cultural identity centrality. It refers to the importance that trailing spouses ascribe to their cultural identity (Sussman, 2000, p. 364). It is to be expected that the more importance participants ascribe to their cultural identity, the less likely they are to accommodate to the host culture. The third element is cultural flexibility, which is a participant’s ability to adapt to new social and cultural environments (Sussman, 2000, p. 364). Learning the local host language is one issue, having local friends, and becoming involved in the host society are other elements that could indicate a high level of cultural flexibility.

These three abovementioned elements determine if participants of the present study were able to fit in with the host culture as well as their ability to fit in with their home cultures again. It is important to keep in mind that sociocultural adjustment is determined by the interaction of all three variables. That means that task centrality and cultural flexibility are connected to each other as well as identity centrality and cultural flexibility.

The adjustments made during the sociocultural adjustment phase may eventually result in cultural adaptation, whereby sojourners are adjusted completely to their new sociocultural

environment. During the cultural adaptation phase, self-concept disturbances may originate because it highlights discrepancies between the home and host culture. What was, for instance, behavioral correct in the home country may not be applicable in the host country or vice versa (Sussman, 2000, p).

After sojourners have completed their assignment abroad, it is possible that they are sent on another assignment. This assignment can be in another country or in their home country. Either way, a new cultural transition is initiated. As seen in Figure 1, the cultural transition to the home culture initiates the repatriation process. When sojourners return home they may experience they have changed. Disturbances of the sojourners' self-concepts could indicate a change in cultural identity (Sussman, 2000, p. 365). This realization of (cultural) identity change affects repatriation, as a relation may exist between the *stability of the self-concept*, the *clarity of the self-concept*, and cultural identity (Sussman, 2000, p. 362). Overall, stability of the self is related to cultural flexibility, that is, to what extent are people able to make cognitive and behavioral changes to adjust to their new (cultural) environment. Clarity of the self-concept correlates with identity centrality, which refers to the significance of cultural identity of the trailing spouse.

Instead of returning home, it could also be that sojourners are sent on another assignment, meaning that the sociocultural adjustment process commences. What they have learned in a former sociocultural environment may not be applicable in the following sociocultural environment. Their cultural identity becomes salient and the sociocultural adjustment cycle starts again.

### 2.2.1 Cultural Identity Shifts

As said before, all three aspects of the CIM interact with one another; self-concept awareness as well as sociocultural adaptation could cause identity shifts. Sussman tries to predict repatriation difficulties by drawing four possibilities that may occur during cultural transitions. Her main goal is to understand why it is so difficult to return home. She provides a theoretical model that predicts responses on individual level. Individuals may experience four different cultural identity changes as a consequence of behavioral and social adaptation in the host culture during cultural transitions. These alternation patterns may become salient when repatriates return to their home countries. The four shifts are *subtractive*, *additive*, *affirmative*, and *intercultural*. Individuals who experience a subtractive identity shift have a weakened link with the home country during transitions. An additive identity shift is experienced when individuals have strengthened link with the host country. These identity shifts are a source of repatriation difficulties and distress. On the other hand, individuals who report a strengthened link with the home country (affirmative identity shift) or have obtained an intercultural worldview

(intercultural identity shift), may experience less repatriation difficulties and distress (Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 4). This is because identification with the home country ....

Based on Sussman’s (2000) theory, a table can be drawn that displays the levels ascribed to each aspect of the Cultural Identity Model ordered by possible identity shift. This is seen in Table 1. The four possible cultural identity shifts can be found in the first column. The aspects that could determine cultural identity shifts can be found on the first row. Repatriation experiences of individuals with specific identity changes can be predicted by looking at the level that individuals obtained for each aspect. The last column of Table 1 shows repatriation outcome.

<b>Identity shift</b>	<b>Identity centrality</b>	<b>Cultural flexibility</b>	<b>Sociocultural adaptation</b>	<b>Stability self-concept</b>	<b>Clarity self-concept</b>	<b>Identification Home culture</b>	<b>Repatriation experience</b>
<b>Subtractive</b>	Low	Low– Moderate	<b>High</b>	Low	Low	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Additive</b>	Moderate	High	<b>High</b>	Low	Low	<b>Low</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<b>Affirmative</b>	High	Low	<b>Low</b>	High	High	<b>High</b>	<b>Positive</b>
<b>Intercultural</b>	Low	High	<b>High</b>	High	High	<b>High</b>	<b>Moderate/ positive</b>

Table 1: Levels aspects affecting repatriation per possible identity shift

To illustrate, a subtractive identity shift may be the result of an individual’s low identity centrality and low cultural flexibility, as seen on row 2. An individual who experiences a subtractive identity shift may have a high level of sociocultural adaptation to the new environment. In addition, a subtractive identity shift experienced by individuals means that they have a low level of identification with the home culture. All these values combined predict a negative experience with repatriation for the sojourner, according to Sussman’s (2000) theory.

Furthermore, individuals who experience subtractive identity shifts have low to moderate cultural flexibility and low cultural centrality. Low cultural flexibility suggests that individuals are less able to adapt to the new sociocultural environment because individuals may be less able to recognize the appropriate social and behavioral aspects of the new cultural environment. Individuals who experience additive identity shifts are characterized by moderate identity centrality and high cultural flexibility. In contrast, individuals experiencing affirmative identity shifts are characterized by high cultural identity and low cultural flexibility, meaning that they strongly hold on to their original/familiar cultural self-concept throughout their transition and they are less able to integrate appropriate social and behavior of the

host country. Individuals experiencing intercultural identity shifts, on the other hand, are associated with low cultural identity centrality and high cultural flexibility. These individuals are aware of their cultural identity and it is predicted that they return home without experiencing repatriation distress because individuals consider themselves as world citizens that can easily adapt and interact in any cultural situation (Sussman, 2000, p. 367).

Sussman has tested her theoretical model in 2001 and 2002. Her empirical research in 2001 among 44 American managers, who returned home after working abroad, demonstrated that cultural identity changes can predict repatriation distress (p. 109). In 2002, Sussman investigated the relation between cultural identity and repatriation experience by testing her theoretical model on 113 American teachers who returned home from Japan. She found that teachers experiencing estrangement from their home culture (subtractive) or who related more to the host culture (additive) experienced high repatriation distress. Her findings demonstrate the relation between cultural identity shifts and repatriation experiences (2002, p. 391). Maybarduk states, however, that “this causality is not equally supported among the four identity alteration types” (Maybarduk, 2008 in Szkudlarek 2009, p. 4). In addition, Sussman’s (2002) results also indicated that “overseas adaptation and repatriation experiences are not directly associated. Rather, home culture identity strength inversely predicts repatriation distress with repatriates experiencing high distress reporting weak cultural identity.” What the influence is of cultural adaptation in the host culture on the repatriation experience of participants of the present study will be investigated.

### **2.3 Cox’s Intercultural Identity Patterns**

A term that is associated with cultural transitions is *acculturation*. Cox’s theory, which is also tested in the present study, is based on Berry’s (1997) acculturation theory. Berry’s theory will be explained first before explaining Cox’s theoretical viewpoints.

Berry designed his theory to refer to the general process of changes that individuals experience when they interact in new social or cultural contexts (1997, p. 6). Berry introduces four possible acculturation strategies, which are experienced during long-term cultural transitions. These are: *marginalization*, *integration*, *separation*, and *assimilation*. Figure 2 offers a schematic view of the acculturation strategies.

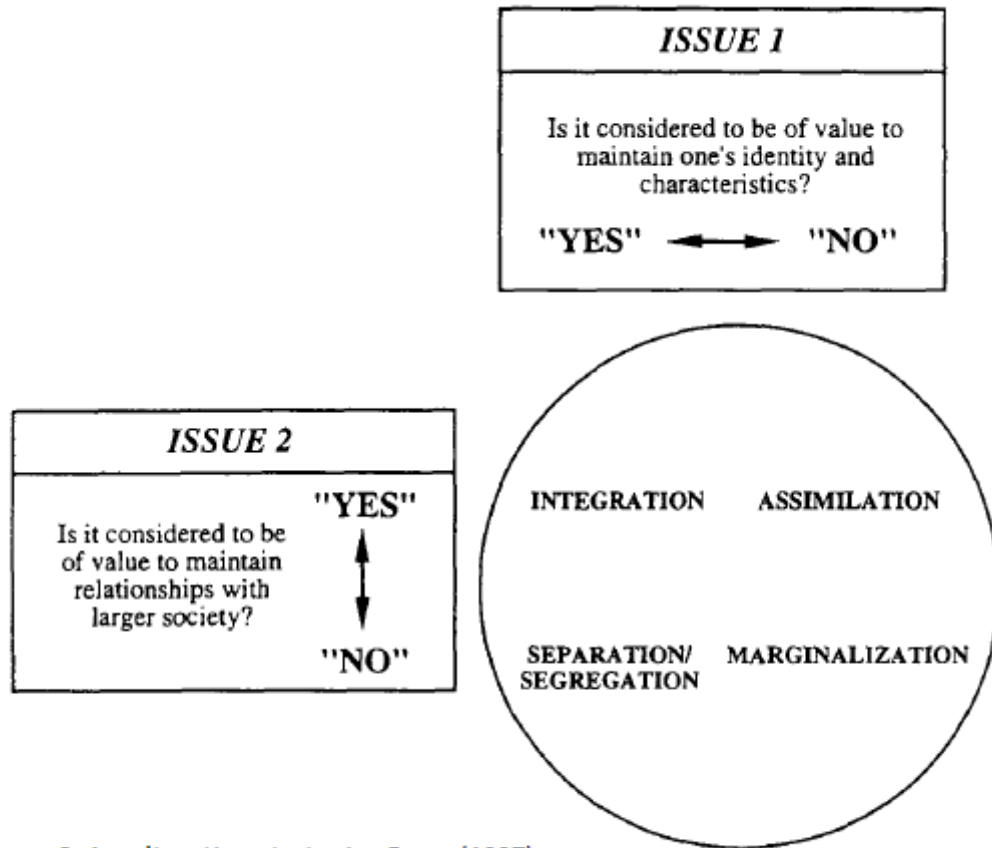


Figure 2: Acculturation strategies Berry (1997)

The acculturation strategies are based on two aspects: *cultural maintenance* and *cultural contact and participation*. Cultural maintenance consists of individual's evaluation of their cultural identity and cultural characteristics and their attempt to maintain these. If individuals, for instance, highly values to maintain their cultural identity in a new sociocultural environment, then this is associated with the integration and segregation acculturation strategies. These strategies involve maintenance of the home cultural identity during cultural transitions. Individuals who do not highly value their cultural identity and characteristics in a new sociocultural environment may apply an assimilation or marginalization acculturation strategy. Individuals who are associated with assimilation or marginalization strategies may experience estrangement from the home country as these individuals value other cultural characteristics, which are not part of their home culture environment, more than home culture characteristics (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

Cultural contact and participation is the level of individuals' participation in other cultural groups (Berry, 1997, p. 9). Individuals who seek intercultural contact in new cultural environments are associated with an integrated and assimilation acculturation strategy. In contrast, separation and

marginalization strategies involve individuals who avoid daily contact with other cultural groups. Based on cultural maintenance and cultural contact and participation, the four acculturation strategies are used to predict the effect individuals' adjustment (Berry, 1997, p. 10).

According to Sussman, Berry's model, at initial reading, may seem to be applicable to cultural transitions of sojourners; nonetheless, she adds a critical note to Berry's theory. She mentions that Berry's acculturation theory mainly focuses on acculturation of immigrants instead of sojourners or spouses of sojourners. A sojourn is a temporary transition abroad as opposed to the immigration process, which is a long-term transition. Highlighting the differences between these migration groups is important because it determines the applicability of Berry's acculturation strategies for the present research project. However, Berry's model is not suitable to test repatriation experiences of sojourners because expatriates' motivation to move abroad differs significantly. Sussman also states that immigrants, generally speaking, differ in motivational attitudes to move abroad compared to sojourners. Corporate expatriates migrate to represent corporate goals abroad and with the intention to move back. In contrast, immigrants, generally speaking, emigrate to build a new existence abroad motivated by financial or political reasons, not intending to return (Sussman, 2000, p. 359).

To turn to Cox's research, he has developed a theory that could contribute to the understanding of repatriation difficulties. Cox states that cultural adjustments are influenced by three variables. These variables are *psychological health*, *functional fitness*, and *intercultural identity* (2004, p. 208). He adopts Kim's theory on intercultural adaptation to describe these variables. Psychological health is, according to Cox, an affective outcome of adjustment, functional fitness is a behavioral outcome, and intercultural identity is a cognitive outcome (2004, p. 204). To illustrate, Cox's research is quantitative research for which he used 101 U.S. missionaries, who filled in a questionnaire. To determine the level of psychological health, he used a Zung Self-rating Depression Scale (ZSDS) to estimate participants' level of depression. A Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, which indicates social difficulty experienced by participants in new cultural environments, was used to measure functional fitness. Lastly, Cox used an Acculturation Index to demonstrate participants' levels of identification with the host and home culture (2004, p. 209).

Cox introduces four possible intercultural identity patterns based on Berry's (1997) conceptualization of acculturation patterns: home favored, host favored, integrated, and disintegrated. He has altered Berry's conceptualizations for the patterns to correspond more properly to repatriation situations (2004, p. 205). With these identity patterns Cox investigates what the consequences are of home culture maintenance and host culture learning on the repatriation process (2004, p. 215).

Individuals who experience an integrated and home favored pattern encounter less repatriation distress compared to disintegrated and host favored. This is because Cox suggests that several variables coincide with repatriation adjustment: expectations and preparedness, communication behavior, and cultural identification. Based on these research variables he induces five hypotheses. The most important hypothesis for the current study is the following: “Home favored and integrated identity patterns will be associated with better psychological health and functional fitness during repatriation while host favored and disintegrated identity patterns would have higher levels of depression and social difficulty” (2004, p. 207). Cox concludes that the best acculturation strategy is where individuals maintain their connection to their home countries during postings abroad. This strategy results in less repatriation difficulties and less depression. Consequently, individuals have to balance the home-country culture and host-country culture during posting. Individuals can acquire and incorporate host culture knowledge but have to keep the home country in mind (2004, p. 216).

Cox’s predictions and findings conflict to some extent with Sussman’s predictions. Cox predicts that both individuals who experience integrated and home favored identity shifts have less repatriation difficulties, thus a positive experience with repatriation. An integrated identity shift is the best option to anticipate repatriation difficulties, followed by home favored, disintegrated, and host favored. Sussman predicts that only individuals experiencing affirmative identity shift (home favored) do not experience repatriation difficulties. Her best option is an affirmative, then an intercultural, additive, and at last a subtractive identity shift. She found that the less repatriates identify with their home cultures, the more repatriation distress they would experience (Sussman 2001; 2002).

Although both authors suggest different strategies to anticipate repatriation distress, Table 2 indicates the parallel between Sussman’s proposed identity shifts and Cox’s proposed identity shifts. Both authors suggest four possible identity changes that individuals can experience. These are depicted in the second and third column of Table 2, displayed according to each author’s ascribed hierarchy of the patterns. The best acculturation strategies are on the second row of Table 2, with the least favored option on the last row of Table 2.

<b>Identity shift</b>	<b>Sussman (2000)</b>	<b>Cox (2004)</b>
<b>Possibility 1</b>	Affirmative	Integrated
<b>Possibility 2</b>	Intercultural/global	Home favored
<b>Possibility 3</b>	Additive	Desintegrated
<b>Possibility 4</b>	Subtractive	Host favored

Table 2: Possible identity shifts



Sussman's affirmative identity shift resembles Cox's home favored identity shift, as seen on the second row of Table 2.

Both Sussman and Cox predicate that shifts in cultural identities can predict the outcome of repatriation. A parallel exists between the identity shift patterns of both authors; however, Cox's model is also based on Bandura's Social Learning Theory. This theory casts, according to Cox, a more positive view on cultural adaptation research. Bandura first wrote on developing appropriate communication and social skills in 1963 in his book *Social Learning and Personality Development*. He presents his theory about the development of social skills through modeling and observational learning. The theory was adopted by cultural adaptation research, which stresses the acquisition of individuals' behavioral and social skills in new cultural environments (Cox, 2004, p. 203). Bandura states: "new patterns of behavior can be acquired through direct experiences or by observing behavior of other" (1971, p. 3). This observational learning of behavior concerns long-term retention. Behavioral observations in the past form a guide for behavioral anticipation in the future (1971, p. 8). When individuals are rewarded or punished for certain behavior in a sociocultural environment in the past, memories of the reward or correction will be stored and used in the future to accommodate to new sociocultural environments. Bandura's theory thus assumes that cultural adaptation in the host culture leads to adequate adaptation in the home country. In accordance with Social Learning Theory, individuals who experience an integrated (intercultural) identity shift encounter the least repatriation distress because individuals shows high levels of cultural adaptation in the host culture. The acquisitions of social skills in the host culture will benefit the repatriate during repatriation, as the repatriate will be able to apply these acquired social skills in the home culture as well. However, Sussman (2002) found that adaptation in the host culture is not directly related to the repatriation process (p. 391). Sussman's finding thus questions the validity of Bandura's theory.

#### **2.4 Visits to the Home Country**

A sub question of the current research project is: What is the effect of visits to the home country during postings on repatriation? Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall state that visits to the home country could provide information on the situation back home. According to them, the duration and the quantity of visits to the home country are correlated with expectation formation (1992, p. 746). The essence of this is that "the more accurate the anticipatory expectations, the easier will be the cognitive and behavioral adjustments necessary for successful repatriation (Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992, p. 744). It could thus be argued that visiting the home country between or during postings abroad has a

positive effect on drawing realistic expectations of the home culture. This could subsequently positively affect the repatriation process.

## **2.5 Multiple Sojourns**

Another sub question is how multiple sojourns affects repatriation. Multiple sojourns could result in a higher level of cultural competence, which is associated with being able to relate to a cultural situation. This positive effect of multiple sojourns on repatriation can be explained with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, whereby past experiences with cultural adaptation provide knowledge and anticipatory skills to adapt to other cultural environments (1971, p. 8). However, Cox found that the number of sojourns do not correlate with the repatriation process (2004, p. 211). Sussman also sustains Cox's claim, but she "hypothesizes that multiple reentries could influence sojourners' adaptation of intercultural identity" (Szkudlarek, 2009, p. 6).

The following chapter presents the methodological justification of the current study. In addition, it explains how theories are operationalized to answer the main research question: What is the impact of cultural identity on repatriation of trailing spouses? And the following sub questions: What is the effect of visits to the home country and multiple sojourns on repatriation of trailing spouses?

### 3 Method

This chapter describes and discusses the methodological approach used in the present study. The first section provides background information on the participants. The second part describes how the data used for the present study was collected and the third part describes how Sussman's Cultural Identity Model and Cox's theoretical viewpoints were operationalized to answer the research questions.

#### 3.1 Participants

To analyze repatriation distress of trailing spouses, this study has used data collected by Master student Janneke Burks. In this study, partners of expats are referred to as trailing spouses. The word spouse is generally used in repatriation research as well as by the participants themselves. Burks interviewed eight native Dutch and seven non-Dutch trailing spouses of corporate repatriates in October 2013. Before selecting participants for her study, Burks designed a profile that the participant had to fit. For the non-Dutch group, which is the group that was analyzed in this study, the conditions were that a participant was not born in the Netherlands, had been living abroad for at least three years with a partner who worked for Shell, and had been back in the home country for at least three months. In addition, the participants had to have had at least one posting in the Netherlands for a period of at least three years. The reason behind a posting in the Netherlands is that Burks' academic background, a bachelor study in Communication and Information Studies, required her to incorporate Dutch culture in her master thesis. Therefore, she chose to set this criterion for the non-Dutch group. Justification for a period of three years abroad and a repatriate for at least three months is that the participants had the opportunity to accommodate to their new cultural situation.

Five out of seven participants of the non-Dutch group fitted the profile completely. One participant lived abroad at the time of the interview, thus not in her home country. However, this participant had transitioned to her home country before as she returned to her home country for 2.5 years before her husband was sent on another overseas assignment. She thus has experience with the repatriation process. The other participant is a trailing spouse of a national governmental employee instead of an (former) employee of Shell like the other six participants.

The seven participants of the non-Dutch group were trailing spouses from English speaking home countries. Table 3 offers an overview of participants' background information. The participants were all women, aged between 47 and 71. Three are from Scotland, one from the United States, one from

Participant	Nationality	Age (years)	Duration interview (minutes)
1	Australian	57	71
2	Scottish	55	64
3	Scottish	49	46
4	Scottish	53	43
5	American	57	47
6	British	47	72
7	British	71	112
<b>Average</b>		56	65

Table 3: Background information participants

Australia, and two from The United Kingdom as seen in Table 3. The total duration of the interviews was 455 minutes with an average duration of 65 minutes and a range of 43-112 minutes.

The participants were collected through Outpost, an expat center in The Hague, and through various other inquiry strategies. Moreover, participants were collected through the snowball effect of the interviews, whereby participants introduced other possible participants through personal contacts. This approach is often applied if research concerns sensitive information or difficult approachable groups (Boeije, 2005, p. 271).

The number of postings of the non-Dutch group varies considerably. Table 4 offers an overview of the duration of expatriation and repatriation. The average number of postings is five with a range of 1-9 postings. Because participants were often sent to the same country for a posting, the average number of countries where participants resided is four and is lower than the average number of postings. The range of the number of countries is 1 – 7.

Participant	# Postings	# Countries	# Years abroad	# Years returned
1	5	3	19	5
2	5	4	16	14
3	4	4	19	5
4	1	1	8	6
5	2	1	8	16
6	6	5	22	N/A
7	9	7	30	20
<b>Average</b>	5	4	17	11

Table 4: Overview duration expatriation and repatriation

The average time spent abroad is 17 years, with a range of 8 – 30 years. The average time back in the home country is 11 years, with a range of 5 – 20 years. Participant 6 was still living abroad during the interview, which is marked with the abbreviation of not applicable, N/A, in the fifth column. Two participants had only one or two postings, which was or were in the Netherlands. Three of the seven participants had lived in their home country for a certain period between postings. That means that these participants have had two repatriation experiences instead of one.

Table 5 shows the location of the participants' postings. Many postings were in countries that have an oil industry because the expatriates were in function of Royal Dutch Shell. The locations include postings in Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia. Because a posting in the Netherlands was a criterion for the selection of participants for this study, most postings have been to the Netherlands. New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Qatar, Thailand, and Turkey are the countries with the least postings of participants.

Country	# Postings
Australia	2
Brunei	3
England	2
Malaysia	2
New Zealand	1
Nigeria	1
Norway	1
Oman	2
Qatar	1
Scotland	2
Thailand	1
The Netherlands	9
Turkey	1

Table 5: Postings per country

The participants returned to their home countries between 1994 and 2009, mainly because their partners' overseas assignment had ended. There are two exceptions: one participant has returned to her home country because there was no longer a position for her husband at Shell's. The overseas assignment had thus ended before completion. Another participant had not returned home yet at the time of the interview as she and her husband were living abroad for an overseas assignment. However, during the interview this participant was temporarily in her home country for two-and-a-half months and would return to the country of the overseas assignment after her visit. She also had had a posting in her home country, ergo repatriation experiences.

Fellow student Burks offered her data and provided information about her own investigation on repatriation distress variables to the author of the present study. Burks' study involves the investigation of the native Dutch group. At time of the current study, Burks had not yet completed her study. For further details on the collection of the participants and the data, please consult Burks' study.

## **3.2 Procedure**

### **3.2.1. Biographical Unstructured Interviews**

Burks has chosen to do qualitative research because it is an adequate method to obtain information on a new field of analysis (Boeije, 2005, p. 267). Little qualitative research has been done on repatriation experiences of trailing spouses as opposed to quantitative research (Maybarduk, 2008; Stroh et al., 1998; Sussman, 2000; Szkudlarek, 2009). Motivations of repatriates, cognitive, and behavioral aspects of repatriation are relevant to understand the repatriation process and the associated repatriation distress of participants. Geerdink (2008) states in her article on biographical interviewing that biographical interviewing is a technique that provides an overview of the reality of interviewees. She notes that it is important that interviewers should not only focus on visible behavior "but attempt to understand the essence of how people give meaning to certain situations, make choices, and how that affects their actions"<sup>1</sup> (2008, p. 27). A biographical interview with trailing spouses provides thus an overview of their life experiences with expatriation and repatriation and is structured by what the interviewees consider the essence of their experiences.

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<sup>1</sup> Free translation from Dutch to English of: "Om zicht te krijgen op de werkelijkheid moeten we ons niet beperken tot het menselijk handelen zelf, maar de betekenis die daaraan ten grondslag ligt proberen te begrijpen en leren kennen" (Geerdink, 2008, p. 27).

Burks conducted all the interviews through Skype, face-to-face in English. Because interviewees did not live in the Netherlands, Burks chose to conduct the interviews via Skype. Conducting face-to-face interviews may help to establish a good relationship and a level of trust between the interviewees and the interviewer. Establishing a good bond with an interviewee is important because it is crucial to the interviewee's willingness to answer questions openly (Boeije, 2005, p. 275). Burks recorded the interviews with an iPod, which is a small electronic device for playing and storing digital audio files and has a recoding function. In total, the data consist of 7 hours and 35 minutes of conversation, which means that the average length of an interview is 1 hour and 5 minutes (see Table 3). Full details of the interviews can be found in Appendix A, which contains transcripts of all interviews. The capital letter J at the beginning of a sentence indicates that Burks is talking, instead of the participant, to ask a question or interrupt the participant. For the analysis, the content of the interviews was important. The interviews were transcribed to obtain a good overview of the content of the interviews; however, without prosody and continuers. Prosodic features are nonverbal elements of speech (Houtkoop & Koole, 2008, p. 116) and continuers are words or phrases that indicate that someone is listening to the speaker (Houtkoop & Koole, 2008, p. 72). Ignoring prosodic features and continuers means that in the present study only the verbal components of speech were transcribed, but not the phrases that indicate that a listener is listening to the speaker. By comparing and contrasting the transcripts, themes in the interviews and their relation were discovered.

The interviewer, Burks, tried not to influence the interviewees in order to maintain a neutral position during the interviews. Therefore, the objective of the interview was not explained to the interviewees at the start of the interviews. Burks did this purposely because she did not want the interviewees to be affected by their knowledge of the purpose of the interview. This prevented the interviewees from giving socially desired answers and Burks steering the interviewees' answers in a certain direction.

Burks used a topic list (see Appendix B) that she sent to the interviewees beforehand. If they had not reviewed the topic list, Burks would explain to the interviewees what the topics of the interview were. She kept a copy of the topic list with her during the interviews to ensure all topics were addressed. During the interviews, the interviewee was given the freedom and the time to construct her story at her own discretion. Burks only interrupted the interviewee to ask for clarification or exemplification, or to introduce a new topic. All the interviews started with the same question: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences? Participant structured their answers mainly chronologically, starting telling about their first posting and ending with their last posting. Burks

asked specifically about their posting in the Netherlands, participants' experiences with living in the Netherlands, and their experiences with repatriation. Because the interviewer might introduce new topics/themes when the interviewee had not addressed them, Burks had some effect on the direction of the interviewee's answers. However, Burks did not strictly follow the topic list but used it as checklist for herself. During the interview, she anticipated on what the interviewee said or had said ensuring that the interviewee was given the opportunity to speak freely about her experiences.

### **3.3. Operationalization Theory**

This study is a qualitative research project that serves to investigate, describe, and interpret actions, experiences, and feelings of trailing spouses of corporate repatriates. The goal is to provide insight in the repatriation process of trailing spouses. This study used Sussman's Cultural Identity Model (2000) and Cox's theoretical model (2004) to interpret the experiences of the trailing spouses.

#### **3.3.1 Sussman's Cultural Identity Model**

Participants' anecdotes formed the basis to draw a table similar to Table 1, as this table is a tool to predict repatriation difficulties and to indicate the relation between cultural identity shifts and repatriation distress. The first dependent variable of the Cultural Identity Model, identity salience, was measured by self-concept awareness and realization anecdotes. This variable contributes to determining cultural identity centrality. For example, participant 2 mentions during the interview that she felt foreign when she returned to her home country. She felt like a stranger, a feeling that she never had before when she lived in her home country. This anecdote illustrates that participant 2 is aware of her out group membership and her cultural identity during repatriation.

The second aspect of Sussman's model is sociocultural adaptation, which consists of three variables. Each variable can be graded with a low, a mediate, or a high level. For each participant, the values were rated at the present study author's own discretion. The experiences with the transition to the countries of the posting described by participants were used to measure task centrality. This includes experiences with the very first transition to the countries of their first postings as well as experiences with transitions to other postings. Each transition to a new host country was thus analyzed. To illustrate, if the first cultural transition was to the Netherlands, the second to Oman, and the third to the Netherlands again then each experience associated with a transition was analyzed. An example of a participant's first experience with a cultural transition is participant 2 explaining that she was very happy



to move to the Netherlands because she was able to find a job there, that is, in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Second, the level of cultural identity centrality was measured by interpreting how dominant cultural aspects of the native culture are during postings. For instance, placing a child in boarding school is a well-accepted custom of British culture. However, residing abroad with children may complicate the decision to place a child at a boarding school in Britain while the parents live abroad. Therefore, the decision to go through with sending their children off to boarding school may illustrate the level of centrality of this cultural aspect to participants because it indicates a preference for a native education rather than a host country education. In addition, making comparisons between native cultural aspects and cultural aspects of the host culture were also indicative of the dominance of participants' cultural identity. Additionally, identity centrality is measured by determining to what extent the trailing spouses consider themselves repatriates. This could indicate how they see themselves after living abroad. The answer to the question *Do you consider yourself a repatriate?* could indicate the participant's awareness of her self-concept and capture the essence of the experiences of the participants.

Thirdly, cultural flexibility was measured by determining features of cultural adjustment. Learning the local host language is one element, having local friends, and becoming involved in the host society are other elements that could determine cultural flexibility. These features determine if participants are able to fit in with the host culture. It is important to keep in mind that sociocultural adaptation is determined by the interaction of all three variables. That means that task centrality and cultural flexibility are connected to each other as well as identity centrality and cultural flexibility. For each participant, cultural flexibility is coupled with task centrality because task centrality illustrates the participant's attitude toward the overseas assignment. For instance, a participant could say: "It was very exciting" or "I was a bit apprehensive moving there." This falls under task centrality and is decisive in determining cultural flexibility. In general, anecdotes that fell under task centrality, identity centrality, and cultural flexibility all determined the level of sociocultural adaptation.

The variables stability of the self-concept and clarity of the self-concept are measured by investigating the relation with the variables cultural flexibility and cultural identity centrality as stability of the self is related to cultural flexibility, and clarity of the self-concept correlates with identity centrality.

Full details of which statements of interviews fell in which category can be found in appendix C. The statements aligned under each variable of the CIM, subsequently, determined whether there was a relation between the three abovementioned aspects of the Cultural Identity Model.

### 3.3.2 Cox's Theoretical Viewpoints

The biographical interviews with the participants also formed the foundation for testing Cox's hypothesis: "home favored and integrated identity patterns will be associated with better psychological health and functional fitness during repatriation while host favored and disintegrated identity patterns would have higher levels of depression and social difficulty" (2004, p. 207).

In this study, evaluations of participants' experiences with the repatriation process determine psychological health. For instance, a statement like "it [repatriation] was awful, it was awful" was regarded as an indicator of a possible high level of depression of a participant. This resembles the experiences of repatriation distress of Sussman's model.

Social difficulty in the present study was determined by using statements such as "we made a lot Dutch friends" and "learning the Dutch language was difficult." The former statement could indicate that the participant had little experience with social difficulty; however, the latter could indicate a low level of Functional Fitness. Functional fitness in this study corresponds with the variable cultural flexibility of Sussman's Cultural Identity Model that co-determines sociocultural adaptation.

The third variable in Cox's study, Intercultural Identity, was measured by using statements of participants that refer to identification with their home cultures. An example of identification with the home culture is "we chose to come back and live a Scottish life." An example that indicates identification with the host culture is the following statement of a British participant. She mentions in the interview: "I kept saying, 'you Brits'", indicating that she could identify herself poorly with her home culture. Sussman's model also includes identification with the home culture. The classification of participants' identification used for Sussman's model can also be used for Cox's model. However, low identification with the home culture does not automatically result in a high level of identification with the host culture. Therefore, identification with the host culture was estimated for each participant.

### 3.3.3 Visits to the Home Country

The number of visits to the home country during postings may affect repatriation experiences of participants as the visits may help form realistic expectations, which facilitate repatriation. To investigate whether visits to the home country during postings abroad affect repatriation distress, it was determined how many times participants went back to their home country during postings. For instance, a participant stated that she went home every year during a posting.

### 3.3.4 Multiple Sojourns

The number of postings of a participant may also affect repatriation. As almost every participant had more than one posting abroad, the effect of multiple sojourns on repatriation can be investigated by analyzing the participants' repatriation experiences. Attitudes toward moving to another country, task centrality, and cultural flexibility were all taken into consideration for determining the influence of multiple sojourns on repatriation.

## 4

### Results

The research question of this project was: What is the impact of cultural identity on repatriation of trailing spouses? This research question cannot be answered with the theoretical models that were used in this research project. The impact of cultural identity on repatriation adjustments of trailing spouses in this study is highly unpredictable as both Sussman's model and Cox's theory fail to predict adequately repatriation experiences.

This chapter is divided into five sections: the first section presents the general results related to the main research question of the present study. The second and third parts subsequently provide the results related to Sussman's and Cox's theoretical viewpoints. The fourth and final parts provide the finding for each of the sub questions of this project; subsequently: what is the effect of visits to the home country during postings abroad on repatriation? And, what is the effect of multiple sojourns on repatriation experiences?

#### 4.1. General

Overall, this project shows that the participants' experiences with returning to their home countries reveal much similarity. Firstly, the seven participants mention that they had trouble with sharing their expat experiences with others. When talking about their former expat lives, other people were only little interested in the stories because they found it difficult to relate to. People living in the participants' home countries, who have not been abroad, are focused on their lives in the home countries. Therefore, people are less interested in the international experiences of repatriates, according to the participants. In addition, people's attention span is very short. They are only capable of listening to repatriates' stories for five to ten minutes, participants say.

Secondly, during postings, all participants were involved in the local community, due to either employment or voluntary input. Five participants worked as teachers of English in international schools or volunteered at an expat foundation, for example Outpost in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Thirdly, an important aspect of repatriation is the age of the participants' children. Many of the participants chose to go home to root their children in their native countries. This decision was mainly made around the time that the participants' children had to go to secondary school. The participants valued the idea that their children could make friends without thinking about losing them because they would move again.

In total, there were nine themes abstracted from the interviews. These are presented in Table 6.

Themes
Cultural flexibility
Cultural flexibility back home
Cultural identity centrality
Cultural identity centrality back home
Going back home
Profile
Repatriation experiences
Self-concept awareness/self-concept realization
Task centrality (arranged per country)

Table 6: Themes interviews

The themes cultural flexibility and identity centrality refer to participants' cultural flexibility and identity centrality during postings abroad. Cultural identity centrality and flexibility back home means the prevalence of cultural identity centrality and flexibility in the home countries during repatriation. Going back home anecdotes indicated the rate of participants' visits to the home country. A profile of participants was made based on the participants' characterization of themselves (see Appendix C). For instance, the phrase "I am a very independent woman" clearly indicates how the participant thinks about herself. The theme self-concept awareness/realization consists of anecdotes such as: "I see my role as a mum at foremost" and "our lives had moved on." These statements reveal elements that are crucial to participants' identity. Because many participants had more than one posting, anecdotes indicating the level of task centrality were ordered by country.

#### 4.2 Cultural Identity Model

Table 7 provides an overview of the levels of cultural adjustment variables per participant. This table is based on Sussman's (2000) Cultural Identity Model. The model proposes that possible self-concept disturbances and subsequent alterations in cultural identity during sojourns are crucial for explaining and predicting affective responses to repatriation (Sussman, 2000, p. 362).

Table 7	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7
Variables							
Identity centrality	moderate	high	high	mod	high	high	mod
Cultural flexibility	high	low	mod	low/mod	high	mod	high
Sociocultural adaptation	high	moderate	mod	mod/high	mod	low	high
Stability self-concept	moderate	moderate	high	high	high	high	moderate
Clarity self-concept	high	moderate	mod	high	high	high	high
Identification home culture	low/mod	low	low	low	mod	low	low
Repatriation experience	negative	negative	negative	moderate	moderate	moderate	negative
Identity shift	additive	affirmative	affirmative	affirmative	additive	affirmative	intercultural

Table 7: Participants’ levels of the CIM

The variables that influence cultural identity shifts are listed in the first column. These variables may predict repatriation distress. The last row of Table 7 lists the participants’ repatriation experiences, ranging from moderate to negative experiences. The levels for each variable per participant are listed in the columns 2 – 8.

Identity centrality levels range from moderate to high. For example, participants who did not think of themselves as repatriates, but identified themselves with the home culture scored moderate levels of the first variable identity centrality. Participants with a high level of identity centrality consciously chose to return home to their home countries, mainly to root their children and to have the children become acquainted with their (parents) native culture. In addition, these participants chose to send their children at young age to boarding school in their native countries. An example for a moderate level of identity centrality is participant 2 who states that she always felt she had two homes, one home in the host culture and one in the home culture. Participant 3 states that during her postings abroad, she always felt Scottish. The latter statement indicates a high level of identity centrality. What stands out is that the participants’ former expatriate lifestyle and identity still play a role in the participants’ life. Elements of both the acquired expat identity and the native identity are present in the participants’ lives.

Cultural flexibility levels ranged from low to high. An interesting statement is that participant 2 concludes that people do not become better in moving, i.e., in the psychological aspects of moving, but in organizing and arranging the transition. Simply put, people get better at packing their bags. Participant 2 has been on five different postings in four different countries, which may suggest that she has developed many organizational skills. However, the fact that she found it difficult to adapt during each transition results in a low score on cultural flexibility. Participant 3 worked every single posting but found it difficult to adapt. She lived in an expat camp in Brunei and refers to living in the camp as incestual, because the camp was a small community and everything was focused on family. Participant 4 explains

that it took her quite some time to figure things out in the new host culture and was very apprehensive about moving because she comes from a close family. These latter two participants have moderate scores of cultural flexibility. It is important to mention that task centrality, a variable that interacts with the variables cultural flexibility and identity centrality, played a role in determining cultural flexibility. For instance, a positive attitude toward moving for a posting contributes to a moderate cultural flexibility. A justification for high levels of cultural flexibility is that participants were able to make each move successful, i.e., they were able to create an environment where they and their families were happy. This was because they were involved in the host society right after the transition.

The level of sociocultural adaptation was only low for one participant. A low level of sociocultural adaptation originates from the fact that this participant characterizes her expat life as living in a bubble that does not resemble real life. She is fully immersed in the expat world, which may suggest that she fails to connect with the real world, in this case, the host culture of her residency. Even though she made some local friends during postings abroad, she scored low on sociocultural adaptation. Riding a bike to work every day in the Netherlands, but not making Dutch friends, or not being able to understand the Dutch way of communicating results in a moderate level of sociocultural adaptation. In contrast, participants who obtained a very good view of the Dutch culture and compared the Dutch with their native culture throughout posting in the Netherlands have a high level of sociocultural adaptation. This is because these participants strived to completely adjust to the host culture and to become involved in the host society through working, for instance, with expats and local foundations. As can be seen from Table 7, a correlation exists between identity centrality sociocultural adaptation; a high level of identity centrality results in a low level of sociocultural adaptation. A moderate level of identity centrality means a high level of sociocultural adaptation.

More than half of the participants had high levels of stability of the self-concept and clarity of the self-concept. What is interesting is the anecdote of participant 2 about an empty cup that people take with them when they set out on an adventure. As she explains, when people travel abroad this cup is filled with bits and pieces that people like of a culture, resulting in a cup that is filled with all kinds of different cultural values that are selected by the traveler. Eventually, this cup represents (cultural) identity. Therefore, the identity of the traveler has changed, she concludes. Moreover, participant 2 refers to her identity as a hybrid, a product of cultural values that she collected through her expat life abroad. Based on her concept of her identity as hybrid, her stability of the self-concept is low and clarity of the self is high. The same applies to participant 7, who describes herself as an internationalist, as someone who has obtained her own vision on the world. Therefore, her self-concept is affected by her

expat life and is not as stable compared to the self-concept of other participants. Maintenance of the self-concept throughout postings results in high levels of both variables. Participants with high levels have a very clear concept of themselves and return home, knowing that they have changed.

What stands out is that six of the seven participants could not identify themselves with their home countries. Participant 5 was the only one who could moderately identify herself with her home country. Although she mentions that she found it difficult to find a new job when she returned and was annoyed by the fact that she had to use different transportations compared to the Netherlands, she adapted rather quickly to her native environment. An example of a very low identification with the home country is an anecdote of participant 7, who is British. She mentions that she missed Mrs. Thatcher, a former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (1979-1990). She argues that she felt very much aware of her cultural identity when she returned home because Mrs. Thatcher had changed England so much. Therefore, she could not identify with her home culture anymore and had great difficulty with readjusting to her home culture. She kept saying “you Brits” when she was back in her home country, even though she is British herself. It took her a few years to unlearn this habit of othering the British people. Statements about returning home and reacquainting with friends such as: “it was a huge change” and “I felt I did not have the right to barge back into their [friends’] lives” indicate low levels of identification with the home country. It took participants two to eight years to readapt to their home cultures, which is a considerable long time.

Overall, all participants had difficulties with repatriation. However, four describe their repatriation experiences as negative and having repatriation distress. The other three participants had trouble with adapting to their home culture, however, to a lower degree. Repatriation distress of participant 3 is evident as she indicates that it took her eight years to readapt to her home culture. It took participant 7 also eight years before she said “we Brits” instead of “you Brits.” Participant 1 expected to be Australian returning home. This expectation made that it was hard for her to feel at home in Australia again because she could not immediately identify with her home country. Participants with moderate levels of repatriation indicate that they found it hard to adapt mainly because they were not directly involved in their home society.

It is apparent from Table 7 that most of the participants scored high levels of stability and clarity of the self-concept. Participants with a high level of stability of the self-concept also had a high level of stability of the self-concept, indicating that stability and clarity of self-concept are related to one another in this study. Moreover, high levels of stability and clarity of the self-concept, as seen with individuals who experience affirmative and intercultural identity shifts, would predict positive experiences with



repatriation. However, the most striking result to emerge from the data is that all seven participants experienced repatriation difficulties. Each participant described that she had to readjust to her home culture and four of the seven participants found it particularly difficult. This study thus indicates that high levels of stability and clarity of the self-concept do not result in positive repatriation experiences. In fact, the opposite is demonstrated.

As abovementioned, all participants had negative experiences with repatriation, therefore, Sussman’s (2001; 2002) claim that the less repatriates identify with their home culture, as seen with individuals who experience subtractive and additive identity shifts, the more repatriation distress they would experience is confirmed. Nevertheless, identifying Sussman’s four possible cultural identity shifts that participants could have experienced was only partly possible because the participants’ experiences did not perfectly fit the CIM variables. For instance, participant 7 may have experienced an intercultural/global identity shift because she states that she has obtained an international world view and adapted to the host countries during each postings. This suggests a high level of cultural flexibility and a low level of identity centrality. Furthermore, Sussman’s model predicts that participant 7 would have a positive experience with repatriation. The results show that participant 7 scored a high level of cultural flexibility; however, she had a moderate level of identity centrality. More importantly, she experienced repatriation distress.

**4.3 Results Cox**

Cox’s model is based on three variables, which are listed in first column of Table 8. Cox claims that these variables affect participants’ repatriation distress. The participants’ experiences with repatriation can be found on the last row of Table 8. Columns 2 – 8 show the levels that participant

Table 8	participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6	Participant 7
Psychological health	high	high	high	moderate	moderate	moderate	high
Functional fitness	high	moderate	moderate	moderate	high	moderate	high
Intercultural identity	moderate	moderate	moderate	moderate	home	home	moderate
Repatriation experience	negative	negative	negative	moderate	moderate	moderate	negative

Table 8: Participants’ levels Cox’s theory

scored on each variable. Psychological health varies between moderate and high as seen in Table 8. Participants with a high level of psychological health also had a rather negative experience with repatriation. Those participants who scored moderate levels on experiences with repatriation also

scored moderate on psychological health. Therefore, a correlation exists between psychological health and repatriation experiences.

Three participants scored high on functional fitness. Participant 1, for example, scored high on both cultural flexibility and sociocultural adaptation. It is evident that she immersed her full personality every time she moved. Her husband describes her as a bad leaver and a good arriver, which indicates her flexibility. Participant 7 also made a big effort to make each transition a success. She has acquired several languages and kept herself busy with participating in the host society. A moderate level of functional fitness derives from the fact that participants also scored low to moderate on cultural flexibility and had low to moderate levels of sociocultural adaptation for Sussman's model.

Determining Intercultural identity was rather problematic as it was with Sussman's model. Two participants are home favored because one participant compared moving for her second and last posting, to how people would pack their belongings to go on vacation. She "got right back into the flow" in her home culture. The other participant, number 6, explains she did not put any roots down in the several host cultures, but stuck to her home culture and expat lifestyle. She describes living in host cultures as "you are very much passing through, you very much visit a country and that is pretty much all. You don't put down any real roots." This results in a home favored intercultural identity. For the other five participants, their intercultural identity is a mixture of both host favored and home favored cultural aspects. These participants have adapted to the host cultures in different degrees and remained true to their home culture. Even though these five participants scored low on identification with the home country, it does not result in host-favored identities.

#### **4.4 Visits to the Home Country**

Visits to the home country do not redefine participants' view on their home countries. Participant went home occasionally, some even every year. The reason behind most visits was family holidays or family obligations. However, one participant went home to obtain her teacher qualifications. Even though participants visited their home countries regularly, they still had a rosy idea of what the home country would be like. Visits to the home country do not contribute to obtaining realistic expectations of the home country and do not positively affect repatriation experiences.

#### **4.5 Multiple Sojourns**

The average posting per participant is four. Only one participant had only one posting abroad. Although the other participants had several postings abroad, repatriation difficulties were still

encountered by these participants. Therefore, the adaptation pattern proposed by Bandura's Social Learning Theory is not applicable to predict repatriation experiences. Each cultural transition is a different transition. From the results, it becomes evident that each cultural transition acquires new social and cultural skills to adapt to new sociocultural environments.

## 5

**Discussion**

The present study demonstrates that cultural identity is not an effective marker to predict repatriation distress as the effect of cultural identities is unpredictable. A correlation exists between identity centrality and sociocultural adaptation; the more participants value their cultural identity the less they adapt to the host environment. The findings indicate that high stability and clarity of the self-concept do not result in positive experiences with repatriation, as suggested by Sussman's (2000). Cox's claim that those, who experience an integrated or a home-favored cultural identity pattern, encounter an easier re-adaptation process is not borne out by the current research project. Successful host country adaptation is not automatically related to successful re-adaptation during repatriation because each participant experienced repatriation difficulties.

The present study suggests that individuals' intercultural experiences play a major role in determining the participants' cultural identity. The biographical interviews indicate that participants have multiple identities, as described by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2009). Their identities consist of cultural aspects of their home countries, the host countries, and their expat experiences. Nevertheless, it does not mean that new concepts of cultural identities have replaced old concepts of cultural identities; rather, new ones have been added to the old ones. This resembles Kim's description of cultural identity. In addition, the results of the current study show that participants are aware of their cultural identity as five of the seven participants scored high levels of clarity of their self-concepts. However, these findings conflict with how participants answer the interview question: Do you consider yourself a repatriate? This question was overall answered negatively, which may indicate that participants are not aware of the alterations of their cultural identity.

Furthermore, the fact that six of the seven participants did not identify themselves with their home countries after (multiple) sojourn suggests that cultural identity is a complex concept and hard to understand. Their lack of identification with the home countries could refer to the idea that individuals become aware of cultural identity changes when they return home, as seen in Figure 1. During their return repatriates "evaluate their personal values, cognitive maps, and behavioral repertoires against the prevailing cultural norms at home. For many repatriates, they no longer find a fit between their newly formed cultural identity and that of their home culture environment" (Sussman, 2000, p. 365).

The findings of the present study also seem to be consistent with Maybarduk's overview of positive and negative experiences related to cultural transitions. Participants notice that they have become more rounded characters, each with an intercultural view of the world. They have also acquired

proficient language skills. The gained knowledge of the world and languages resemble the positive outcomes of cultural transitions described by Maybarduk (2008, p. 24). Feeling foreign in their home countries, having lost their sense of belonging to the home country, and the feeling that life in the home country has moved on is how participants of the current study describe their experience with repatriation. Some participants have gone through personal crises because they were not able to find a job abroad or were fully entrenched in the host culture. Overall, these experiences resemble the negative outcomes of cultural transitions described in Maybarduk (2008, p. 24). Maybarduk's distinction between positive and negative outcomes of cultural transitions was based on repatriation research among students. The current study provides evidence that repatriate spouses experience similar outcomes.

The present study was unable to demonstrate that cultural identity shifts can predict responses to repatriation. The reason for this outcome could be that, unexpectedly, all seven participants experienced repatriation difficulties. That six of the participants did not identify themselves with the home cultures may indicate that cultural identity shifts have taken place. However, most of participants have adapted to the host cultures by participating in local society, learning the language, and by making local friends. Sussman states that cultural adjustment involves actively anticipating to different communication strategies and relational cues, thus psychological and social-cultural modifications. This demonstrates cultural flexibility and resilience (2000, p. 360). The fact that most of the participants scored high levels of cultural flexibility indicates that the participants have gone through psychological and sociocultural adaptation. In addition, these cultural adaptations indicate, according to Sussman, suggests that the cultural identity has changed, which results in repatriation difficulties (2001, p. 109). Nevertheless, those participants who had lower levels of sociocultural adaptations also experienced repatriation difficulties. It is difficult to explain this result, but it might be related to the idea that the concept of home, that is the native cultural identity, has not changed, even though participants adapt in host cultures.

Cox has based his cultural identity patterns on Berry's (1997) acculturation theory, which was designed to predict repatriation difficulties of immigrants. Furthermore, Bandura's Social Learning Theory plays an important role in Cox's theory. The results of the present study could not provide evidence that individuals who experience integrated and home favored identity shifts have less repatriation difficulties. This inconsistency may be due to that Cox bases his theory on the acquisition of social skills in new cultural environments. The acquisition of these social skills would predict positive experiences with repatriation. The results of the present study indicate differently. All seven participants

adjusted in some extent to the host culture, but adjusting to the host culture does not mean that participants do not experience difficulties with adjusting to their home cultures. This resembles Sussman's (2002) findings that adaptation in the host culture is not directly related to the repatriation process (p. 391) and demonstrate that Bandura's Social Learning Theory is not applicable to the participants' experiences.

Lastly, it could conceivably be hypothesized that the transition to the home culture does not resemble any other previous cultural transitions. Multiple sojourns and visits of the home country during postings do not result in forming realistic expectation of the home country. Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall's claim that the more realistic expectations of the home country are formed, the easier the repatriation adjustments are made is therefore confirmed. Multiple sojourns also did not positively affect repatriation, which resembles Cox's findings (2004, p. 211).

## 6 Conclusion

The present study has given an account of repatriate experiences of trailing spouses. It set out to determine the impact of cultural identity on repatriation adjustments of trailing spouses. The investigation of the repatriation experiences of the participants of the study has shown that the impact cultural identity is highly ambiguous as both home favored and host favored cultural identity shifts experienced by participants result in repatriation distress. Therefore, it remains unanswered what exactly causes repatriation distress. It has become evident that repatriates struggle with their sense of belonging because participants' home countries identities no longer fit with present cultural identity. This corresponds with what Sussman describes: "the sojourner is now a member of a new out group within the home country, that of repatriate" (Sussman, 2000, p. 365).

Repatriation could be affected by many factors, possibly including expectations combined with cultural adjustments, but also the age of the children. Upon return, cultural identities consist of a collection of obtained cultural identity traits. Participants' identities exist of experiences of being an expatriate, a repatriate, a partner, being married, being a mother, experiencing home-favored and host-favored identity shifts, all at once. It is especially difficult to let go of the old expatriate life and reacquaint with the new native life.

Sussman's and Cox's models advocate cultural identity as the most important factor affecting cross-cultural adaptation. However, the participants' experience with repatriation did not match the intercultural identity patterns used by Sussman and Cox, or only partly. Therefore, neither model does adequately predict repatriation readjustments for the participants of this study. This is because the participants' experiences varied from the predicted values that belong to the four different identity patterns of both Sussman and Cox. Repatriation distress was detected both in home-favored as well as host-favored cultural identity patterns.

A number of limitations need to be considered. Firstly, this study has used two theoretical models to predict repatriation adjustments that are based on short-term cultural transitions. The sojourns of the present study concern long-term transitions as the average cultural transition of participants is 16 years. This is a limitation because short-term cultural transitions may require less cultural adaptation because individuals do not have the time to fully adapt to the host environment. Nevertheless, most of the participants have had multiple short-term transitions, as the average postings of the participants is four.

Secondly, most repatriation research is conducted among American corporate repatriates. Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall base their findings on American male corporate repatriates, Cox used American ex-missionaries, Sussman (2001) analyzed American managers, and Sussman (2002) tested her model on American teachers. The present study concerns female trailing spouses, some of them whom worked abroad but never represented any corporate goals abroad. The difference in participants could explain differences in repatriation experiences and thus difficulties in predicting repatriation adjustments and distress.

Furthermore, the abovementioned studies used participants who have been abroad recently, in the 1990s and early 2000s. This study involves repatriation experiences of participants whose husbands had their first postings between the 1970s and 2000. The attitude of Shell towards expatriation changed in that time. Whereas expatriates were sent in the 1970s, having no option but to go where Shell sent them, expatriates in the 1990s were able to sign up for specific postings abroad. This could explain discrepancies between the two theoretical used models. It may also be that participants remember experiences differently because of the large time gap, which could have affected their views. In addition, participants tell their stories from their memory, which means that their repatriation experiences are subjective.

Lastly, a limitation of this study is that the sample size is too small. Finding participants is nevertheless particularly challenging. Trailing spouses who would like to share their repatriation experiences are difficult to find. This may have to do with the fact that their stories are very personal, the repatriates' unawareness of repatriation distress, and conservatism toward discussing negative experiences.

Cox mentions that because repatriation research lacks a common theoretical framework and standardized research methods, a cohesive understanding of repatriation and repatriation adjustments is missing (2004, p. 202). The present study has attempted to test the contemporary methods, which lead to conflicting results of the theoretical models of Sussman and Cox. Further research should involve developing adequate research models. However, one should bear in mind that the research subjects are human beings who share their individual personal life stories. Each individual reacts and responds differently to new sociocultural environments. Therefore, research should include qualitative research among trailing spouses, either comparing their experiences with their repatriated partners or independently. Moreover, researchers can contribute to processing repatriation experiences. Being able to share experiences with others and having someone who is interested in and listens to their stories longer than ten minutes is of incredible value to the repatriates.



Concentrating on cultural identity is important because culture and identity affect human behavior, people's thoughts, and actions (Berry, 1997; Spencer – Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Being able to predict responses to cultural transition could mean that companies and organizations can anticipate to these responses, which facilitates repatriates to return home without experiencing distress as prevention is better than cure. Forming realistic expectations is also related to cultural transition responses. Multiple sojourns and visits to the home country did not provide the participants realistic views of their home countries. This can be explained by an anecdote of participant 7. Although she visited her home country several times, she did not experience any cultural changes during her visits. She states, "we were in the van, the whole time, just, not really sampling British culture." Knowing and learning in advance about what repatriates and their spouses can experience and expect could support them to form a clear view of what is going to happen. Preparing before returning home may also soften the blow of repatriation difficulties. It will not only benefit corporate goals but will ease repatriates last cultural transition.

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## Appendix A

### Transcript interview 1

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

Yah. I can. Well, it began in 1990, so we were actually away for twenty years. So, we left Sydney when our children were five and six and my youngest just started school and we were going to the UK, to London, so it was very exciting. One, because the interest rates in Australia were at that time were 18,5% and we were running out of money fast and we knew that we would be paid much better if we went overseas. But two, the opportunity to go overseas when our children were young was a wonderful opportunity and we were very excited. So our thoughts were at the time were, well certainly mine was I am not sure how my husband communicated it to me but that we would go for two or three years and return to Australia. So, I at that time, going to England had no although I had been working part-time, I was an early childhood educator I had no intention or hadn't thought of working while I was there because it was for a short turn overseas assignment. We were very fortunate that our children were placed into a, well Shell at that time owned a number of houses in the Cobban Surray area, half an hour commute for Greg into work and we were allocated our house the second night on arrival in London. Very fortunate that our very good friends had arrived five months previous and actually were allocated their house about a five-minute walk away. So, my friend Jen being a very good organizer, had suggested which school we would go to for our with kids, it was a co-educational school, it was a private school but it was, it seemed like an appropriate thing for our kids to do so that was fine. So that was the very easy transition into life in London, the language was English; you know our heritage was English. For us it was very excited I had. So those two years, I worked voluntary at the school and did some work at the school, our children some coped in that school it was a very academic school and it certainly did not suit our younger child Dycynta because she was marginally dyslectic and there was a lot of pressure on her to do spelling and the stuff she would do on the very young age she wasn't ready for. So, it was very very difficult two years on. And we were told that Greg had said he was flexible to travel and we were told that we either go to Santa Domingo or to Norway and not back to Australia. So my family, we come from a very close family, I certainly do, it was a very difficult time for me to ring my father in particular to say that we were actually further away and we ended up going to Norway. So my heart was string in all directions as of an on as they go when you are living. So, my mum always traveled so it was not a concern for her, she traveled to everywhere we lived, she came almost every year but dad had a fear of flying and although we know that, he'd loved every location we lived in he wasn't getting on that plane.

So, the decision was after the summer we were two years we went to Norway, a new country and a new country where the language wasn't English, excited but a lot more tentative at least from my part, the children being two years older we really looked at the schooling and should we put them in, we considered Norwegian school so they could learn the language but the hours the Norwegian school ran were too different to what we were used to, we looked at the British school and the international which was an American based education and our daughter who was at time nearly seven, certainly had enough of the English system and the formality of then English system and she very clearly told us that she was going to the American school, to the international school. So the decision was made on her input but it was certainly the right decision for her. So for four years we lived in Norway. Much different for me at that point of time, I was then 38, I knew that my friend well and truly entrenched in Australia and I realized if I didn't do something then that when I would go back to Australia following this assignment I would be behind in terms of being able to get a job. So, it was a personal crisis really, in that I had to struggle with that and also struggle with the fact that for the first time in my life I was identified by the wife of. And when you are in a position, like that, you lose your identity really quickly and certainly, that's what happened to me. In the meantime, though, lots of good things came out. Norwegian and I had a really good Norwegian teacher, I had private lessons, and for nearly 12 hours, a week actually it was an intensive language lessons and Brit is still a very good friend. She was able to introduce us to her network of friends and that was a very special experience for us, we were expected to entertain a lot at home, Greg was in a position where and that was also a huge pressure for me because I never had to contemplate to that previously. So all in all, a huge steep learning curve for me, I found that subsequently when I tried to volunteer at Rudolf Steiners school that volunteering is not really a work ethic in Norway that most women worked, the first social function in their home, this is about ten weeks after we arrived and the women spoke very little English would say where do you work and I immediately found quite anxious about that because one I was not allowed to work on the work permit he came in on and two I was floundering with the language so huge identity change for me. For the children, it was much much easier. It was a great school, very competitive, very welcoming, one thing we seek to do was immediately was something to go to a Norwegian after school experience, and so Christopher became a member of surface bates, which was sea scouts, and that was totally Norwegian and Cynta joined 18 months later, so subsequently they learned, the dialect so that's for them and that's how I became involved in IELTS and I trained to become a leader in a Nor Norway support group which was challenging to say the least but that was the to get my daughter to go either she wouldn't go. So, we, thinking back it was an interesting time and the faulty of that is that Greg was promoted to The

Hague, we were told to go back to Australia, we came back to look at schools in Australia and six weeks later that was revoked and had a promotion to The Hague. By that stage I was able to work and I just started a job in an international pre-school teaching, part-time, so I was very determined not to let go of that so that was a very difficult time in marriage because he already moved and wanted us all to come and we were all entrenched in live in Norway. So Greg always tells me I am a very bad leaver but a good arriver, so I don't know if you've moved much but moving from country to country in another unexpected way I had to come in terms with the fact that I wasn't going to work for money I didn't I honestly I didn't the stammer to do that as well as to ran a family to accommodate the needs of our family back in Australia. And that was a personal thing. Having said all that, Shell in 1992, set up a wonderful support network for partners and I was involved in the foundation support group in Stevana in Norway that was with two Dutch friends and a British, two British friends, so that set me on the round to truly understand and embrace mending my relationship with the expat and sub sequentially I was asked in The Hague to do chair what was called Outpost services and their central office is based in The Hague. I chaired that for a number of years and also with a group some of the group the women who set up in Norway and we set an international women's forum called Connecting Women and that's going strong in The Hague today. So that was for people, it was an English speaking forum for women in and out of the workplace but who wanted to connect with one another and network with one another. And the significant proportion Dutch repatriates involved which quite exciting. So all in all I keep myself really buzzy. Still not being paid for all of this but I lost interested in being paid after I while because I, as long as my skills were dialed I was constantly I learned to use the computer and did some speaking in public and things like that so it became easier to move. Now once that we made that move to The Hague, the children started secondary school in the American school I knew we weren't going back to Australia while Greg was staged with Shell, we weren't going back to Australia. So, well I came in terms with that and so previously moved on to England, that is when our son was sixteen and had his first serious relationship with his Dutch girlfriend and was in no mind to make a move. So three months previously before our moving he was not moving, so it was a terrible time. Because he knew that, he could use me or trying to use me as a tool to persuade his father that he could stay in The Hague. He had the support of his school because the loved him, he had the support of his friends and supportive family friends but his father and especially me wanted him to move. So, he did move, and once he moved he adapted rather quickly, he spend his last two years of school in England. We were by then in Buckinghamshire, a different location to where we had been previously and in The Hague's four years, so that was four years on and then we were back in The Hague for another six. Now, in that time in England, I continued to

work with expats both with an organization called information service that had been set up in London to provide support for international families and also with the Outpost London network and started to write some policies on expats and doing a bit of research but by that time Outpost was going on for a couple of years, five, six years and were reviewing that at that point. So certainly keeping very much involved in that series of lines of time and also started an art-history group because a friend of my had graduated, she had done her PHD in art history and I wanted to learn something about that so we initiated a group that she would come and speak to the group and we would go and visit galleries and museums in London and around in Europe. So that was exciting. Having said all this, the decision we made when we arrived in Norway was that we would go home regularly so that our children would know their passport country was Australia. And, so we went home at least once a year and sometimes twice a year. And I felt it was very important, we made sure they met their cousins and extended family, with friends in different locations around Australia so they got to know their own country as well. So, that was essential for me as well as for them. It was certainly the reason when Christopher finished his final year in school, they both did international bachelorettes, but when he was given the opportunity to stay in London, but he chose to go back to the university of Melbourne and two years on our daughter decided to do the same. We were very fortunate that they did chose to go back home to the university. I always remember something that my Norwegian teacher Beret said to me she said, "It doesn't matter where you live while your children are at school but when they do choose to go home to the university because they are likely to meet the person they marry over there and certainly that's what happened. But technically, I think it is important, our son did his extended essay for IB on cross-cultural communication and for him is really was a soul-searching process to find out about his identity. He was at that age like all of us on 16 were like to find out where he belonged and they have this term called third-culture kids and many of them marry and go on in that sort of life and I suspect for Christopher, he really was to find out about what it was like to be Australian. In fact that's what he said to us when he left so and he came back and one of the funny stories he tells us and a year after he had been back, he was at a college, a residential college at the university and some of his friends invited him up to the pub and he put on, what he calls he put on his European clothes so he got quite dress up to go to the pub and of course they were in their jeans, wearing flip-flops and looking squeaky and I think I haven't seen him in anything but since except for when he goes to work. So it was a cultural cringe for him to return and something he hadn't quite got hold of or his head around when he first went back to Australia. So we lived overseas for 6 years when the kids were back here. So that was great for them because they could come over for holidays, and they loved The Hague so they loved being back whenever they had the opportunity to do

so. I continued working with expats that I became a member of the expat achieve center that you know of and chaired that for a number of years before we relocated. Now in 2009, the senior changed dramatically, there was no longer a position for Greg, and it was a very very difficult time for him personally. Also because our daughter had been diagnosed with a very serious disease. She was already in Australia of course. So for a number of months in 2009 we were in no-man's-land not knowing what the future held and it was pretty glazy/ghastly. We knew we were going back to Australia and that wasn't very important anyway. There is always good with bad and bad with good so although we were leaving Shell in an utmost unpleasant situation we were going home where we needed to be at that time. And at the same time, her wonderful man husband proposed to her and they were married three months after the diagnosis so we came home and two weeks later, we were hosting a wedding, mainly family and friends but it was official. So here we were, back in Australia, we did had a house to come back to, we had actually two houses to come to but one needed renovation in Melbourne, that is where we are right now. Well, it was a huge change, I mean Greg immediately got back to work he was asked invited to work as a consultant in India. So he started that pretty soon after he left Shell and fell into that traveling two weeks a month to India straight which is a 12-hours commute I had to get my head around that as well. So I was left with trying to do some home making here and being feeling good being back close to family I think struggling with the logistics of our relationship and how that was paying out, had to organize three properties that we owned and we renovated two and the third was really close to where my mum lived and she wanted us as close to her as much as possible although she very independent. So my heart strings pulling in all directions and it took I think probably two years to start accepting we were here to stay. I did have the option to go to India if I wanted to but I did not have the energy to do that. I've done that plenty of times and my time was to be at home. Meanwhile Cynthia improved, she stabilized, and she was actually working full-time and as well as Chris happily married and doing very very well. So, what did I do now? I joined the group Support Group for Women that was a support group here in Melbourne and went to Bangladesh on two occasions to look at that project and support that in any way we could. It was a freely related project so we couldn't pursuit that for very long but we did that for two and a half years here in Melbourne. And the other thing I uninvertly became involved and was an art society supporting artist promoting Australian flora and fauna and that was in the place of my birth, where my mum lived it was up in the country and I said I would help but after a year I took on the presidency and ran it for three years and festival for three years and did me really in actually I never done that before. It is very challenging working with artists to say the least. Although I made so wonderful friends in that. As a consequence of that, my darling husband he thought, he decided



to buy some land and on that land, he built a life art museum, so that is the next step and that is what we are very involved in at the moment. He had to become involved and we now have a board of directors and he is now on the board as expat, we're looking for funds and have this brochure out and talk to lots of people we have sub gained local support from the government and we're still in the infancy of that. That was all inspired by the way by a conversation I had with a Dutch chap who lives near you Bram Brouwers and he runs the artists for nature foundation, you can Google that in the Netherlands and he and I met accidentally, I think I went to an exhibition and I met him and I was very inspired by what he was doing and he actually has a group of artists and they sign up and go to different conservation areas around the world and spend two weeks, and they draw, they paint, they interact with the local community and many times they produce full books out of those experiences. So if Bram was really behind my thoughts when I decided to get involved in this project in Australia. Quite different from what I have had done else I had done. In terms of expatriates here, I haven't had the inclination to go to any support groups are any groups that are set up here. I have been invited but I have been neither went to one or two. I do have a network of Shell people that live here, one or two that I see on a regular basis, and we are really close friends. That's been very important to me. I have a new network of friend through associations but certainly through this art society so living I here and there I am not settled in one place so it is challenging while Greg is still working in India. Meanwhile our daughter, well this is interesting, this year she, her health did deteriorated and in June she had a kidney transplant and that made me live in Melbourne for a number of months and she was in the hospital for five to six weeks and then home but regularly going back to the hospital, so I've been a care for many many time together with her husband and so that's been interesting because I had to commit to, I was able to commit to different groups, to go to Yoga regularly and going to knitting regularly and doing things like that so that was very good for my soul, so that's a really interesting aspect of her sickness but she is recovering if so please to know and she is doing very well. How old are you?

So anyway, it's been an interesting year, I think next year I keep saying my New Year's resolutions will be to keep some sort of consistency and try to look after myself. I've been diagnosed with something called monies disease which is depicting my hearing and also affects my balance so the Yoga and plenty of sleep is what I need and so I have to make sure I don't overdo it but as you can hear I pretend to overdo it in many ways. Very busy, I am a very good networker that is my strength but my undoing as well. I love people, I love finding out about people and I learn to commit to many other things at the time. That is where we are.

I do have some other questions for you. Even though you already told me so many things. About reintegration, you say you're a good networker and keep really busy, do you think that helps with the reintegration?

*Look I do I think it is very easy not to do that. You go into a phase where you go into your own cocoon and think that is a really important because it is a reflective phases and it was for me a reflective phase and I really wanted to take stock of the person I was, the experiences I had and try to make sense at it back home. The thing you learn, and you learn it when you up in the country we have a country house and we have been involved with wildlife art society, I cannot talk at all about my life as an expat despairs no effect. And when I do, people glare their eyes over and it doesn't really matter. So that's something you have to come in turns with. Networking in regards to finding parts and things your interesting in is very important, though in fact you have made the first step; nobody ever makes that first step for you. So you do have to reach out, you might do that in various forms and ways, and I am lucky that I have a network of ex Shell people who I am really fond of here and that did got me involved in different activities. It is vastly different to being an expat in a community, a really defined community when you are overseas. And I think that is something you have to accept. I am with family, my family's all traveled except here didn't travel except for myself, they just visited me. So that's wonderful and they understand, very much so and that's really important. I think yeah if you can, I think it's very important to reflect on your time but I think it's very important to look for things that may interest you, and to reach out and become a new persona, that's the great thing about this life. You can just create you a whole new person that you want get and do it in a different way*

J: Do you consider yourself because you haven't lived in other places ever since you went home to Australia? Do you really consider yourself a repatriate or are you still actually an expat staying in one position?

F: No I'm definitely Australian but I love to travel. I was in your country in May. I think we will always travel. For example, next year we've organized a boat of 18 people of whom of four, six are coming from Australia, five are from Australia and the rest coming all over the world and that's our network. So Greg and I have always created opportunities for our friend from all over the world to get together and will is something exciting, we go to the Galapagos next September. So we do see opportunities, to reengage with that world that was very important to us the twenty years we were abroad. The mundane thing is

no matter where you live you still have to do your washing and you do those everyday things and it is not whether you're an expat or not. So, yeah that's a good question I, part of me really realizes how important that life is and you sort of forget that as well and you seem to think in reality nobody wants to know about that is something in the dark and past and you have to move on. Life is like. Illness, she had to go through this huge operation but she has to move on get on with her life. And you sort of do that. She's married to a man who first told was in Switzerland and he is working for an international company so they could well travel again and she really would love to do that, they both want that. Our son has married a lady who travels internationally for her work and although he's not, he is with an international company and has spent many summers in the Pacific Islands where with her parents and her father worked voluntary over there so they've all been, both married to people whom may encouraged them further on so I think that is some much part of your identity and you can't let go of it but it is not easy to keep reminding yourself of it as well you just get on with it, coping with it. The language is the same but you still you still find nuances you think gosh I haven't heard that before or you've missed twenty years of singers. For example, my sister loves this particular chap that's very popular over here and I missed his whole career so I got no idea of who he is. So you now, there are little gaps in history and the kids got huge gaps of course.

J: Did you receive any training at all? Also with the departures to the different countries but also with coming home?

No. no training at all. Well actually, when we lived in different countries we did. One of the best things we did is was a course called Understanding the Dutch when we first went to the Netherlands in 1999 and it was a two-day course and it what it carried, it was done by the, what's the institution called in Amsterdam?

J: I think Koninklijke Instituut voor de Tropen.

Yes, I think that is the one, they facilitated it.

One of the great things was they made us think of our own values and once you identified your own values, which we hadn't really done before, you could then look at the values of your observation of what you were seeing around you. That was a great thing to do. They had some actors, I remember an actor pretend the issues you find difficult to comprehend when you come from your country and that was really really well done. In Norway, we had an introduction we had to do a two-day course of living in Norway but my teacher was instrumental and learning the language was certainly instrumental in

learning the language there. And I did do an intensive course in Dutch, which I should have done three weeks as it would have given me more confidence to handle it and I can speak it a little bit. Yeah I was just lazy over there.

J: Dutch is a really difficult language; it has many exceptions and rules

Well that is copped out. If I persevered for another week because I'm certainly thinking in Dutch I may have persevered the confidence I may have the confidence to speak it. So certainly, we did the private lessons of reading in Dutch, learning about the history of Dutch, so that's been great. We have some wonderful friends who are Dutch. So that's was really important. So no, coming back to Australia, you're just expected to be Australian and I think that what's really difficult. Fortunately, for me, I worked with a lot of repatriates, I've read a lot of books about repatriation, and people say it is the hardest move you make. I am not sure about that. Australia is also geographically isolated from where we lived and that is for me probably harder any living anywhere else. The fact that it is a 22-hour flight back to Europe and it's not that long but geographically it seems a long way and it's evening here and it's daylight there.

J: it feels further away than any other place.

Yes and it is, it is. It is pretty well it is. We are very fortunate that our friends have traveled over here. We've made opportunities for them to come. That's very important to us to share our world here with our friends from Europe. And they are honestly very special friends from Europe and the States. And they are lifelong friends I am, we had some here but they are not the same, it's just different, you know. You make very special friends when you're in a community, an expat community because of the intensity of of survival, you know. And I think we had easy assignments, people have done Nigeria and Syria, that's much more challenging in the compounds. Yeah I am also I only gravitate towards positive people and I really try not to gravitate toward negative people and I've learned that in Angora. I find I am feeling highly affiliate, I would things of trouble with me and then, that wouldn't work so you know I only communicate with people who are very similar in mind and philosophy as me.

J: well that's a good idea actually. I take that advice from you. I was wondering. Can you tell me a little bit more about your stay in the Netherlands? And also what did you think of Holland? And the Dutch people?

Well I can tell you, I cried and cried when I left Norway. I was given some much to that country, I learned the language, I was a fluent speaker I loved the rugged mountains, I loved the freedom, I loved all of

that. Having said that it wasn't an easy country to live in. in fact, hard to learn the local people and I was only fortunate to learn them through my teacher and through sea scouts. Having done that, we arrived in Holland and we lived in Den Haag, which is right in the center of town, and two nights later, out of our windows down the canal was a band playing and they were playing Rolling Stone music and we thought wow this is fantastic aren't we lucky, we are right in the center of things, it was so exciting and so it was like coming back to civilization. You know, Norway is beautiful in its isolation and it's like Australia like that. And coming to the Netherlands was balancing and full of life, diversity and interesting places to see and interesting places to visit, so that was very exciting. Certainly, for our children, that's the highlight of their time away living in the Netherlands. I loved where we lived, I loved being out on my bike. And this is one of the things I found interesting because it is one of the density places of the world, high density but you could find your open spaces by getting on your bike, just riding and I think that's just a wonderful wonderful thing about the Netherlands. Frustrated about the traffic and trying to get out in the weekends or anything like that, I think that is horrendous. I didn't look really far into your politics although I could read about your politics. I think it's, I didn't really got involved with that part of my life, met some wonderful Dutch people. I found it important to maintain a balance between meeting Dutch people and learn about the expatriate experience. I was lucky to learn that through the organizations I was involved with. So I think, The Hague and subsequently, we went six years after that we bought a house the second time. We still own a house in the Netherlands because it's so terrible over there, you can't sell anything but we own a house. We bought it two doors down from where we rent it so our neighbors are still the same neighbors. And they are very very good friends and they've been out to Australia twice and great friends. Their daughter was with us for two months this year. So yeah, I felt very much at home when I returned this year, everything felt so familiar. I don't know, I love going out where you are and going further out, what's the name of the national park going out from Utrecht, you keep going out?

J: Veluwe ?

Yes, loving going out there, once you go out there. I think that's really a beautiful part of the Netherlands as sailing up north. We had friends with a yacht, sail with them. I'm forgetting the names, but you know up there in Friesland. I learned to love wherever I've been but the Netherlands is certainly unique, I think the Dutch are very creative people, very industrious people. I have to say they are very special people; I really have to say that. I loved having Sophie, our neighbors daughter, she's 19 she came a year ago she came over and she spend two months with us and it was really lovely because I could see quite a

different person to an Australian 19-year old. I think very freethinking, very independent. She was definitely very independent, free-spirited girl, keen to try everything, and to explore and very positive. So yeah, I think it really sums it up really.

J: What do you miss the most about the Netherlands or don't you miss anything?

Let me think, what do I miss?

J: It could be something like hagelslag or so

No, I never really like hagelslag. The food, I don't miss the food actually. I think, I suppose I miss the long summer nights, although it is almost summer here, the nights are coming up but it is still dark by 5.30 pm so I miss those lovely beautiful evenings where you could be out till midnight. It is just beautiful out there, but they are rare but they are very special when they come. I miss riding my bike, I can ride my bike here but I haven't got on it. No, we haven't got cycle paths as you got, so I miss that. What else do I miss? I miss the spontaneity of the people I think we are far more over governed I think you are over governed but I think that we are very over governed in this country, you know there are laws for everything, you know, health and safety laws, it just drives you up the wall. So I think that sort of aspect, you've got a bit more spontaneity about you. One of the stories they've told us when we were doing the Dutch course was we were all very upset about people having their dogs pooing at your front door. You know, they said to us, you know they won't never; they won't allow their dog to do that in their own neighborhood. She said, people will take them to them to another neighborhood and you had to laugh about that you know. People get really indignant and it doesn't matter where you were, you have to take up that dog poo, fair enough and that's very very true. And that has improved in The Hague, certainly the first time I lived in The Hague, my kids slipped on it and it was right out front of our door, we lived right on the street and one of my friends who lived there she set up a whole foundation to try to range a war against this because she had young children and would go to the playground and found this dog poo in the sand pits and she decided to put Dutch flags on every bit of poo that she found in the street. Yes, she did and she got quite well known for doing that. I don't know if it made a huge difference but she certainly made a point, for people taking responsibility for picking it up. So that's one thing but I don't miss that, I don't miss the dog poo. I miss the canals; I miss those beautiful days in the canals in the water. I think the water is a calming effect for all the people in the Netherlands. I think that is very very special and your history, we don't have that history, I miss that history and the beautiful old buildings and your art and I miss the Maurtiz House because we were around the corner from the Maurtiz House,

just being able to walk there and looking at those beautiful paintings there. That sort of thing you can't get at all here. Other than a truant visit or something like that, that's what I miss.

J: I can imagine. I have a few more questions actually. The comment you made earlier on in the conversation about your husband calling you a bad leaver and good arriver. What does he really mean by that?

He means, I think he means, he means that I embraced living where ever I was 110% 120% and that is because my personality is such that I think I want to make it work and I want to be very inclusive of live and want to make the most of it. As I was talking about it before, reaching out to people and finding out, I like finding out how things work and I like particular the culture. One point in Norway when I was coming into terms with the language and the culture and finding it difficult when people wouldn't say hello to you when you walked past, that sort of things. I decided I would call myself a social anthropologist because I felt that we really had to move close to the culture and try to make head and tail and try to understand it and I embraced that where ever I lived and whether it was through the children's school or through the community, that's what I did so and by doing that I immersed my whole personality, myself into that so when I had to relinquish that and knowing that life would never be the same, I will never have this experience again. It won't be the same when I go back and visit. We've been there, we've done that we have to move on. That's when I really grieved and found it difficult to leave. And I can cry about that now when I thought about that. I think it was very very difficult to leave. And having said that, coming to a new country, although there was a bit of a lull, there was the expectancy that it would be great and that we go through this euphoric time, everything is new and you're excited and you have a bit of dip really. I didn't experience those dips so much, because I really saw opportunities where I would become. I am very much an opportunist and those things didn't really affect me so much although I was a great arriver as I looked at the differences and accepted the differences and tried to get our family together as quickly as possible in a cohesive way. That's what he meant, I think.

J: did you also have, you just said that you have a euphoric state and then you have going into some kind of dip. You didn't really have that, going to the different countries, did you have it coming home?

I think in Norway I possibly did. I think there was a time after nine months I felt very very frustrated. I remember Greg wanted me to open something at the refinery that he refinery manager, he wanted me to speak Norwegian and it was just like, I'm not going to do that and I absolutely refused. I knew I got do

it I just decided I wasn't. I think it was to do with my identity; I didn't want to be seen as his wife and his wife doing his things and his job and in his workplace. So I stubbornly to do it. And I remember, I think then I can feel it now, the whole sort of feeling of, it was certainly related to my identity. What I was, where I was. Then I didn't do it and then I felt a bit of strength and character and he had to do it and then I got over it. And then I thought I can control my own destiny if I want to and so yeah. I think that's probably what that was related to. I can't remember going to the same when we went to the Netherlands and I certainly can't when we went to England. So I certainly do when we went to Norway but that may have to do the stage of life I was in as well.

J: do you have any advice or tips for people now who are abroad and about to go home, go home to their home country?

I think not to have too many expectations, thinking that it's going to be easy. I think that it's very, inevitably you will make comparisons and it's a challenge to even go into the supermarket and see the price of things for example, or to work out things used to be cheap in this country but they are not any longer and of course your whole scenario with wages and things have changed because you're not on an expat salary anymore, I think although it hasn't affected us too much. I can be very poor when you come back and realize you have to budget, you have to live within your means and you can't travel to you want to in any time and so there's lots of things. I think you have to come home really with an open mind, I think you sometimes do suppress and that's really important suppress these whole emotions and you don't express them to yourself and your family. It was interesting when Dycynthia was going into the hospital, she and Christopher and I were all sitting around the table and Chris said it is time for team Loo and the gang and we hadn't said that, the last time we said that was probably when we moved to England, you know you really have to get together as a family and really unit and support one another when you try to adjust to a new country. So that doesn't go away when you go home and that's really important when you come home and I don't think that we appreciated that enough when our kids came home. You know, we just expected them to get on with it and they did they found it really tough and was really lucky to have Chris support her but for Chris who is a much more reflective sort of kid, he at the time found it really hard and I think it must have been really tough. It's not easy and not having too much expectations and getting on with your life and start something new and different. I think it's time to say here I am and I am at this point in my life and what do I really want to do and get on with that. And in that way, you will meet new people and a friend you will relate to as something new in your life. Yeah, it's not easy, but you can do it. Still travel, it is important you can. It's important to go back where you've



been. For me it is, I have many friends who never go back to where they've lived and they've gone back to the States or the UK, but for me who put so much energy and life into where she lived it's really important to do that.

J: do you have anything else you would like to add or say ?

Well one thing we found when we set up the expat it was for Dutch expats this burden of unburden of life and I think for several years we just listen to their story, they had someone who would listen to their story. I validated their whole life and I think you can underestimate the importance of people diarizing their whole life and giving records or sharing their records or sharing their lives with others. I think that's why the strength of the expat archive center is enormous. The potential is enormous, but many a times many a day we wander and we would sit for two hours with you and it was like a counseling session and it was really really important and I think that t I have always been writing dairies and written a book on traveling and I think it is really really important to write down your experiences and bits and pieces. And people that brought in their photos and talk about those photos they became totally immersed in that life. Because as you know and your mum and dad have experienced, you come back and people don't give a stuff, they don't really care and that's why you need something like Outpost or something like archive center to acknowledge that life you had and certainly with Dutch repatriates that was very obviously particular who had lived in Asia who had a lot of support in their home and they come back and you have to pay for it or you do. It's the same here; you have to do your household and housekeeping. And you have to find time to do that. That's something little but it can undo you, really. And it really creates a lot of tension and it is really good if you interview the partners who are working. For Greg, my husband, going to India was a great revelation for him; one they acknowledge his contribution and his expertise, and that really important. He's found it really challenging to reintegrate in Australia and found new positions that he could actually work in, whether they would be born position or the university because he hasn't got a network here and that the other thing really important to think about, to know the don't have a network, they have lived abroad, often we have something called the poor puppy syndrome and we strongly who are you anyway because you moved overseas and you're no better than us and that is very prevalent in this country. So his name is not known here and he's been recognize by the government and that was really important.

## **Transcript interview 2**

J: Start with your preparation of the first posting and walk me through your postings.

I need to begin in 1984, but my husband was working for shell. He just got his first job at shell and that meant spending four months a basic training course in den haag. I decided to go with him. We were married at that time. From at the end of four month period. He was given his first posting. That turned out to be in den haag. I was very happy about that because I was able to find a job. But then the very last minute they said to us we changed our minds, you're going to assen. And all the people in the training course said I go anywhere in the world except for Assen. We had this awful image in our mind of what it was going to be like. We weren't looking forward to it, to be honest. I need to go back a bit because in preparation, before we were on this four months training . the kit in Amsterdam, for intercc training. We were about 30 40 of us. That was the first year they invited partners along. That was big depa, a positive step I would say. I was just a fantastic course. I remember sitting there, ow I can do this. One day I want to do this. We did that icc training. And I am looking back as a repatriate for sixteen seventeen years. That set me up very well for a life on the move. Very good preparation. Just even knowing the basics of culture shock and of what you experience if you go through a culture shock helped me every time I moved. Because you don't get any better in moving, you get better at packing, and planning but you don't actually y get better at psychological side of moving. Because it is a process that you have to go through at time. I did I feel I constantly went back to the training through the years and found it helpful. At the time I left Scotland, I was doing career guiding counseling. I knew it was going to difficult if not impossible to find a job in the Netherlands. So we had a kind of a five-year plan that if we were not happy in five years we would do something different. That is how we approached, we had a five-year plan through our lives. Checking if everything was good. SO the time in Den Haag was fantastic, the four months were amongst the most exciting in my life. The Dutch, half of the course, they stuck together and we didn't see them at all. But the rest of all stuck together, we were all European, so many languages it was just an exciting time for me as a Scottish girl. If I look back, getted to know French people were German of sorts of European people end their partners. We had to handle this move to Assen, it was difficult actually. We spend 2,5 years there and it was probably my least favorite posting. It wasn't bad. I wasn't an ideal for us in many aspects it was quite remote and my husband is a mountaineer. That was quite difficult. The big problem was finding a job, for me. That was really tough. So we I think after six months I could not find a job. I was doing so volunteering work in the Drents bureau that but then, yeah we were thinking maybe I should go back to Scotland and try some commuting thing. But as you know, Assen isn't really easy for a commute. We went on for a bit longer, and one day suddenly I saw this sign in English. We landed in Holland I expected everything in Dutch. I had my degree is in German, it was not so difficult for me to land. Having said that, you can't learn the

language that fast working in a working environment. That's not easy. Yeah, driving along. Saw this sign, English international, and said what do you do if you do it in English, can I have a job? They were teaching English as a second language, mainly to shell people I just begged, I begged, please please try me. I don't have any qualification. He tried me and then ok, teaching as a second language degree. I went back to Edinburgh and stayed with family, got my qualification, got back and was a lot better after that. I worked part time and was far more enjoyable. I actually then, so then, 198. There were only three people, 3 expats who were working in Assen out of hundreds. It was difficult. Yes, I spend 2,5 years there and then we were moved to Melbourne in Australia where we spend 4 years. From there we moved to Bangkok in Thailand for 2,5. From there to newplummers in new Zealand for 6 years. And then we decided to come home.

J: Where is home?

Home at the moment is 13 miles west of Aberdeen, in the north east of Scotland. We live in a small village.

J: Little like Assen?

Much smaller, more like villages like Rolde.

J: Did you have a job every posting? Or just one in Holland

Yes, I did every posting. I was importance for me. I have a desire to have I knew I couldn't have a career in the traditional sense of the work. But I did feel I could go which I did. Basically, I was teaching English in every location. That the perfect move in my career.

J: How long have you been back?

We've been back 13 years and can you tell me something about the return home? Preparation, process of moving, process of reintegration?

There was no preparation. Shell was very good in given that first course. But it was a trial to give a repatriation course but there was none. I knew it was going to be difficult because the Dutch on the course that repatriation that it can be the most difficult move. I was expecting it to be difficult and it turned out to be really difficult. It was awful, awful. It was awful for me, it was awful for my daughter. She was 12 years old. The boys in the family, my husband had no problems and my son who was 8 at the time was fine. So it was the girls who struggled.

J: Is there something specific which you can tell me about, exemplifies part of the struggle?

I think one of the things that is wonderful of being an expat is the excitement/it's exciting. Coming back here was slightly exciting because you know our family and we all had come back. It was nice to think we can drop in now in our families, we can come and live in a fortnight. That feeling goes very quickly. In this country work really hard, compared to the work life in Australia and new Zealand. Or a country like Norway. We more like you. We work very hard. The work life balance is not great here. We struggled with that as well. People are just focused on their jobs, they are tired and don't really have a lot of time for social side of life. So was one thing. I just felt foreign. That was the main thing, I felt foreign. Here I was back in my home country feeling like a foreigner stranger and I never felt that when we came back on home leaves, for our holidays. I never felt it. That's interesting. Coming back living is a whole different ball game.

J: Why was that do you think? Was that because you knew it was going to be difficult.

J: Maybe was it your expectation which was not up to standard?

No, I wasn't expecting to feel foreign. And while doing the icc training I sort of like you got your cup and let's say this cup is empty. And you set of on your adventures. In this cup is poured some Dutch, I think I can chose the things alike of that culture and add it to my own, and into that a bit of Australian the bits that I like and then into that goes Thai and new Zealand. So actually, the cup is completely different to what it was when it left. I see it like fewer Scott And now I'm not I'm something else, I'm a hybrid of different cultures all stuck together. It was the hybrid that was not adjusting very well. We had come from New Zealand, I dropped of the kids for school in the morning and then I would go the local café so I could hear the boys of the waitress who came from New Zealand that made feel at home. I was quite strange. I suppose the thing is, you come back and because we are living in a small village, I think it made it harder. As in Aberdeen, we would be part of the expat community. We chose to come back and live a Scottish life. So it was not to put the kids in an international school we didn't want them to be somewhere their friends were leaving. We wanted them to go to school where 10 years from now they could come back and the same friends also coming back to this village. Had I gone to Aberdeen, thing would have been much much easier. We small village and by the end of the first week, nobody invited us for dinner and that was really strange. When you are on an expat posting, almost the next day, you're invitations you keep going out of their way to make you feel at home. We had fluted back into normal life. Normal life relationships go much much slower. When you are on international assignment, you

have to speed your relationship building up. Otherwise, you'll be gone. So before, you really make a deep friendship with somebody. You end up people telling things you normally tell in the normal. I'm using the word normal, that is a bad word to use, but I can't think of anything else. Yeah in the sort of conventional Society. Relationships, Its just different. It was For a long time to establish friendships in this village

J: Was that one of the most difficult things, getting your social life back?

Yes, I probably think so. Also, because I realized that cause such a high percentage of women work, in Scotland, it is one of highest in Europe. There was nobody. There was literary was no one to socialize with. So that's why I really quickly thought when I thought I have to join them and find something to do. So I went back to the university actually a year after I came back. And after that I , I stuck to the business intercultural training. I think once I got into the study and into the job things improved dramatically. It took me 2 years or 3 years to feel settled. A long time.

J: You been away for 6/7 years. That is a long time

I'm sure the longer you are away the harder it can be. Not for everyone you see, the boys in my family were fine and didn't really suffer. It's about personality as well. I think when you got the corporate culture, you have juggle with two cultures. People with the corporate culture that adds some buffer to the culture they move into. A you got a purpose, you are the person working and moved there for a job, you have a job, you can identify with the corporate culture. Where ever you go in the shell world. I do think it is a lot easier who a person who had the job. Moved around m, much for the accompanying partner.

J: Other things you can name you found difficult?

I found wanted to come neither to my family I found it really claustrophobic. Actually, it is probably different nowadays because we have things like Skype and remember we were going back to a time there was not Skype. We had like a weekly phone call from Australia and New Zealand. And you save up the most important things and that is what you talk about. I think my mum first phoned me about 4, 5 times to say nothing. Just because she could. Very quickly found that very suffocating. I don't want to know her neighbor or this or that. And I felt bad, I felt really guilty about that. But you live a very different life as an expat. You get away from all the interruptions of everyday life.

J: Do you consider yourself a repatriate? Do you feel completely back home?

Not, no, well I am very settled, but I think one final posting before my husband retires. He is 55 he could actually retire now, but I think. I certainly like one more posting somewhere. I would never, having said that, I would never give up my house. My home, my village. I do love it here. I don't regret coming back, you know it was the right decision. A good decision at a good time. It was just hard. I do think if we could have had some sort of repatriation workshop that would have been beneficial. People underestimate the difficulty of going home.

J: Was it a really thought through decision or inspired by shell, you have a job back at home?

I was very carefully thought out decision because there were a lot of factors, actually. The first factor to choose to go home, before then shell policy was to move people from a to b to c with no choice or what so ever. At some point, 20 years they changed that policy and allowed you to apply for a posting. For the first time it became possible to actually choose where we might want to go. Then on top of that, a few things happened. Our daughter was 12 years old, she was coming up for secondary school, she already was in 3 different education systems. She was going to have to go old girl school in new Zealand and neither of us had had an experience ourselves. We didn't really want that for her. Then I had a dream, where my dad came to the door of my house, I didn't have a house e in this point. In my dream, I had a home it was somewhere here. I came down, ran down, opened the door and it was my dad and it was so over with joy to see him because he dropped in. I woke up the feeling of disappointment was immense. And I thought this is what chance you have, you cannot have someone dropping in for coffee. I thought wooo maybe it is time to go home. And a few days later we actually got a phone call from my husband's sister and just been with Ms. Yeah. So you know it's like some all factors all combined to think just give it a go and see how it goes on. No, let go home permanently and see if we like it.

J: Again, a five year plan?

Yeah.

J: Referring to Scotland as home. Did you always consider it home?

I thought very patriotic, even though we were amazing travelers, we are in that sense more like the Dutch, although we traveled to every corner of the world very strong sense of home, here in Scotland. However, I always felt I had two homes. Home I was living and I had had my Scottish home. And actually, it always interests me, we had some other friends and they had two children the same age as my children. They had a house back home in England and their boys all was, they didn't refer as home, they

referred to England as home, the family always referred to England as home. Now very early on when we got children we actually made a decision that to us it was crazy to teach that their home was a somewhere they weren't even born and would only four weeks a year in . it was really important to create a home for them and that should be where ever we were living. That is what we did. We always wanted the children to think that where ever we live is home and the place that we visit was mum and dad's home. That's where granny lives and that is not their home. It is for my son definitely for my daughter. She is the older one. Very much an international child. Third culture. My sons interested he is arrives here age 8, and he is no 28. He is not Scottish in the way a lot of Scotts are but anti-English for example. He never said . but when you hear it, you absorb it. But things absorbed, maybe we got their late enough. That is one difference from the average Scottish person that makes him a bit different.

J: What was your idea of Scotland when you were away, before coming back. Did you have an idea of what Scotland would like or did you just not think about it?

I knew what Scotland looked like. I was coming home every year. I very romantic idea of Scotland in their heads. I would fly back from Australia, I would get in the plane in London, heading north to Scotland. I know looking out of the window and knew we were in Scotland and I would cry. Scots are sentimental people. I think we have a similarity with Dutch people but there are also some major differences. I think that is one of them, we are very very sentimental people. We love it.

J: Did that meet your expectations?

I think there were a lot of things that disappointed me. That was not merely repatriation. It is more that it is your own country and you feel it should be better . for example, my son played cricket from the age of five, he arrived here at age eight. I tried to find some cricket. They said, Children aren't able to play cricket when they are nine. And I was like I watched he play for three years and he can play cricket. So that's when you say what is wrong with this stupid useless country. Not much wonder and unhealthy. Multiply by that with lots of little things that happen when you are in that second stage of culture shock you become very irritable. You always compare and contrasting what you have, in nz they are much more, much better. It is such a curious thing as you know on another level I just love my country.

J: What was your image of Holland?

I never been before until I arrived there. I found a really busy that was a big problem for me. I mean there where we live in Scotland it is empty. Much emptier than Drenthe or Friesland. Much emptier. I

just found it quite busy. The communication style I struggled with because it is very direct. I can say that now looking back because I understand what it is all about. At the time, I thought a lot of Dutch people were very rude in the way they communicated. Another thing I found negative is that we moved to assen a lot of the mentality people did things in big groups, all organized, groups and groups. People liked to do things in groups. We are the exact opposite. We try to get away from people. When we go out for a walk here, our idea of lovely walk is not to see anybody else. That is a cute walk. Or when you see someone in the distance, we need lots of space because we have lots of space. So that was a problem. But what I liked the fact that society functions very well , it is very ordered cause it has to be. And of course, with time, 16 years abroad that we lived in Holland, we made a lot of Dutch friends and massive contact with Dutch people through shell. Some that really understand Dutch culture a lot better. That is now coping better with the Dutch communication because I understand it. I liked straight forwardness of people. And I think that there are a lot of similarities between the scots and the Dutch. Proletarian and Calvinistic, we work hard, then I think there is a difference. Dutch are very stoic, strong and non-sentimental. The scots are very sentimental and soft.

Three other women working. Several hundred expats partners. Most of them did not work.

J: Did you stick together with those three?

I don't think I would say we stick together we were all working doing our things. I found it difficult to fit with the expatriate lifestyle it didn't fit with what I needed form life. A lot of the expatriate would go out for aerobics class, they got mahjong group. It wasn't who I was. Working was always been important to me. That's what I wanted to do.

J: Did you look up likeminded people? Other expats?

I didn't really look up any other expats because I didn't really know who they were and the other thing is that going back in the 30 miles out of the city. There is not an expat community here. There are a lot of men who work abroad. A month off and month back in Nigeria. There is a lot of population who do those kinds of things. Maybe it would have helped if I were able to speak with people who were in the same thing as me. I guess it is kinda difficult for the company to run such a course, when you're dealing with such small numbers. It would take 6 months to get people in to form a course. By which time people who have been here longer would think they don't need it anymore.

J: Have you given reintegration course?



I haven't here. Just very that very reason that I was working primarily with shell that was a problem. There were not enough people to form a course. If I had left to other companies that might have been possible. At that time I was studying, a family, had my own company. I had a contract with shell and I didn't really need to

J: Training you had in Holland, did you learn about expatriates the whole adjusting, but did you also specific things about Holland, cultural things/

I think we had, I can't remember what it was called, it was general intercultural training, which is important to have. A lot of people I'm doing business in china I need to know all about Chinese culture. You do but before that, you need to learn about your own culture. Move away from this essentialist view of the world. You can only do that if you have general icc training. I do know that people who were going to the more difficult postings, like Africa or south east Asia, they did get a session on the customs and habits and culture. I think it was because it is Europe, it ridiculous expectation you will be fine because you are in a similar country. I didn't expect it to be big difference with the Dutch because it was just over the water. But there were.

J: Do you have any advice?

Get on some form of repatriation training it would be a very good thing. Apart from that, I would say expected to be difficult. Keep busy, very quickly. A lot of people don't get active fast enough so there in the second stage of culture shock and at the time you don't feel like doing stuff, you are not in a great place. Get active, As quickly as you can . it is a process you have to go through. You can't speed it up. It will just happen.

Two things that really annoy about Scottish, is one the anti-English feeling and didn't notice it before I left the counter and the second thing is the extreme drinking. It is also something that foreigners always remark on Aberdeen. The drunk in the cities. I was really shocking to coming back and to see that.

### **Transcript interview 3**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

Our departure to Holland was in 1991, so quite a long time ago. We were both leaving from England, it was my husband's first job after he had studied in Birmingham University, he did a PHD there. I had worked full-time. So when we left to Holland we had three months in The Hague. He was going to do a

training course, so was doing a training course for three months. We knew that after that three months we would be moved somewhere and we didn't really know where. so for me it was quite big change as I was leaving full-time employment and moving to another country, you know moving away to another country and not having any work. I was about 25, 27, 28. I was still very keen to work and I wasn't quite ready to have any children. When we were in The Hague, after a few weeks I became quite restless and I found it quite difficult because the initial pleasant experience became reality, the somewhat mundane every day, what I'm going to do with myself to fill my time and enjoy myself was quite hard to deal with. So , and I actually ended up, I probably should have mentioned that, I am teacher and I actually ended up contacting the British School in the Netherlands, in the Hague. They were actually quite happy to take me on and do some supply work. So I had had a lot of works but a few days, which were good. Because when we were actually then posted, after the three months we were sent to Assen, in the north of Holland. That was good, because in the north they have another branch of the British School in the Netherlands. Because I had already made contact with the basis in The Hague, it helped with feeling involved again. Although I wasn't working, I was only doing volunteer work. The school was small, there wasn't a lot of opportunities there for work so , am I going on too long?

J: Please go on. If you don't hear me then I'm listening. I don't want to interrupt you.

J: If I go on too long please interrupt.

J: You have plenty of time

So when I went to Assen, it is quite a different field in the north. As you know, The Hague is quite busy and buzzing and probably a lots of opportunities I could've probably work in a Dutch school as well, I thought, it was quit teaching English. But it was quite different when we went to Assen. For more farming country a slower peaceful life. I actually liked being up there because I'm not really a city person. So I like the more open space. But obviously, the opportunities weren't so much. I actually ended up teaching after a while, probably after six months. A job in a in school in Groningen, a private school. Teaching English to international children. That was really nice, but I was only for a day-and-a half and I really wanted to work full-time so after a year., a post came up in the British school in the Assen. I was able to get that job. I stayed there for two and a half year, maybe three years actually. I really enjoyed staying in the Netherlands. Actually, the first time my husband and I were earning money together. Probably the last time we were both earning money, together. So it was good. We made lots of friends, we were free spirits, we were able to go away in the weekend. We weren't students and you know me

having to work, in ad dorm as well. Money wasn't actually spilling over, it was quite a difficult time. It was great in Holland I w-would say out of all postings, that was the one I really enjoyed a lot and found quite fulfilled with. And then after do we need to talk a bit more about Holland?

J: I would also like to hear about your different postings.

J: Holland was the first posting right?

I tell you what we did right after that. I was there from 1991 to 1994. In 1994, we left and we had a posting in Oman the least and again it was a big change. Going from Europe to being in the Middle East where the culture was very different, the climate was really different. It was also a camp life we were living. All people we were living with, or amongst, were all Shell people. And that was my first experience with a camp and it was quite difficult when you've been living in a city and you feel anonymous in a situation, living in that camp, and socializing with people your husband is working with. It all quite incestual. I didn't really feel happy with that, I did manage to do some work. School, which was again in, it was a Shell school. It was called Pedu school. I worked there three times a week. That was good, I didn't really work more than that because we then decide we wanted to have children. We then our first child, not in Oman but actually to come back to school and have him and didn't really felt confident to have birth in Oman because of the more primitive side of the hospital and medical situation. A lot of women did but I just felt like, I was just happy with that. I came back and then we had, we were in Oman for 1994 to 1998. So we had four years there. After Oman, we left and we decided then we wanted to go back to Scotland. Because we wanted to put some roots done. Once we had children, it was funny, we changed about international life, expat life, we felt that it was important for our kids to have a bees. And for us as well to have a fees. We came back to Scotland and we lived here for, from 1998 until 20005. We were in Scotland. 1998, when we came back I was pregnant with my second child, he was born just after we came back. So, that was again a big change, sometimes I think that coming back to Europe home country would be a lot easier than going anywhere else. But one of the things I found the hardest, was living in in Aberdeen, we had a situation, you had all the choices to make, where you bought your house, what type of house you bought and in Scotland we have a situation we have to live near a school and in that environment and in that you go to a particular school. You might want to get into a good school and therefore you have to live in that area, so for having had your house to you, the school shown to you, your job shown to you and the shops shown to you when we were in Oman, suddenly choice around were you know it was quite difficult to decide, ok we are going to be here for a long time, hopefully we make the right decision and we want have our kids educated. So that was quite hard and took quite a lot

of time. Housing was difficult to get because house prices were really really high, a lot of competition, a lot of relocation in Aberdeen. As in London, to Aberdeen that was causing a big influx in the house and lots of competition. You went and get a house, in fact, we had to I think bit four or five plans on house, we were unsuccessful. That was obviously, you go. We rent an accommodation for quite a period of time. That was quite hard. I think everyone has this grizzly picture of what your house will look like going back to your country and suddenly you know, it was tough.

J: Did you also have that rosy idea going back and expectation of how it would be?

Yes very much. The idea of all the things I was feeling, I wasn't getting when I was in Oman. You came stronger the drawback to Scotland, and when that actually happened it was actually quite tough. It was probably quite difficult because we were trying to sell our house in Scotland and it had become a different sale. Basically, because we had tenants in it and they were not getting out and we had to dangle down with an obituary mortar. In some way, our whole settling was deleted because we had to deal with this. This crock case, the guy who had been renting, was along the pay rent and we were trying to evict him and try to sell the house and move on as well. So it was difficult. But that is life, sometime when you, people as an expat you don't experience a lot of the reality of life and kids don't get when you're living on these camps it can be quite focused on family and so you know mum dad and the children. Usually the dad is the one who is working and the mum doing the shopping and those kind of stuff. They don't really get to see old people expect from their grandparents they see every time they go back to the UK. But they are not seeing them in the real world of times. It was in some way, the whole business being on the camp felt like false. Having said that, in 2005, when we had our two kids then, my husband was given the opportunity to go abroad again. We kind of thought this is something we should do. Both the boys didn't really experienced living abroad. Because Andrew the oldest one had his first three years when he was in Oman, he didn't remember anything about it. We thought it would be great a foreign posting. With both the boys, they were both older. The one was nine the other was five. We had the opportunity to go to Malaysia. Again, it was something we choose to do because we wanted the kids the experience of living abroad and give them the experience of life and mix in with other people and give them the opportunity to learn about different cultures, practices and the world. So we left, in 2005, and I think we had probably a really family time there. From the first couple of years, we did a lot of traveling, it was exciting, and then we had the situation that my older school had to go to boarding school in order to carry on with his education. He could have gone back to Scotland and boarded, but we didn't wanted that. We had the opportunity for him to go to a school in Brunei, which was a two-half-

hours drive away. So we boarded him and he came back on the Friday night and he left on the Sunday. So he was away for a week. That was hard. He was really happy because he was really happy we felt we could carry on with it. I was happy with the situation but I felt that he was happy, we all had to, you know, carry on. Get on with it. It was a great grounding, I must admit. He is now going to the university. He is doing math in . he is quite independent and quite used to living away from home because he did it when he was young. I'm talking about my kids, I shouldn't talk about my kids.

J: after Malaysia, did you go anyplace else?

No, after Malaysia, we came back home. In 2009, that was December 2009. So home in 2010. We had 5 years in Malaysia. We came back and came back ever since. We came back because my oldest was about to go into important life of secondary school when they need to start do work for their qualification for going to the university. We felt he had enough of living abroad and it was again time for them to be young people in their home country. And, they were teenagers and I think when you're a teenage it is important to have normal life around you. And to build up experiences of getting the boss in the town, being independent becoming a bit more street wise other than you would have become if we had stayed in the campsite in Malaysia.

J: can you tell me a little bit more about coming back the first time and also the second time. Was it different?

The second time was different because we had our house established. Having the house established. We had rented this house out, coming back to this house it means a huge difference. We didn't need to hunt for a house. The first time that took two years which that was long. I guess a lot of the decision-making had been done the first time and you know, it was a lot easier the second time. Having said that, my husband didn't come back with us. He had to finish off his work and there wasn't a job for him here. So we had about four five months on our own back in the house. It was unfortunate actually, was also had sudden damage to the house because the winter was really cold. When the tenants moved out, we had a burst pipe, it created a lot of damage to the living room, so we were inconvenienced by that. I had to spend a lot of my time on that on my arriving back, sorting that out. That was quite time consuming. I tried to find builders, dealing with the insurance. It was fine. I spend about 8 years to, just trying, trying to get familiar with things again, setting up the house again, establishing the boys, I chose to go back to work. But shain, after about a year, I carried on with supplied thing, just twice a week in Aberdeen city. So that's been good.

J: can you tell a little bit more about the reintegration. Coming back, figuring out how everything works, can you specify or give an example?

For me, coming back it was it all felt all quite familiar. Because in a way we had only left Scotland for 5 years. We did had the opportunity to go on a course that Sheila young organized. Through Shell, shell had this system called Outpost, when new people come back, not only foreign people, you know natives. When we reintegrated there's a course, which I don't think it runs anymore which is a shame. I don't know if shell stopped it or that they couldn't find people. But it was a course basically to reintroduces us to Aberdeen, I think there were about six of us about it. We talked about Scottish culture, practical things, how to set up a bank account/situation. How to know to reconnect your phones, basic things you know, services and what they were for. It was useful not so for much for me, but it was to be able to go to that meet people who were coming back and

J: People With similar experiences?

Yeah. I think it was much more useful for someone coming to Scotland for the first, you know, foreign, for us it was useful but not as useful as for them.

J: Did you have this course the first time or the second time or both times?

Just the second time actually. I don't think it was running the first time. I can't remember. But when we used to arrive in a foreign country, as we arrived in Oman and in Holland, there weren't courses like there being set up for the newcomers. It was basically coffee mornings, meeting people, here's your. We used to have what they call a meet and greet lady who would come and welcoming you and give you a pack with information about how to, as I was saying, how to connect your phone and how to get your services back on. So a lot of the Shell wives had put together a magazine that would help you commerce find it easier to find things. Set things up. That was, I find it quite funny, it was called the meet and greet lady. In Scottish, greet is a word, it is a cry. So like you know she would come and meet you and you greet. In Scottish, they felt like.

J: Can you a little a bit more about. You are now back for quite some time. Do you feel like a repatriate.

No, I don't. we have shell club where we can go sometimes and it is equivalent any club that you would find in any shell country in any shell posting. I never feel as if I'm somebody who is not Scottish there, I always feel very Scottish, very you know blending in. you can look around and see a lot of foreign people from foreign countries. And I feel very much native here.

J: can you a bit more about your stay in the Netherlands, more specifically what you think of it and the Dutch of course.

Of all my post as I, say I really enjoyed it. I think I I was at my happiest there. We met some great friends we had remained our friends. Since. It was quite wonderful Dutch girl but she was married to a British man. She was a shell wife. What a terrible name, shell wife. She still lives in Holland, but I. so we met great people. I really liked Holland. I loved the shops, the shops were fantastic and just so different than the Scottish shops. I loved the Hague. Probably more than Amsterdam, the sofistaction. I loved the idea of cycling. I used to cycle to work every day. We used to go up to Groningen. Take the train and enjoy friet met. Bitterballen, I can still remember. Enjoy. But I really, I am not saying not just because your Dutch. Of all my posting, I really enjoyed. I don't know it was because I was working, I knew that working provided a lot of fulfilment in my life. I'm not really that much a career person. I think it to be when you are married to a shell guy. So I was thankful for what I am . I was really fulfilled and I had my boys. I see my role as a mum at foremost. I think the postings we went on were just necessary tick of the boxes as Holland. It was exciting. We were aspirational, we had freedom we both felt fulfilled whit our new roles. We had a great house I guess it was just the contrast, not being so well off no having all these things and enjoy the country. It felt different but not that different. If we gone from Scotland to Oman that would have been a big big change. There is so much to get used to. We were going abroad in a more gentle way . so cushioned. If you go with a company. They are you are not taking so much of risks. It is not as if you're setting it all up and doing it yourself. The Dutch people were not friendliest of people, I got friendly with some at work. They were Dutch. I didn't make an awful lot of friends who were Dutch and living in Holland and you know. I guess in Assen there was a bit of transient feeling about us because the Dutch would see us coming and going. And the necessarily make a big effort because you would move off. We didn't really make Dutch friends. We friends that we did made were probably international people who were working at Shell. And were good in having an international life as well.

J:What do you miss the most about the Netherlands? Can be something silly like licorice

What I really liked was koffieboontjes. Chocolate beans, coffee bean inside, they were good. Some of them were pure chocolate. I really liked them. I liked the cycling and going out on a Sunday weekend, we often take our bikes and go cycling. We also did a lot of hashing, running in the woods, we would follow trails, we don't do that kind of that things now. We had time at our hands. We were volunteering, that was a great way to see a bit of the countryside. It was pretty boring and flat. One of the things I didn't like was the monotonous of the flatness, especially in the North. We, it was I guess an opportunity for us

to travel for the first time. We had money, Europe was so accessible, we went over to Germany and enjoy the Christmas market and we went down to Champagne region. We did a holiday there. It was just a gateway to opportunities. We did a lot of skiing. Took the overnight trains. I loved the flowers, I used the 10 guilders in Groningen on a Saturday on the end on the market and get three big bunches of flowers. You had fresh flowers in your house. Every week three bunches. God know how much that would cost here. The cheese as well , the old farmhouse cheeses. The food wasn't al that great. You don't do suppers. So we did enjoy steak and chips up in Groningen. Good rib eyes. Friets met.

J: Any advice who is now in the stay abroad and in Holland or anywhere else and on their way home? Any advice to this do that?

I think one of the most important things is that you enjoy, it so obvious, if you're going abroad, you've got to be able to the opportunities to be ready to take the opportunities that the county offers. Not sit there and feel sorry for yourself, and you know, try to just make the most of where you are. It can be hard at times, you can be missing your family or feel the change that you've experienced is it is so different. You might have to give up work or your kids, or whatever. There is no point in going abroad if your actually take on the chance of the country and enjoy the experiences it has to offer. You just got to make sure to make the most of it.

J: and for the return home? You have to make of it the most of it?

I would say wherever it is, don't always think that it's going to be, this image of, you been, idyllic when you come back, sometimes as I expressed you can think of the home country and the romantic things, that you have, that you owned, it's not necessarily going to be like that quickly. As I see, you used to complain about the opportunities buy another house, have a house in a certain house. We used to be told that our kids would go to this school when we were abroad. And suddenly when we came back you have all these options and it can be quite breath taking . complaining not having, is certainly , the reality of it is quite hard to get right. I think that's probably, be more realistic, it is not going to be as easy as you think you will.

J: I remember, your expectation may not be reality.

Yes, that is right.



**Transcript interview 4**

J: first if all thank you for participating. Did I send you a topic list. Or not?

I just go through it.

J: The main idea is that I don't really interview you, I just go through the topics, I'm interested in and you just tell me everything you want to tell me.

Ok

J: Topic list, is about your departure from your home country, and your stay in the Netherlands and I also like to hear about your integration to your home country, the whole expatriate repatriate experience. And I tell you in advance I'm really fond of all the stories I hear. I found it very interesting and I don't get bored, so I don't want you to bore me with your stories. I find them fantastic. Nothing is too much, nothing is irrelevant, I love to hear everything.

OK, I hope I can remember everything; I've been back for quite a while now.

J: So where do you want to start. Do you want to start with the first departure?

We left Scotland early 2000; my daughter was almost three when we left to The Hague. It was quite a difficult time. When we had my daughter I had worked for twenty years up till that point, we had her, moved to Aberdeen and I just got into this motherhood thing, not working and having a child when we decided we were going to move to The Hague. So it was a lot to take in in one time. It was the move; it was other things as well. I was really apprehensive I must say about moving because we're a very close family and although it wasn't far away, it was still the idea of breaking things and so. It was quite a difficult move. We initially were moving for two years; well it was one plus one that made it a much easier because back in my mind I thought if it does not work out, I can move back here and it is not really long so that made me feel a bit better out of most. Friends who had moved since, talking to them, they seemed to take comfort in the fact that they are all moving for a short period of time. So psychological. The move went well and well I don't know how much information you need, initially we were in a sort of transit accommodation so that was a bit more difficult. We did not have our own personal things so; we were living in an apartment that wasn't ours and so all unfamiliar settings, unfamiliar surroundings, though it took quite a bit to getting used to. The company my husband worked for had a good supportive network so they had a kind of department that took you under their wing and giving you lots of

information of what's there to do and how to meet new people, so that was really good, really good. And because my daughter was small, she was just a baby, she was two-and-a-half, I made a big effort to meet people with children, you know. So toddler groups, so yeah that was really good.

J: and Holland was your only stay abroad?

Yep, this was our only stay. We initially we're going for two years, but we ended up staying for eight. Because we absolutely loved it and The Hague was absolutely fantastic and we met some gorgeous new people, made some really good friends and I ended up living in a part of town that wasn't really expatty so we decided we didn't want to go down that routine expat route and live where it was predominantly expat, so we stayed in a part of the city that was traditionally part of town. And our landlord, we rent a terrific apartment a quite historic part of town. And our landlord was a neighbor and the neighbors became good friends and they were just fantastic. So we still see each other now, we still visit each other and so yeah that was a fantastic aspect, moving to The Hague and meeting these new fantastic people. So yeah we loved it, we absolutely loved it. We loved the life, we loved the fact that everything was so flat and everyone cycled and embraced that whole Dutch lifestyle, yeah it was great. Unfortunately, my Dutch was never great, I did take Dutch lessons but I do understand quite a lot. I do know if it's my Scottish accent but everyone was always so keen to speak English, I'm not making excuses; everyone was always so keen on speaking English. My daughter went to a British school because we thought we were only going to be there for a short period of time, so we sent her to a school that was British and English speaking so she didn't go to the Dutch school, she wasn't incorporated in the Dutch school system. I think that would have made a difference, I'm sure my Dutch would have been much better. We loved it, we absolutely loved it.

J: yes Dutch is a difficult language and all the Dutch people enjoy speaking English and they always want to practice

Yes everyone told me that and everyone said its ok its ok and my pronunciation is quite OK because it's quite a glottal language and it's a bit like Scottish so my pronunciation was ok but I had wrong quite a lot of time and my confidence dipped. It was a lot. And after we left my Dutch friends were like yeah yeah don't worry were going to parties and everybody will be speaking Dutch but I was like yeah yeah getting it all wrong. But my Dutch friends were all like if you wanted to learn you would have learned by now ...so it was good, it was really good.

J: after eight years you returned to your home country /yah/ and you've been there, if my math is correct, for five years? /yeah that's right yeah/ so what can you tell me about your return home. How did that go? Actually the same or.

It's funny because we had only lived here for a short period of time before we moved to The Hague and all our family living in different parts of Scotland, so Aberdeen in itself was quite new from when we left. So coming back it was strange, it was really strange, because a lot of my friends although we kept in touch, I kept in touch with my close friends, we didn't really see them over the years because we didn't travel much back to Aberdeen because for holidays we would go to Glasgow or wherever our families were. So we didn't really come back to Aberdeen, at all, I think. I came back once because I had some work to do in the house but we kept our house and rent it out while we were away. And we came back and the house was a mess. So that was, you know a big blow. That was a big downer. People've known, people were down here a lot of them were still around but I has some kind of reluctance to barge back into their lives and I felt like they had moved on with their lives and I had been living somewhere else for three years, and not that I did not have the right to barge in but it seemed things were different. We all had grown up, our children were all older and I had a few really close friends and I still, we picked up where we left but for those people, we were just acquaintances and organized things for the kids before we left. I didn't really pick up the things. that was the difficult thing, coming back and like, my daughter was a lot older, she was eleven, and a lot more independent, and when I took her to school, the first time we came back, I expected a lot of gaze or picking up acquaintances but it didn't happen because a lot of kids were walking to school and their parents would just open the doors and throw the kids right out. So I didn't really got the chance to get right back to that socializing. So that was quite difficult to start with. But yeah, it did feel strange; it did feel strange coming back. And everything was different. Our lives had moved on and we had big plans for the house when we came back and that took over my life in a bit. So one aspect that was, just before we left Aberdeen, my life had changed because I had a child, I had worked for 20 years and I had this child early on in life and then coming back I hadn't really had the time to think about what I had to do with my future so I felt under pressure a bit, to get back home, looking for a job, getting myself out there, start working, and I hadn't really giving myself the chance to think about what I really wanted to do. That was difficult. I put a bit of pressure on myself, think. Yeah it was strange; it was quite strange coming back.

J: can you point out one specific example, moment that is really symbolic that it was difficult for you? Because you say it is difficult, it was strange but can you try to explain?

I was probably more I was different and I was changed, you know. We had left this place years before and then enjoyed a kind of different life, you know. It was really really sociable; we met a lot of friends in The Hague who became really close friends. We saw a lot of each other and we had a great social life. And coming back, it was very quiet. I didn't really know it, it seems bizarre but I felt a bit like a fish out of water. I didn't really quite fit in and yeah I had to start making new friends, I think that was the biggest problem. I felt a bit isolated. The city wasn't drastically changed, the house wasn't drastically different I think it was me who was different. I needed a social life, that was the problem, I needed to build up new friendships, new friends, it think that was it yeah yeah.

J: you said you had worked for twenty years and then you became a mother and after a short time, you left. In Holland when you find a bit of order did you find a job or did you stay at home with your daughter?

Yeah I stayed home, I did a few things, I set up gates, or scouts you have in the Netherlands. I set up a quite a British equivalent, brownies and rainbows and gains and that sort of things. And I set up a unit in The Hague with a friend and we did that for six or eight years for the time, we were there. So that took up quite a lot of time and yeah my friend ran a shop in The Hague and I did a bit in the shop and but it wasn't anything serious, I hadn't gone back to full-time work and I didn't even feel about doing so when we lived in The Hague. Because although we lived there for eight years our contract was originally two and it kinda grew and each contract was kinda for a year or two years so we never really knew how long we were going to be there. So I never really felt compelled to do something, fill time you know. I had quite a traditional view of bringing up my family, if I had the opportunity to do it and not have to work then I decided I would do it and I just took on that kind of traditional role.

J: and now, back home in Aberdeen, are you still at home or did you pick up where you left off?

I haven't, I didn't go back, I haven't been back to work. Actually when we moved back home we had huge plans for the house. So we've had massive renovation work done that took approximately three-and-a-half years, and I have been involved with that and it probably over the last year-and-a-half that we've been a bit more settled, so I haven't gone back to full-time employment and the initial panic that I had when I moved back to Aberdeen so what subsided and a lot of people said it's just some kind a neiger reaction , coming back home and be with other people and find people. No, I haven't gone back to work and I am still a lady of leisure.

Well it sounds like you do keep busy. Renovating and that sort of things, it's not easy. Do you think that helped that you had something to do? In Dutch you say om handen.

Yeah something to keep my time with, to take my mind of things, yeah probably. Yeah you know, the career that I had for the last twenty years wasn't necessary something I wanted to do for the future. I was involved with, I worked for a big telecommunication company as a training manager, so I traveled the country and I didn't have a lot of time at home and I didn't really saw myself in that kind of role again, you know. Being absorbed for work for twenty-four hours a day, so you know. It wasn't a case of going back to work it was a case of finding something else to do. Once I got that frizzled out I got involved with the control management of the house so that all frizzled out yeah. I'm more content now not working and I'm thinking about skill, doing some voluntary work or something that doesn't take up all of my time.

J: we talked about your reintegration a little bit and you said it was really strange because Aberdeen was quite new when we left and when we came back it was also a strange city. Was it really the city or did you have somewhere in the back of your mind the feeling but it is my home country?

Yeah, I knew, I can take that from the back that, when we were back in Scotland, we wanted to see the family and jump in the car and drive there. So that was good, that was nice. To know that we could visit any weekend and go down and see my mum during the weekend. That was a big plus, that was a big plus. And although The Hague is only an hours-flight back, it is still; it is still an hour a week on a plane. It is not the same as jumping in a hute and driving and although it wasn't far away, we could have been on the other side of the world that would make the difference you know.

J: do you think emotionally it doesn't matter it was the other side of the world or just an hour away with the plane?

Well, most of the time. Well I may same it could have been on the other side of the world but I have friends who live in Brunei, Sacry, but realistically if we would have lived there and not in The Hague, I think I would have felt quite differently. There's no doubt. When you live further away, you feel that distance a lot more. The fact that we lived in The Hague, there's no doubt in my mind that, I wasn't really easy even though it was close you could pack up the car and jump up the ferry and being back in the UK for a couple of hours. It definitely, I'm sure it would have been much different if we had lived much further away but there is still that, you know, you can't go home really quickly. When I was living in The Hague, my father was taking ill rather quickly and he died while we were there. And although we were so

close, I still didn't have time to go back so you know. It is when something like that happens that you realize, although, saying that, if I had lived in Aberdeen and he in Glasgow, the same would have applied. Still couldn't go back home if I was living in Aberdeen so that still applied. You still cannot pack up the car and leave. Yeah

J: yes that the distance is bigger than more than an hour away.

Yes, that's right, that's right.

J: what is the biggest thing of your reintegration that you remember, something funny or something new that you thought, gosh, is this really my country

That's a good question. That's a good question. I suppose the scale, I remember the first time I went to this huge, out of town, not shopping malls but more like a big warehouse shoppy place and I remember the first time I was there and I thought, when we moved to The Hague there wasn't even a big supermarket and everyone shopped every day and you went out and shopped and it was, not a much simpler kind of life, but everyone just didn't go to the really big supermarket shops and there weren't really great supermarkets. When I came back home, the first time I went to the big huge supermarkets I thought Ow my god, I think two -store supermarket and I thought Ow man, when we moved to The Hague, I think you had two packages of cornflakes to choose from and when I went back I thought ow my, I had too much choice to choose from. That was quite extreme. I got used to that quite quickly though.

J: It is convenient, everything in one place.

Yeah that was a big thing.

J: and do you consider yourself a repatriate

It was funny, living in The Hague; I didn't feel like an expat, it felt like home to me. It certainly felt like home to my daughter, she spent eight years there. She still considers herself, she's like, I'm Dutch too and you know. No, I don't consider myself an expat at all, no, no.

J: funny. Did you receive any training before going to Holland or when you came back?

No, training as in, opportunities if you wanted to work. Training, I had Dutch lessons but that was about it really.

J: so no training in the sense of if you want to take the train you have to buy a ticket by the lovely lady and you have to stamp it, no ?

No that was weird, getting a strippenkaart and how to use it. Yeah that was funny because it was very different the strippenkaart, when we moved in at first, no one really explained the machines or that the machines are actually on the trams or on the bus stops. No there wasn't, no information about that.

J: and the return home, you didn't get any information like that either.

We did go, it was called Welcome back to Aberdeen, it was mainly for foreign people who recently had moved back, Scots, or had repatriated to Aberdeen. So there were lots of nationalities. That was really interesting. That went into a lot of detail national health system and statute and all that sort, history. I found that was really interesting. There's the same thing, the same things applies in The Hague, I must be honest, a group with Shell and it's called Outpost and it's this whole unit of, you probably heard of it, to a support group for expats, and you can ask them anything you like. If you got a question then you could just called and asked what should I do with this strippenkaart. You know, when I moved to The Hague, they would have told me. Yeah, that support element was there. I do consider myself quite lucky that we moved with a company like Shell who have a good support network.

J: I know Outpost, Outpost is actually the place where I started finding people to interview. Via via I wound up with you and my main contact is at Outpost in The Hague.

Very helpful.

J: Even for students who want to write their thesis about repatriation.

The wealth of information on every country that shell has employees. I could have found out everything I wanted. Maybe because I had a child I didn't used Outpost as much as some people did. It can be really useful if you're an adult with a grown up child, or no children at all, you know. They have a huge number of contacts, as for me, I was too involved with my young child, taking her to school and I met lots of new people in her school. That was a big help for me.

J: yeah I can imagine. Your image of the Netherlands, before you went to the Netherlands. What was your view, everyone walking in wooden shoes or?

No! I had no preconceived ideas at all. Yeah, I knew that people didn't wore clogs anymore, the only thing I knew was a Dutch football team and Ronaldo, I thought he was gorgeous so. I really liked the idea,

I knew it was flat and small hills, but I didn't go round thinking people walked around in clogs. No. no any kind of preconceived ideas actually.

J: you went quite blank.

Yeah, you know, The Hague, with traveling quite a lot within the Netherlands, The Hague is quite different from the rest of the country as well, you know, so I wouldn't say it's a typical Dutch city, town, if you consider that's quite big, quite cosmopolitan. A lot of cities are quite different compared to The Hague. So I didn't go with any preconceived ideas and I was really surprised, presently surprised

J: so your image of the Netherlands is quite positive?

Yes, I love it, I love going back and my sister in law moved to The Hague a year before we left so picked up where we left, so yeah we still go and we still love to go. If we go on holiday and we have a transit flight through Schiphol, I think my daughter will always call it home. She loves it, she really loves it. Even going through Schiphol, she's like ahh warm. It's quite strange.

J: what do you miss the most about of the Netherlands

I think cycling, the outdoor life, we did a lot of walking and cycling, just the whole attitude of people, getting around on their bikes, that's just fantastic. I miss that. I miss my Dutch neighbors.

J: do you have any advice or tips for people, after their stay in the Netherlands?

If they are returning back to their home country, it different for any one. I think to keep an open mind, its different, it's not necessarily the same when you move back home. Unless, you spend, unless you came back home a lot then you would probably won't see any differences. But if you're living away, when you have been away for a certain period of time and you haven't been back for to your country, just keep an open mind when you come back. Things may have changed, you have changed as a person. That's one thing I would say .

J: to keep in mind that you have changed?

Yeah, I think so. The country that you moved to could have made such an impression on you that you may have changed as a person. I would keep that in mind. And the fact that so many people stay in the same place for their whole lives that abroad you change personally, broaden your horizons and you may not feel like the same person when you move back home.



J: I can image. Did you when you returned home to other expats?

Yeah, I met some when I moved back. At the course, I was telling you about. Yeah and they became really good friends. Yeah we had a bit in common. Some of the others thought that .. Depends on the stage you are in your own life. If you have young children or your children have grown up or left home and your own personal circumstances can make a huge difference in how you deal with moving back home.

J: did you find it that you had people who had similar experiences?

Yeah, definitely, definitely, because we had friends who moved to The Hague shortly we had did and they moved back just before us and we have the similar experience as us. Though they have no children, which makes a difference I think. But they had similar experiences and how to it back into my home country and my life. Yeah.

J: made it easier?

Yeah it made it much easier, to talk to other people. When I came back initially, I was like a told you, I had an uneasy mind. I thought I have to find a job, I have to do something, other people accommodate well. I just takes time, think about it first of all and. So yeah, that was good.

J: so do you have anything else you would like to add, funny story of information ?

I would say that living abroad certainly made me a much more rounded person and in retrospect, learning the local language would have been much better. It certainly helps you to create more, even though everyone speaks English in The Hague, virtually everywhere, old ladies at bus stops, everyone speaks English, I myself was a bit disappointed that I didn't make the effort to learn the language, because everyone so appreciates it when you speak the language so much. So that's something I would say, if you can have the opportunity to learn the language, do it. For sure.

J: thank you for participation. If you have any questions, please fire away.

No, I don't think so.

J: my thesis is about how to keep the partner happy.

Well. I didn't know either, I thought I was going back to work. It all depends on the individual. Some could have been really focused and made plans or when they got home and got themselves really

organized or set up a job. I think that could make a big difference if you have an immediate focus for when you get home, something you are working towards. Yeah it could be a study thing or going back to work. If you got a focus then I think, definitely makes things much much much easier. For me, until we started working in the house, I didn't really had a focus. For sure, my friend who came back to Aberdeen just before us, they have no children as I said before, she went back to work and that was a necessity for her, to find a focus and so.

J: first I had a preconceived idea that if you have a job you have a social life. I was right about one thing, the social thing is the most important thing, if you have your network then or if your busy getting your network then you will be fine but if you feel like isolated and that doesn't really resolve that it becomes a problem. Whether you have children old enough to go to school or not, reparenting on the playground or go around the corner to the coffee shop, either way, if you have a network, or building your network, most of the people will find their way eventually.

Definitely. I think that's so important. You definitely have to find, not necessarily like my, people you can talk to and feel you belong. I think it's a sense of belonging that you have to recover, that sense of belonging.

J: My mum and dad had such a different expatriate experience

How you actually feel in your posting, what your life is like is in a foreign country can really impact how you feel moving back home. You might not want to leave because you like it so much you want to stay.

J: thank you very much.

I'm glad I could help.

J: If you have anything to add or have questions. I am always available.

That's fine. Ok let me know and looking forward to read about the subject. Thanks very much. Bye

**Transcript interview 5**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

I was a trailing spouse with my husband. He was working with the government. When we went over there, we did have two small children. 6 months old and 15 months old. The government does not do counseling anymore, in fact, they didn't do it. Now in the industry they do more. Now they do more family counseling. They didn't think they offered courses to learn the language. I sort of did it myself because I took German in high school. So that's why I was excited to go to the Netherlands. I was born in Germany actually. So we made the move over. My husband immediately had to go off on business. I am a very independent woman and that is a lot to do expatriate, that is how strong the trailing spouse is. It's not for everybody. I had no car, I had two babies, all of the facilities that I knew were at the American base. I had to get myself there by bus, to do laundry, to. We were in a hotel for three months downtown Rotterdam while we were looking for house. There is a housing officer, and Kapel was very small base, so there was a housing office, but there was not much available. We wanted to be on the the economy , we didn't wanted in the military, we are not military with the government. Again, we are very independent. I'm a very much a go-getter. I went out on the economy, I looked at local real estator, and found a very nice family house, which was what I wanted. So for you know I may do, I'm a courageous, dedicated woman, I may do. Anyone may have had a different experience. Mainly because my husband was away so much and I was left to my own devices. But Holland is great. The people speak English when the do so. And I prefer they do so when they have an American or English speaking person. So that was good. I picked up my son, my oldest of two. He started in kleutersschool in the town of ours. Crimped aan de Lek the first time. We had a farm home Krimpen aan de Lek. That is where I met Ingrid. Because her two little boy were almost as old as my two sons. Put them in the kleutersschool. So my son started speaking English and I was speaking English and the youngest. The time would not refuse to speak English. So but my we try to speak, and of course she was willing to speak English, to practice her English. And I was willing to learn Dutch. So she was a huge influence on my getting involved in the economy, and the village .and feeling more comfortable. There was no counseling, there was no preparation on coming over and we had a large enough home where we knew we could welcome family. And in the five years, we were there. the first time we did have a family member come over, every year summer did over. We did come home and as soon as the opportunity came to go back, we came back to Holland for another two and a half years. Then this second time we were in Berschenhoek. And again, I went out in the economy, and found my own home and negotiated with the homeowner and everything.

J: So your total period in the Netherlands was 7,5 years. Was there a long period in between.

No, it was only about two years.

J: You said you were born in Germany. Can you explain more about your life?

My father was with the CIA. He spends, he's an interpreter, we were in and out. My sister, my older sister, and my younger sister, we were all born in Germany. We came back in 1995, I think and he got out of it. We were born to, in Germany, to American parents so it is not as if we didn't have dulls and things like that.

J: You are a little bit a repatriate child as well as a repatriate partner.

Not that I remember anything about my time in Germany. It was not difficult, like a lot of being an expat is repatriate, coming back to your country. And because we had rented our house unlike military, we left our home, we rented our home, we came back to our home, the same neighborhood. We were not like military, employee free maybe getting orders, you know, having a new job in a whole other area. And again the family is further and again the family is some place and having everything relearn, whether it is an American or not.

J: so you had a house and rented it out but did you also when you came back maybe holidays or something?

We did, the first five years we did because my third son was born there actually. With the midwife, the town's midwife. That was a very good experience for me that have him born at home, so we did. He was born and the three of us went back to the states. Probably, three times in the five years we were there.

And did you then stay in the house you rented out or every time in a different place?

We would go to, my mother was in Florida, so we would go to Florida, twice and to ... where my father in law lived because they didn't come over. My mother and father and sisters, all came over.

J: so only actually, the actual repatriation you went back to the house you rented out. You rented it out for the whole period of time?

The first time we left, we had a town house and we did rent it out and we came out and sold it. And bought a single family home and then we left the first time we rent a single family home and came back

to that home. Because we were able to save a lot of money. So that is why we were able to that. That is what certain companies do when you go overseas, they added income .

J: You already mentioned repatriation is actually more difficult than moving. Can you tell a bit more about your repatriation?

My repatriation was not a problem in that it was for me it was a problem because we were coming back to the same county the same state. For the children obviously they were two years older than we came back I fourth grade and then happy to coming back. Coming back was difficult, going to a new school. When we left for the second time they were 14, 13 so they were teenagers. They had to they were expats, back in an international school as teenagers and then had to come back, again. But We were only gone a 2,5 years so they did still have friends to hook up with because we were in the same county. Mine issues only that repatriation was I don't have a job. I left I quit my job and cannot over there and then I came back and found a job and then again I left to go to Holland. And came back and had to find another job. That was really difficult. But as trailing spouse, you're giving up your job, and then your deciding do you wanna work again and then you have to go and find a job. It is very difficult for trailing spouses. As I said to my credentials in the relocation industry, that is why more more company are doing this counseling not only for the money but also for the reality of the trailing spouse. And for the children. So it really is, it depends on what the circumstances are for your overseas move whether you are coming back to the same place or somewhere different. And the family ties, I on the transfer free drama that is involved and getting back, the trauma is a lot for a lot of people. My husband was a military brad and he moved a lot but it was in the country so it was different overseas. But we do have some great memories, and my kids of some great memories of Holland.

J: did you only stay in the Netherlands or also had expatriate experiences in different countries?

No, the whole time we were living, we did traveling, the whole time we were living in Holland.

J: you were repatriated two times. The first, we are now back, we are going the repatriation process or did you then already know somewhere inside know that were going to back.

The time we came home, that experience was over and we were back in the state. We did not even consider the fact that, my husband said that we could take another trip, if something comes available let's do it. But for first coming back, it was to come home for good. It was, for kids, it was good, for us it was a bit difficult because we really liked Holland. We very much liked it. Coming back to the states, you

get used in the new country, the transportation, and something you just don't do in the states but they became so natural. So coming back to the states it was really annoying not getting back on the train or ride your bike. I didn't want to hop on the bus to go where I wanted to go. That was difficult. I missed going down to the local flower shop and bakery and getting my fresh vegetable. You came back with the mega stores and the food was you know to 2,3,4,5, days old. That was, I felt cheated almost. Holland can do it, why can we have fresh vegetables, fresh breads. Our flowers are so expensive. We missed a lot of things from Holland coming back. And it were those things. And of course traveling, we love to travel and of course Europe but we missed the beach and the summers and we were very bored. To go to the beach. The weather was not something we missed of Holland.

J: the only

J: Did you experience a difference between the first time and the second time back, something to do with expectations?

Coming back the first time, no we knew, coming back to the states?

J: Did you have that the same second time? More prepared for the States the second time?

Yes very much so, the entire move home was. Very much was like many vacations. Getting back in to the routine, having done the routine so many years, having growing up here. So yes, that was very much different. I'm sure ... interruption by technology.

Coming back, the second time was more of inconvenience and nuisance. I was ready to come back the second time though. Having been there for 2,5 years I was ready to come back. And maybe it was the age of the kids, they were teenagers I felt they needed to come back. That they were, had their friends at high school. But getting used to the traffic and the shopping that . there is a big difference between two years and five years. The length of travel and is also a factor.

J: Were you surprised? Did you really experience it as readjusting? Did you get right back into the flow?

No, I got right back into it. I did, this is the type of personality I'm. you take with you got and go with it. For me it was not a problem.

J: did you, when you came back did you go back to work?

Yes but ended up getting my real estate license. Because the kids were younger and so, I was able to get my real estate license. Flexible schedule to be with them. I did not go back to a full-time . the second time, the kids were older, so I did get a full-time job.

To not have to work, to be available, that was very nice. That was a good time for me in my life. That part I really appreciated.

J: reintegration problems other than no working?

No my husband took care of all of that. We went right back into. If there was anything, he took care of it. Taxes and that stuff. I had the kids they were my responsibilities. One thing I did run into was that children had to have vaccination. So I would take to them the village doctor and their medical records and their medical book was in Dutch and was different and it was something I hadn't really considered. So when the kids were back in school and they had to do sports facilities and every time they asked for the kid's vaccination records and they were in this little book in handwriting that you couldn't understand. That caused some problems. There was a date, they had to take it. That was one of the things that spouses who have children need the to consider all of the records that go on for your children. And the time that your overseas, are legible, in a format that can be translated if you go back to the states. That has been an issue through school. Vaccination records.

J: no information or training. Did you any assistance on you return home?

No. no. and if it was offered my husband turned it down, we knew we had family, we knew where we were going.

J: did it well

It helped my, yes it did, I helped my husband, it is a very small compound. It did help that we were going back. We were probably very fortunate then when this is something you do every three four years and you have to get used to everything all over again. It did make it very much easier. Finding the place, was the most difficult. But we found a great house.

J: Ingrid. Did it make the a bit easier if you had social contacts like with her

Yes. Very much so. Because, not being military, I didn't really have anything in common with the military wives. That is one reason to live where all the Americans lived. Here are certain neighborhoods where they live. So having her was fabulous. Having her, our kids being the same age and it was great. For

somebody, I am an open person it is difficult for me to make friends and stuff , she had been so forthcoming and out coming it might have been more difficult. If you meet children, she was a life saver, a lifesaver.

J: back home, people like her or who also had an experience abroad?

No, no, because we don't have any communication or socializations of military families and my husband's department of the government he was with we didn't socialize with them either. So no, that was kinda frustrating. I had all these great experiences, we went to all these great places, we had tons of great pictures. To go and talk to somebody, last weekend we went to Frankfurt to pick somebody up. We hid four countries in three day. It is too bizarre to even believe, unimaginable people cannot even grasp it. It is very frustrated to you know. When I did come across who had experience or whatever it was so much fun to talk about it. Again, another thing they say about repatriation is that companies try to hook you up with families who have done it so that you can get some more understanding and I can see how that can be helpful. Not only going away but also coming back and that you can share that experiences. So no other than my sisters, I didn't really have anybody to share that with.

J: repatriation not really difficult. Even more easy if you did have social contacts with other repatriates who share similar experiences?

I think don't know if it would have been easier but I would have been very enjoyable. The memory of the travel would have lasted longer, the experiences would have. As you talk about things you remember things and it might have had extended the experience if I had someone who had similar experiences, traveled to Europe we could share the same kind of things. But you know I had my husband, my kids, my family, friends who came over and traveled to France. It is not as if who hadn't go over there. We were with them we were there everywhere we took them.

J: do you consider yourself a repatriate?

No, I don't. I consider myself somebody who, just because I guess after seven years I should be. Just because I don't but I am probably, wrong. I don't because I moved there and fell in with the lifestyle and with my kids and came back here and continued my lifestyle. I don't what somebody who had to move and it was maybe the experience was so huge and when they came back and that experience was also huge. Maybe in a negative or positive maybe you feel that way. I don't know. I haven't talked to too



many people. I talked to military people, they say we were in Iran and in Hawaii as it was nothing. Maybe I'm wrong maybe I should feel like an expat? What do you think?

J: what was your general image of the Netherlands, the Dutch and everything?

I think they are very tough people, they don't wince as Americans. People that accept for the most part whatever it is they need to accept, how to get on the bike, oh it is raining, yes that is how you go to work. So they are very tough people. My neighbors, the first time we were there, the woman she had 4 children and she was a tough tough woman. Wow, Karen Hillenbrand, she was a big help too, she tough. She was a no-nonsense woman. And the Germans can, the Dutch are much warmer than the Germans. They like to socialize very much and they are so good in making you feel welcome. But mostly, they are tough. I think they put up with a lot more than the Americans do. And that's the way it is. I think that when they come to America they think it is so great, besides the weather. I don't. For the most part, they were all friendly.

J: what do you miss the most about your stay in the Netherlands? Something silly like licorice

The beer. Hertog Jan, oh my gosh. Absolutely favorite beer. I liked to drink beer. When I left the states to come to Holland. The beer I drink was bud light, but after being in Holland and drinking the beer, it doesn't have the fermentation and you don't get the headaches. Beer is just pure tasting. We came back I cannot drink domestic beer. I have to drink foster's, Stella, or Mexican beer. I can't just drink but and miller . the beer for sure we miss. But we also miss the history. Omgosh the castles, just the history. We love European architecture. We had so much fun going to all the castles, bridges, om gosh the town of Delft and Amsterdam. O my goodness, it was just amazing. Walking through Bruges, you won't find that in America,. That's for sure.

J: is there something you miss the least?

The weather. You know we learn though I go and plan something, rain or shine. On Saturday, unless it's a down pour, you are taking the bikes and go there. If you planning a party, you plan for rain.

Here you know if they are predicting snow, half an inch, everybody runs out to toilet paper. In Virginia, here omg ownoo everybody stay inside. Get the fire going.

J: do you have any advice who has a posting in the Netherlands and return to the USA. About repatriation ?

I would recommended start reaching out to family, friends, and their new location asap and can all the information they can, talk to people, by the time the get the new area that they already know it. They know somebody or the area, so you don't feel like a lost sheep. Because that's, that's terrifying, the feeling of where do I get on the bus or how do I get bank account. Get as much information they can get before they go to the location.

J: Do you have anything else to add?

People who have the opportunity to have their children to take them to an international school. I think they should take that because the memory they get of an international school, is huge in preparing them for the multicultural society that we are going to continue to face. Their field, here you get on bus and go the Washington monument, there they went to Paris for the weekend. No comparison. If you have the opportunity to get involved, I was the present for a couple of years. Getting involved is the best way to really get the memories and feel like involved. Definitely get involved. Don't just stay home. Definitely get involved.

J: You always got involved activities beside work?

The first time the kids were in de kleurterschool. My with Ingrid they were so close, we did a lot of holidays together. So the second time the kids were in the international school and I got involved.

**Transcript interview 6**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

I myself am an expat child.

A brief history of my life and my parents lived in and worked abroad. My mum and dad are from Scotland and they went away in the 60s. and my dad worked for shell and went to Venezuela and my mum was a school teacher and she went to Venezuela and they met there and got married. I was born in Venezuela. They subsequently moved all over the world. I obviously moved with them. We lived in Venezuela, Zambia and my two brothers were born. Sierra Leon in Africa, Jamaica and Kenia then London then back to Kenia and my dad retired. I traveled with them me and my brothers all the time. But when I was 12 years old I went to boarding school in Scotland. They stayed abroad and I stayed in boarding school in Scotland. My brothers did the same when they were the same age. Mainly because then schooling in Africa was poor. My parents felt that they were giving me the best advantage in life by having a stable education. Then when I graduated from college and everything I went to teach in the Netherlands and met my husband there who is English. He also works for shell so its bit like history repeating itself. We lived in the Hague for two years and then we moved to Assen. We lived in Holland for four years and then we moved from there to Oman in the middle east. Then we moved from there to Aberdeen in Scotland and from there to Brunei and then from Brunei to Qatar. That is where we live now. We had the experience as a child having moved around the world and now as an adult moving around the world.

J: Your first stay abroad in the Netherlands?

I met my husband in the Hague, yes.

Second time you were married and had a assignment in Holland

The first time we were young free and single and no children. The second time we had three children it was completely different the first time we were able to travel and explore and go out. And do all sorts of

things young people do. The second time we were parents. Our children to the school where I taught. The first time where I met my husband. I loved the teacher who I met when I was teaching were still there when my children went. I taught at the British schools in the Netherlands. Two completely different experiences living in Holland.

J: One or the other more difficult or the same?

The first time around as I said we were young we went off and did lots of traveling and young friends. The second time we were a bit more restricted, children, school holidays and but when we went back to Holland for the second time I was very much looking forward to going back because I really really liked living there the first time. And we chose a house in very local area and I thought we will have Dutch friends and really reintegrate well into the Dutch society . but as it happened because our children were at a British school mixing with British friends it was actually very difficult to become fully integrated into Dutch society. Because our lives tended to revolve around school which was then expatriate. That was you know that was the way it was. I think to be able to fully fully immerse yourself in Dutch culture and have Dutch friends you have to be able to speak Dutch.

J: Only the language as a barrier or are there other things?

Not really, no. I remember going out met Petra who gave you my number. I think it was her birthday and we were sitting around a table in her house. It was really lovely and she had her sister and her husband and another Dutch friend and other Dutch friends and they had to speak English because our Dutch was not good enough to join in the conversation. I always felt bad about the fact that Dutch people always felt they had speak English to me or to us to you know make you feel involved and so on. And then it means they are not fully relaxed or having to speak a different language. I was always very aware of that. Really my Dutch should be a lot better.

J: Did you really experience it or made people feel that?

I think it was just a feeling I had. I don't think that people necessarily felt it like a burden that they had to speak English to. It was mainly from my own point of view I found that they couldn't fully relax if they weren't able to speak their own language.

J: Do you feel like home? You live in Qatar. Did you also lived in your home country again after the Netherlands?

Yes we did , we had a posting to Aberdeen. Which is near enough home country. It is Scotland and although Aberdeen is not home, it felt like we were back home. Home is Edinburgh, which is a different town. Although I had absolutely no connection with Aberdeen before I went there. Knowing a few people living there again being expat it still felt very familiar, very Scottish really.

J: So you felt like at home?

Yeah maybe it was just the time in our lives. We had two young children and they started primary school and they we bought a house there and it was the first home that we had bought and we got into all the things happen when you have a young family and your own house. You spend your weekends doing the garden and very kind normal things. Things you don't do when you are an expat. When you are an expat you live in company accommodation and it, you normally have a gardener. If you want something done you call the men and they do it. A garden you don't take as much interest in because it is not yours. Back in Aberdeen we had our own house we had to do our own fixing and mending and decorating. It was very much much more real life situation than living abroad.

J: Did you feel, integrating, reintegrating was easier or more difficult than you had expected?

I was quite a long time ago. No it was difficult that we had come from being an expat when you live in a little sort of bubble, expatriate bubble. Everything is kind done for you, you don't have to worry about fixing your house or doing your garden. Where we came from in Oman we had help in the house. We had a fulltime maid which was very much the expected thing where we were. She would help with children and laundry and cleaning the house. Plenty of time to do exercise. If you wanted to go out there was always babysitting. When we went back home there was none of that. You had to do your own cleaning, washing and cooking. No child are and own garden. Yes it was, it took a bit of adjustment really. To get used to living a kind of normal life again.

J: Going back Home country more difficult than the expatriate life?

I think especially in Aberdeen if people know that you are expatriate and that you will be moving on. They are sometimes a bit worry to be friendly to get friendly with you knowing that you are probably going again. That is quite a difficult of life. Always on the move and never never really putting down really solid roots. Peoples 'lives go on and they actually aren't bothered by the fact you are an expat and that you move around and go to all these different countries. They feel like, their life is full and have

family commitments , they've got all sort of things in their lives. One thing that I have learned is that if you come back and talk about being an expat and how wonderful it is and what sort of life you have, people are interested for 10 minutes maximum. After that they are, Ok I have enough of that. A lot of people can't relate to what it is like to live that kind of expat life. Stories are interesting for a little while but not too long.

J: Did that bother you?

Yes in the early days you are telling your stories that you think are really interesting and exciting and you get the distinct impression that they are not really that interested in hearing them. They are interested in are the thing that are here and now. What is currently popular in television , local politics here where they live in the time. Not your weird and wonderful stories living in the middle east or whatever. It took a while to realize that actually just come back and tell people how you are how it is but don't go on and on you know expat life. Because firstly they don't really understand and secondly they interested in the here and now and quite often people have conversations and family have conversations about what the current television programs were and we didn't know any of we didn't have seen them. So we couldn't be involved in any of the conversations. And you then sort of realize that you have missing out. Their lives go on their lives continue as they would do as where you've gone and come back. Life doesn't stop because you've gone away. Aberdeen gets on. Its taking to realize. And even now for me coming back, ive come back to Edinburgh on holiday. I'm here for 2,5 months. Last week I called all of my friends and I said I'm back and it would be great to meet up. And I said call me and nobody called because they are all busy and they have their own life. I think it is not great why are they not calling me? Then you realize that they will call and I will see them and I already have seen them just because I've come back they don't have to drop everything to see me. It takes getting used to I would say. Stories can be very interesting and very funny and they can be quite often hard to relate to in many ways. Although people are interested and do want to know not into too much details more some more general what it is like and so on. A lot of people, another thing of being an expat, people say, you know, they expect expatriates have a lot of money because they've got maid at home and gardeners and they sometimes, almost make assumptions of you being an rich expat a spoiled expat. You don't know what it is like living in the real world. This is what is like, it's hard. A lot of people think that about you. Where I think, I, come back, I know it was a very privileged life to be an expat but it is also very hard to be an expat. There are many many compromises you have to make even though you have that nice life living gin hot country with beautiful beaches and have opportunities to travel to fantastic places. It's not always just I do kind

know what it is like to live back here, maybe not fully having to cope with. I do I have lived in Aberdeen I have experienced I haven't been an expat. I have been an expat my whole life. I have experience a bit of real life as well.

J: Real life is hard ? where did you go in your mind?

I think everybody thinks that expat life is a charmed life. It is a charmed life. But and the real world the real world the non expat life is a sort of drudge. It sort of hardship not hardship and but doing all the mundane things like cooking and shopping and cleaning your house. Taking your kids to school in the wet weather, biking, cycling to work when it is pouring down with rain and all that kind of things. There is definitely a perception that the expat life is the easy life. There is a lot to it. An expat is an easy life but there are also a lot of hardships that come with it. The fact that you are moving around all time, the fact you have to make friends all the time, the fact that you re uprooting your children all the time, the fact that every time you go somewhere that it takes a lot of time to set up some kind of network of support in a new country. That's all quite hard work. So even though it is charmed and easy life it is also a challenging and tough life. If you go to a new posting and you husband disappears to work and you are left what on earth do I do here where do I shop ? If you don't know anybody having to go for that for the whole business of making friends again that does get quite hard. I think it is a lot easier when you have young children and your children go to school and meet other children at school and have play dates and you speak to other mums in the playgrounds. But when your children get older that is much much more difficult. It is very nice life there are drawback and similarly if you live a normal life there are drawbacks as well. I quite like this feeling of belong to belonging somewhere and have a history with somewhere to build up friends and for those friendships to be long lasting. Not one of you leaving after a few years.

J: Why do you call it normal life?

Because I always think that expat life we always call it you live in this expat bubble, you go into this country and Holland doesn't necessarily count in this. This is more in Qatar or Brunei places like that. Qatar and Holland you actually experience much more of a life similar to what you would have at home in the world for us, British. We always talk about expat bubble when you live in places like Qatar. You don't really get involved in the infrastructure of the country. You very much passing through, you very much a visitor to their country and that is pretty much all. You don't put down any real roots. You dot put done any roots at all. A lot of this activities that you do maybe in this expat bubble of things that you wouldn't be able to go back home. Because firstly you don't have the money to do them, secondly you

don't have the time to do them. You must spend much more time much more normal things. So it is this sort of unrealistic bubble that you live in. being an expat. Where we live in the moment in Qatar, we live in a compound of twenty houses and they all back onto a park in the evenings or late afternoon, all the maids go outside and with the tiny children and they all play and the maids talk to each other and watch the children. But only two minutes by the beach, you can sit on the beach and watch the sun go down and there's a tennis court. It is really really lovely. It is really pleasant. When I say expat bubble that's the kind thing I mean. This kind charmed life you live. It is really nice. If you have got young children, you can go out with your child while the maid is preparing the meal for the kids. You can go out and meet your friends and have a chat. That sort of things. You do it back home it is not there are so many other demands that you have at home. On the other hand, you know this nice compound that we live on it can also be very lonely. You really have to put yourself out there to meet people, you have , people don't really necessary enjoy a gym, you have to go to classed, you have to come involved. It is you could become very lonely and isolated and that is all takes a bit of effort you know to keep doing that again and again if you keep moving around the world. Everything else, there are huge plusses. There are minuses not everything is roses there are really good things, there are some lots of good things.

J: Expat bubble, what exactly is your image of the Netherlands ? your ideas about it?

For us it is a great vesting its actually quite similar to home in that it has the same ideal same sort of outlook saying kind of culture in a way. But it is also quite different there are lots of things that are different. The food can be different , the whole shopping, street life is different the whole even just things likes shops. The shops are really lovely, all the nice house shops, flower shops and all the rest of it. It is quite similar to home in many ways but then it gets a nice extra as a kind of bonus. One of the biggest things is that it is so close to home. You can close there and get back home so easily. Being an expat there but still have experience different things. Experience different cultures and you know the things I just described. But then it is quite similar to what we are used to back home. The same kind of weather is fairly similar, the while we are now in Qatar you couldn't go much more different to living back home in Scotland. The weather is different, an Islamic state the culture the religion you have to be very very aware of that. Where in Holland you just felt kind of, I didn't really belong here, I know a lot of people who stayed there a very long time and it is very much home for them. For me it was never really home because I always knew that it was only going to be for a short period of time. But we could make it home. You could very well feel comfortable relaxed there and for a long time because it has that familiarity. I could not ever feel like that in Qatar.



So yes from that point of view Holland has many benefits .

J: Also benefits or also experience another side of the Netherlands?

It was definitely another side of the Netherlands. I remember once or a couple of times actually once going down to the beach in Schevening and ordering kibbeling and I wanted to order tomato ketchup with it who was serving it you can't have tomato ketchup you have to have mayo. So sort of laughing and everyone around laughed thought it was really funny. I thought they are laughing at me. I had been in the situation that people in speaking Dutch and hadn't understood and I felt a bit isolated and intimidated. A bit out of fit. So no, not always great. There were definite times you do feel gosh and I think the language is a big thing. If you were able to speak in Dutch I do know what you are saying then it probably would be different. Holland is very very accepting of I think lots of people passing through and English widely spoken. He interested in speaking to you and learning what you are doing there and so on.

J: Expatriate again? Did you ever feel like an expatriate ? even you were in Aberdeen that felt like home, did it feel like a posting?

A bit yes. I always felt like although it was very nice at the time, we probably that wouldn't be it. We would go abroad again. It was a kind of passing through.

J: Never felt like a repatriate?

No no not really. Part of me we lived in Edinburgh, is our base, part of me is absolutely desperate to come and live in Edinburgh fulltime and never go abroad again and settle and feel a part of city to have a full involvement invest in the city. Getting a job or working or my family. Live here, just being a part of the city, sometime I'm really desperate for that to happen. But at the moment that is not going to happen but I hope one day in the future it will. Our ideal is that we would come back and live in Edinburgh and retire here and stay there. I don't want to be an expatriate the rest of my life although I have done it for quite a long time.

J: After the first time in Holland? Aberdeen?

In Aberdeen, it went from the Netherlands to Oman and they were born there and then we went to Aberdeen and after Oman. So the children were really young 4, 2. And then we went from there from

Aberdeen back to the Netherlands. They were sort of 10 and 8. And then we had another child in Aberdeen so we left Aberdeen with three children.

Now 18, 16, 10

J: They lived with you abroad or like you in a boarding school?

18, 16 year old are in boarding school in Edinburgh. And the 10 year old is with us in Qatar. Probable the 10 year gets to boarding school. That is also a huge consideration. When your children go to boarding school that is very very big decision. For them I feel that is very important that they when you are moving around at that sort of age 14, 15,16 it is a terrible age to be moving and making friends and normally around that age they are studying for important exam and to move around and have disruption is not good. So we want to provide with stability during that time also its very difficult for them making friends and leaving friends and making friends, when they are at boarding school they have friends and stay friends with them through their schooling. And I think it is also important they come from Scotland Edinburgh is home this is where we do belong even though we don't live there fulltime. They are Scottish this is where they are from. If you go to school in Brunei and all the other places, it is so temporary. But then obviously with the decision of going to boarding school comes with it a whole lot of other implications because your separated from your children. You know all that sort of things. They are quite tough decisions to make. I know in Dutch culture that completely foreign thing to send your children to boarding school all of my Dutch friends, say ohh gosh we could never that, we would never do that. I know htat it is not for everybody. It is common in Britain, much more accepted thing than in Holland for sure.

J: Living part time in Edinburgh part and fulltime what do you mean?

We have a flat there, because the children are at school here, we come back fairly regularly and we have a home here and we move in and feels like home it is home. We have also another home in Qatar but. So at the moment we live there part time it is only holidays and so on. I am actually here for 2,5 months this summer. You could argue this is home for this time.

J: Still feels like home?

Yes it does fell like home because my family is here. This flat is very much home you know we don't rent it out to anybody we just keep it empty. We can just move in when we need to. For the children as well they see this very much as kind of second home.

And then they come to Qatar in the holidays as well. For them is going to lovely hot sunny paradise where they can swim in the sea and play tennis and so on. Have a nice holidays, it's the best of all worlds.

J: Did you receive any training?

Yeah shell have very good network called outpost and you can get a lot of information from that about schools and culture and things to do and sort of official paper work that you have to complete and that sort of things. There is always help, shell help you to settle in these countries by giving you information and sort of educating on what to expect when you get there and that sort of thing.

J: Does it make that you search for mind liked people?

There is definitely, yes a definite element of cause we got a lot of friends that wave met in various part of the world who have may have come back to Scotland. Definitely easier to likeminded people who had similar experiences to yourself. You do tend to have probably more in common and more to talk about, yeah

J: Does it help you with the sense of your stay abroad and turn stay in Edinburgh if you have that place to share your stories? Does it make it easier.

Yes it does. All the friends that I will see this holiday or a lot of them, not all of them are friends that we met in Brunei and who are back on holiday. Or who live in Aberdeen when we lived there. They have also had to be abroad. Yeah you do look forward seeing them and catching up with them hearing how their lives are going. Some of them still live abroad and some don't but there is definitely a feeling of closeness and kind camaraderie that you get having lived abroad and having lived and socialize quite closely with a group of people. They have become very close friends. Friends you keep in touch with forever probably.

J: Did you always have a job in every country?

Yes. For the first few postings I always had a job. So I taught in the Netherlands, when we were in Oman I taught part-time although we had children there. When we were in Aberdeen I taught part-time, back in the Netherlands I taught part-time. The last two posting in Brunei and Qatar I haven't worked.

J: Having a job makes it easier?

To some extent yes I do. It gives you a purpose and identity and something all for yourself and your able to feel fulfilled. In many ways because if you don't work there is sometimes the feeling of emptiness. Gosh what am I going to do with my time, how am I going to fill my time. Quite often you end up filling it with quite sort of banal activities like going to the gym meeting people for lunch having coffee that is ok vfr a certain time but after a while it gets a bit boring. I think having a job and working does can help.

J: Do you Have a specific story?

Aberdeen it is maybe not a good example, in Brunei it's, you live in a middle of the jungle and its completely I think 90 percent virgin rainforest. Where you live is just been hacked out of the jungle and houses have been put up and gardens have been made it is still very much a jungle. The monkeys troops of monkeys is to camp through the camps every day and through the garden every day and come on the veranda and they let eat candles and pick plant and come up to the windows and looking turn all the furniture over. I mean repeatedly and they make a complete mess that is almost they are telling you it's their jungle and you've come here to live in their jungle they still own it. It is their home and yes that can be real pest. That is very very scary. You want to go outside when the monkeys are there and yeah. So people are interested in that and say wow wow you have monkeys in your garden how exciting that is kind of all they need to know. If you then stop going about the monkey and go on about the other thing, they lose interest after a while. In Brunei, in specially, very isolated place there wasn't really much going on apart from where we lived. People would organize parties all the time, all the progressive diner, and dressing up parties, queen's birthday part, there was Dutch night, Latino night. When you it is very very so sort of specific to place and very interesting to that place for people who live there. But out of there t is not interested at all. You are sort of parties dinners or things you got up to. I can't think of something really weird and wonderful. Stories have got to be relevant to peoples interest in some way to, otherwise they just quickly loose interest.

J: Any advice?

Returning home after staying in the Netherlands, euh, one thing about the Netherlands is that it's a , the summer the atmosphere in the summer, people out of the streets and eating on the streets and drinking on the streets, on their bicycles and sort of out with their dogs and their dogs sitting up at the table. That is a very nice atmosphere, kind nice gezellig feel. Maybe when you get back to the UK, not quite the same atmosphere but. It is always nice when you go abroad when you live abroad and you eat and try different foods . things taste a bit different and then you go back home and it's nice to be back to the

familiar things you maybe didn't get in the Holland that you do get back home. Then you miss the things you miss the things you didn't get in Drenthe and get in Holland. I don't know it is just of period of readjustment. There are things you miss and things you don't miss. So getting used things again.

### **Transcript interview 7**

Well, there are always two sides to this. The actually physical business of it and once mental decision making the motives. You want both of those?

J: I want to hear all.

Ok. Right. Ages ago in 1963 when I graduated from Cambridge, I hope, I was already engaged to my husband and we got married in 1964 I hoped to get a chance to do a soil science diploma because I thought that would be useful because the chances were that my husband would work for shell. He is geologist and they were paying for his PhD. Which he was about to start. And I thought while he's doing it would-be e useful if we traveled the world. Neither of us had made this decision. He was born in the west indies. My father was a low poor, so an immigrant. Neither of us had problems with other countries and cultures. I like languages, I spend quite a time deciding the age in 15 to do science rather than language although I was probable better in languages, mainly French and Latin. I thought I can do that on my own, whereas science I cannot do that on my own and without a lab. My curiosity probably weights everything else. I already made ... (decision)one around the age of 15 one can do language on one's own and I probably would. Then got engaged to this. Both were at Cambridge, at booking, and when I went for my interview with the British grant giving government, they saw the engagement ring on my finger and they said, well Mrs. mc Cleavy may we ask about your intendat. I told them that this little story about you if we did go abroad I would be useful as a soil scientist because I took some geology and chemistry in Cambridge. Ahh they said, well if I think if your intending to go abroad, this is UK government money this is a problem. So did two things they would never have done this age, a spot my engagement ring and ask about his plan b cut me off because I wanted to go abroad. Just a little of background there. Next, I went to Sweden and did some work for the geological survey there. There was a kind man I knew in the Cambridge geology department and he asked if I wanted to be his research assistant because he needed a chemist. Although he was a botanist, he needed a fairly sort of practical cookery style to support his extract procedures. I was delighted ,because mark and I were e in the same place. So I did in the about five years in research, had a baby in part of that and mark joined shell in the middle of that. But I this is quite I doing a bit of motive about. The man I worked for a Norman who has

now died, he was in a main paleontology mag and he I did his research for him he put my name on five papers, his and mine. I actually was even in print. I felt by the time we did go abroad first of all to Holland, in 1966, I didn't, I wasn't feeling grumpy or anything I was already doing some translation. I had translated some Norwegian into English and some French, the anatomy of the earth. It was in English, from French into English. I was quite English, I was age 24, I was born I was 24 or something like that. I thought anything goes. I was expecting our first baby, about four weeks after I arrived in Holland and we had the baby at home. Mark had already joined shell and I arrived with I think I just came over by , yes we had a rather aged, second hand minivan. I drove over. And then we had the baby at home quite comfortably, Dutch fashion. Then typically on the day the baby was born, shell send mark off to to Scotland for training. So I didn't complain, I really I'm not a complainer. It is a bit of a surprise if you leave your own work to join your husband have a baby and on the day the baby is born, or two days, he's send of for 2,3 weeks for training. I felt about bad about this. We were prepared for life as it came so this wasn't a problem. I spend the time reading Dutch newspapers sitting up in bed, with a resident as a sort of midwife, that was typical Dutch, just fitted in with the Dutch way. I learned important words like stoffelijke overschoten, in de Telegraaf. I was reading newspapers I had not used this vocabulary very often. Anyway, it was fine, we were really happy. Torbeckensland 62, subsequently, that was in October by January I had returned to England with a new car, Dutch registration the baby in the back everything we had in the back, which was very little because we were students. Mark had been sent to Spain without further leave, because he was only going for five months. And shell regulations were bad, so my past departure, my first repatriation, was in 1967 when I peered at hook of Holland, Heriage, I to be told that I had to import my car. I said that I can tell you I the day I will leave this country. No he said, he started his , like a parking meter person once started their docket whatever you call it. I was pretty cheesed of at this point and had to pay 100 pounds which was for us at that was all lot of money in order to come back home. You know he said you can put it up at blocks, it is full of the baby stuff and everything we possessed. It was a ford station wagon, I can't put it up blocks. He was not sympathetic and I have to tell you, this formed my view of the customs regulation worldwide there is no right wrong about them, there are simply regulation, you just fall into their clutches or you don't. I think, I still feel like that. This is quite useful when you are an expat to have your own view of the world sort of clear in your own head. I'm a Quacker I take ethics seriously but that doesn't that I always obey the rules. We are allowed to break them. This is quite helpful for moving around the world. I went back and stayed repatriation at this point meant showing the baby off to the family staying with my husband's parent who came just from the west indies and his father was very ill. We didn't have a home. I spend the entire

five months with bits of the family, with all my stuff in the car. I would arrive in with everything, which wasn't much in those days. The market hadn't got to everybody I had quite a modest pile of stuff that fit in the back of the station wagon. I think all I decided was that I had enough of my office to help , rejecting my, you have enough to do my dear, you look after the baby. Which you don't and a young baby doesn't really take a lot of feeding, I didn't have a home, I was pretty under occupied apart from being family friendly. The next thing was about , my husband went a spend a little while in Spain without telling the company, just on our own. They weren't against it but weren't going to pay for it. I just trailed round. Next time we went to Holland, no then he went to Holland and they said next assignment was going to be Oman as a field geologist flying around in a helicopter and he would not be taking his wife and family. This point my husband having missed the first 6 month of his life, 8 months, said oh him going, I'm giving up, I'm leaving the company. This is why we got married, and this is not what it is about. When I learned a bit more about his job, flying about the Oman mountains with a Dutch, French, Austrian looking at oil field with all the facilities of an oil company he had a penny les university. If he give this all up for me and the baby I will be eternally in debt this is not good for a marriage. Is it just too much for him to give up, he didn't say that but for me. I persuaded him to go and I said I just go back to the university and continue research. Which I did, I didn't go with I went back to Cambridge. This is till part of the repatriation. I went back to the university and putting the baby under the table. My boss the man I was working for I didn't, this is my other life lesson don't ask questions you don't want the answer no to. Because so much hangs on it, just don't ask the question. There are various ways of rephrasing it or just completely not saying it all. So I put the baby under the table. Most of the work was with a microscope, the chemistry work was minimal and I had an assistant and I was in the geology department of Cambridge of sciences. That was pretty comfortable, and I did that I really glad I did because the because of the publication and so on. I just made me feel I hadn't wasted my expensive education that I paid for. I felt it was a resource. That is one of my bases of life; don't waste anything, opportunities, money, food, time, contacts, anything. Don't waste. It is a sort of bottom upward views. I safes you time worrying about the environment and things you can't do anything about anyway. Right, wait a minute, now the next thing was that while mark was still on the Oman mountain project, they had all moved to Holland to write up their results. So then, I abandoned Cambridge and went to Holland where we lived in Rijswijk. Jacobvdewielerlaan 12, we weren't there very long I just the Hague, this is a good moment to tell you. The Hague is so welcoming I already heard that it was a city servants living beyond their means and I you know which is a good sense of humor thing. I also was also really interested in your social services that particularly the riag, not that I have mental, by now we have some of our family has mental

problems. But I always have been on the edge of society, prisoners, criminals. People who don't fit the norms. I was just so impressed the way the Dutch managed their yes they have high taxes. I really was full of admiration the way you managed your society. I remember going to a meeting and asking, I don't remember his name, he was an official in the government and I asked afterwards why couldn't say the UK just follow the good practice which I had seen in the riag, it really upset me, that such good practice was around and that people who cared couldn't copy it. He said something that I found, that, really interesting ow I think you will find, he believed, very firmly you cannot lift something that works in one country one jurisdiction just pick it up and put in another jurisdiction. It doesn't work. Cause you well he just said that firmly, there were questions at the end of the meeting. It was a very useful comment in a way and I I'm telling you this because it is how much you admire the Netherlands and how you do things. And another thing, and I hope you feel this is complementary, coming from the British side where we are rather diplomatic and hear me say rather there., and this man whose name begins with Joris Voorhoven, he said to me I didn't say you'll find, or maybe you, because that is rather diplomatic he which is so good about the Dutch, you just simply go into the issue straightaway. You just say it isn't possible. I have noticed over a time in Holland that the combination really of the British rather cautious diplomatic, as an Nigerian once said, when we were living in Nigeria, this would have been in 1982, no sorry 1980, the person the faire well speech of my husband was chairman of that part of Nigeria of shell. This Nigerian manager was saying goodbye to a Dutchman. He was the finance man he was saying goodbye, I worked for the British and I worked for the Dutch and I would rather work for the Dutch any day because you know where you are. With the British, they say one thing, they mean another, and they do a third. This is the Nigeria view of working. I do think that between the Dutch and British we understand one another, because the Dutch helped a great deal with our agriculture. The side, Britain and went to Holland, first they went to America, a whole lot of connection between the duct and the British and I really like it.

J: Overall view the Netherlands I think, you sound really positive, so can you elaborate a little?

We'll have the same weather which , I do think makes the difference, although you don't have the mountains, not I my part of , in the randstad, not in my part of Holland, but you can really , you're a more compact country, which I like and you are also actually do understand British sense of humor which people like. Americans I think don't. you know. Although there's nothing nicer than people laughing at your jokes, it such a bond. We could laugh at the sometimes-disastrous directness of the Dutch or zuinigheid. I feel laughing at the Hague being self-termed by the Hague measurements residents and civil servants living beyond their means. We laugh at Dutch jokes. I think we are quite close. I definitely think



that the Dutch have developed this directness, which makes life easier really. Is that enough? That sort of things? I tell you something, the first time we went there in 1966, even the melkboer speak English, wanted to speak English. I say hoeveel have you, I had a sort I was trying to speak Dutch, I liked languages, not just stoffelijke overschoten. He replied in English, that was sort of I had post war sense. In those days even I noticed in Norway trying to speak Norwegian this would this is comparison at same time period in the 60s, there were a lot of wellingtons in Norwegian, they were really unhelpful in the shop because I they thought I was German. When they discovered I was British trying to speak Norwegian, I almost had the boot of price. And I won't there was a sense and we knew that the British had bombed or the allies, out of bombed had quite a bit of the Hague, bang the state, It wasn't really much point about it. Nobody ever made or was bitter about it. One felt humbled because I discovered amongst the Dutch how difficult it is to be invaded. We as Brits were never invaded. I was constantly, royal Dutch shell, half-and-half company, you know. I have my whole life, working life compared the Dutch with the Brits, this is one of the early bits of it. To realize, the differences between those which were are, less the weather more the recent history of European the WW2 they were different. You were just so stoic, non-bitter, non-bitter about it. Just reinforces one's international views. Both mark and I felt totally at home in the Hague. What I can say is that later, when I, mark was you want me to do? You see we lived three times in the Hague.

J: Can you give me a short overview?

I think that is a good idea. After that, where were we now. Second time in Holland, we were then from Holland about six months to Brunei, for the first time, expecting our second time that was in September 1968. We left Holland but not to go back to Britain we went to Brunei, which was an oil camp, and we were all together. At long last posted somewhere together. We were really in the shell system by then. Up to then I hadn't had much to do with shell. We just lived our own, we rented houses and felt perfectly independent and comfortable, however, *daughter rings*

So we were in Brunei, 68, that we had then our second son in 1969, we left in 1972 we went to Australia directly. Initially we were on a two-year contract. You didn't go back to Europe for two years, you had a local holiday. We saw lots of the far east, taking the children with us and our son, all fine. Nowhere was I unhappy or uncomfortable or were there tragedies. It was already different in the early sixties, the late 60s two year contracts and you certainly couldn't phone unless you booked a phone call. So you were really separated from you family. Took three weeks say you would wrote back it would take 10 days for the letter to get there and 10 days for the answer. So you weren't really in touch with your family but

you were really in touch part of the shell family including Dutch. I actually I set up at that time as you can imagine, being an academic and being sort of cheerful and we set up a language exchange. Well we got three levels of language, beginners, intermediate conversation. So we each amongst us all, the 400 expatriates, mostly the women, we either taught or learn a whole group of us. Spend a lot of in learning languages. I improved my Dutch I think and certainly learned Malay, I thought lots of English. I did things explain to the Malays why we ask why on earth do you apologize someone when you touch someone by mistake? Which we do. Because in Brunei, the Malay practice is that when you talk to someone you put your hand on the shoulder. It is part of the communication thing. The Dutch are not great teachers either. One becomes aware of all the differences societal norms. We went to Australia 1972 we were there till 1976 when we went back to Britain. By then we had 4 children, 3 sons and a daughter. The daughter was born in Australia. So the children were 2 in Holland, 1 in Brunei and 1 in Australia. I used to say it's all to do by the way the bathwater goes about the plughole in the southern hemisphere. Or had something to do with us producing a daughter. And we just this is now this is repatriation moment because we send our eldest child we decided he was going to boarding school. This is something interesting to tell you about. This is an overview that I give you, he was well you know he was born in October he would have been 9. We sent him when he was nearly 9 when he went to boarding school in Britain. And blow me, shell didn't repatriated mark to Britain. Because we didn't know that and in those days, you didn't choose, you just got sent. I have a comment on getting sent, I found better in a way, if you didn't like it or there were problems, you didn't blame yourself for not foreseeing them. It was the company's responsibly. It was the company. If we had chosen to plan our career, for any reason really other than shell's benefit and mark's interest. I would have felt more stressed. I like being it somebody's responsibility and it's my job to make the most of it. That's one thing. My father had just died while we were in Australia so it was good staying with my mother and I send the boy we send to boarding school, stayed in boarding school and I could watch his matches. So I went back with him early September. The right time, that's really important thing is, when you're moving If you start your children you children are new as well it is much less stress upon the child. Then mark arrived in the new year we had a house and we stayed for 15 months and I at that time I decided to do part-time teacher training graduate. I didn't realize that. But we were only there for 8, I was only there for 18 months. I didn't take the final exam although it did do all the training. We were then sent back to Brunei, all of us. That was quite repatriation to Britain. I didn't really last very long. We thought mark was running a team in the north sea. He said to ow I think we will be here for a while. And we decided to have a room in the roof and all sort of things. Which we are only there for a years which I wouldn't have done certainly. Back in Brunei,

that is 1977 I think. We went we were 72 to 76 in Australia 76 78 that right back to Brunei and we were only there for 15 months there was a murderer in Nigeria and I think they thought that Mark was a good person to deal with such things. So we were sent to Nigeria. 79 82. Mark was chairman half of shell in Nigerian only the western part of Nigeria of the off shore producing area. Nothing off shore that happened then. Hard shore was on the other side. There was a Nigerian at charge. We had a lovely time there, living on a camp side, it was the camp side why they would think Mark would be good there because in Brunei it was all oil camp.

J: Only shell?

If few contractors like slumber see, I don't various others. Only in the minority. Shell ran it, shell standards of safety and watch health in Brunei, most interesting in terms of I thought things like child safe guarding is coming in. new societal norms coming in a small community. I watched health and safety coming in the seventies, in Brunei. After that, 82 we left Nigeria, crosses the Sahara at some point. Then we were in turkey for four years. 182 86, 86 19 we were in Malaysia, and then, in 1990 we came back to Holland. 1990-1994.so affectively 5 years in Holland where we live in archipel, we spend about in Mariahoeve waiting to buy in the house in the house, not in Wassenaar where everybody somebody on the Mark's level to live. We wanted to live in the Hague because we liked it so much. We had enough living in levy nice spot we really wanted to live in the city. We had we had lived in the city in sort any way Kuala Lumpur and in turkey, in Istanbul. Not in the city city, you know what I mean. We were active. We decided again to suburban. When we finally got back to Britain. We bought where we are now, in 1992, we sold the house we bought in repatriation area, we kept for quite a while although we only lived room in the roof for 15 months, we kept it for quite a while but never lived in it again.

J: Not even for holidays? Did you got home quite a lot?

Yes. We went back for three months, we always hired a camper van. Not a VW, but a Bedford camper van we could all sleep in. our family called it the ice cream van. It was so could front up in any one's friend house and sleep in their drive. If you are, a family of six you are a bit of a burden. We actually got to the stage, although I was not in the car at the time, ow yes. It was. One stage we got the baby Elisabeth and mark would be in the van and me and the tree boys could push started. It had a wobbly feel and was somewhat inclined to fail to start. But. So we had quite a relationship with this mobile home. I did embarrass the children in boarding school. It did once broke down at the corner of the football pitch. I caused huge embarrassment. It enforced their wish to kick start it and get it moving. All

things, all those relations very important. Since then, we were then in Holland, then we came home. That's it.

J: Do you think that it was easier to come back after you have been back a few times?

No because we missed Mrs. Thatcher entirely and she changed Britain. It was just such a shock. Are you like this. I don't go in for culture shock. It's a sort of aggravating word I found. But I think I had. When I came back in 1995, although we bought the house in 1992 we lent it out because had to have a British house. He would go back and would live in the club, the travelers club when he left Holland. Because he was by then on the committee manager directors. The company's center was in London because he was also running expiration of production the center was in the Hague, still is, he needed to be based in the Hague. I was totally happy to stay in Holland as long as we needed to. There, I actually, am not answering the question, I finally, I had to make speeches and being the wife of and meet the queen and such things. Not that I did, I got to learn Dutch probably and I went to take lessons, which I had never done before. I learned something really interesting that it's your pronunciation that gets people to talk with you. It is not your grammar and certainly not the Dutch I noticed in the intervening years. I am likely to have culture shock coming back to Holland because we felt so at home there. We've been away and I both repatriated to Holland, for five years and then repatriated to Britain. I felt that attached to Holland feeling repatriated to the Hague. Especially because it was Mark's he. so I'm good in repatriation. Anyway, the difference I noticed in Holland because you had so many people from ebonize, people were used to foreigners speaking their language in a funny way which we weren't didn't happen in the first time in the Hague, people spoke Dutch properly or should speak English. Whereas I found people this is Mark's series he ran the Dutch got used to hearing foreigners speak it. Anyway, that is a notice a thing that we noticed different and liked and that's why "ik ben bereid met jou te praten". You of Jij it doesn't matter if I got the grammar wrong it doesn't matter if I have the pronunciation right. People will then reply to me in Nederlands. If I got the pronunciation right, they don't mind about the grammar. This is useful lesson, which I learned that time that would have been in the 1990s. yes, that's right. But when I got back to Britain. I said quite soon we are now in 1995 I used to say I know this because my children complained, you Brits, I can't think why you ....and I complained because Mrs. Thatcher it's been a huge change in British culture from where we left in 1966 the short time I was there. My mother had a sort of depression, my father had died, we had our first son in boarding school. We were renovating the house is as doing a post graduating thing. I was a bit busy. So didn't really take in the culture was then in that short period. I was just too busy organizing the family and our immediate surrounds. Come back in the

90s finally because I said , frequently I hadn't noticed it but I did, you Brits, the children said: mum, you really have got stop saying that. Nobody want to hear it and anyway its boring. I managed ow really yes, I did adapted to the thing about the Brits is, I had a sort of objective way expressing my feelings about the place, Britain that is. I must have taken me 8 years, to be able to say we Brits. I can do now, we Brits. The inheritance of the thatcher years and all that changing culture, health and safety, child protection, I don't were coming in then, health and safety certainly. More money, different education, so many changes, I hadn't seen happen. You asked me, coming back on holiday I didn't really catch on with things. I saw things on the television but we were forever on our van. Bussing round the family. We have a huge family. Mark being the youngest of 6. We our family sticks together. I didn't spend and we didn't have a home to come back to. We were in the van. The whole time just not really sampling British as in the . It was potentially quite a shock between 1966 and 1996, those 30 years. In others peoples place they are not interested in as h=you have heard in other peoples norms and societal. Ok.

J: I was wondering, do you , you repatriated to NL and the UK, do you consider yourself a repat now?

A repat, yes I think because there are, yes, because I still hear myself because we miss Mrs. thatcher, that I mean maybe doing a her injustice but that is how I refer to the 30 years we missed she's the one who changed such a lot. I do hear myself saying that. And also , you know there is now question, if our an internationalist, also, you are just an internationalist, it got to be better open and less nation stage, more global, that is self-evident for me. I am a repatriated expatriate. But I two things 1 I have analyzed the expatriates round my life into two main sorts. Sorts like us who put roots wherever they are and learn the local language speak Turkish Malay Nigeria it wasn't wise to learn a tribal language and there a so many and you would chose a special favor to one of them. So I rejected the idea to learn the language there for reasons. Put down the roots and learn the local language and possibly and help in old people's home or an orphanage. I did all those things wherever I could. The other sort are really looking forward to go home. They have a home whether in Holland or Britain, I'm mainly judging the Dutch and the British here. They are just the play bridge, golf, they I you ask them in the turn in the library, they would say we are going to leave in three months and I have to get ready. You image it taking it three months to prepare to leave. Their mind is still back home and I others of course at the other end of the spectrum focus on their lives where they are and I'm that variety. But we all noticed the when you get back on holiday to your own country and your own people, they say what is it like in Holland or Nigeria, what's like and they have an attention of about 5 minutes. You don't more than 5 minutes to tell them because they have the experience on the hang of what you want to say. I certainly found that that when

somebody what's it like abroad or whatever place, oww you don't just have time to tell them. So you give up.

J: Do you look up other expats to be able to tell your stories, does it give you comfort?

Yes, what you can do is share the experience you know when we were in Nigeria, nobody says Nigeria, isn't that dangerous? Ow what about the corruption. Even anybody hasn't lived there but is an expat does not do that because you are those there's a sort of brotherhood, sisterhood as expats its lovely. They might be soldiers, it not just oil people you immediately known. You have a huge amount in common without any details being shared. There is as sort of people that are expats and they get repatriated. I had quite put some effort with other shell friend in holding annual lunches and we set up the archive center. I had put some effort into it and I think my experience now is that after how many years, not yet 20 years, good 15 years we were back in Britain, that people and getting grandchildren and so on people are less don't, to begin with they do want to see one another, You know we went on outings and look, people were wiling a smallish group but a definite group of expat were really pleased to get together and that has faced. That is because we settled and we filled our lives with other things. That has surprised me.

J: Ex/repatriates. Did shell also help with your stay abroad or return back home in the form of a training or information?

I never went , I was a thing somewhere in Kent that people used to go to. I was never off to it and I never inquired about it. Partly because I think we were in exasperation and everybody in expiration is mobile and also. I never got any training, a part of the offering languages. Language training, shell always offered lessons in the local language whenever you. I used I describe it shell's attitude to us families as I was a wonderful big Shell umbrella but you have to stand under it. So which is quite I'm not complaining about it but one has to realize there are rules and regulations and they are only held the umbrella in a certain way. There are exceptions but Shell used to pay for you to go home once if your parents were critically ill. And also offer a funeral. If I can remember one person in Brunei, it wasn't us, rushing home his critically ill parent and then they recovered and then actually a little while died. And the question was would he then be able to go back to the funeral or had he used up his term. On paper he used his term up but what my husband calls you strong management. You can make an exception. This is what is great which shell was and I was accused not setting a precedent. A job of human resource or a personnel they had the sense they were dealing with a large group and they didn't want to set a precedent. A very tricky

job and my husband's view was that it you really shouldn't being that frightened of setting a precedent if there was a really humanitarian need. It wasn't a precedent it was a guide and that's was always an issue in a way I can remember it. Points system for houses and so on. This was rather aggravating thing because once on a camp, the son the managing directors was working for shell and on the camp his mother came on a state visit with the director and commented on the quality of the houses he had. The local personnel man upgraded the housing for this local. This Dutch , they were Dutch family. And this caused as you can imagine in the camp huge embarrassment difficulty the point system was actually overwritten by the request of the managers/directors wife. They had to live with this nasty feeling go nth camp. You know oehhhh you get to be connected to the right people to get anywhere in shell. It was then that at top shell level as a result of this to my mind It was the personnel man mistake he shouldn't have done it. But as a result, the top of shell, no children of directors should work for the company. And when our son wanted to work for shell, who now works for slumbers Hai, of course he couldn't because mark was then a director. And there was no way no way our son was going to work for another oil company because he had such a sense of loyalty to Shell. In the end, the oil companies were denied to him by my husband's job. There are little things like. The went to start to work with slumbers Hai and he still works there in the oil industry that is alright. But it is I am just telling you it as if it is a sort of. The affect the family as dependent we used to be exported, what is the word, send abroad, where the expatriate was the worker and family were dependent. And then in 1990's it was changed to the unite of the expatriation was the family and you might have a one person family. That was the expatriate with no dependence. So that, this is actually different philosophy. It was in the 90's, I was particularly interested to set up an information network between all the families. We could do then by email and fax, telephone, to help people who would go abroad, to be able to work because a nurse. It was only the families, whether they should retrain and should bring their papers with them, what are the opportunities, and volunteering, and how many boys, would there be a football team, all sorts of things. Help you made your decision, because increasingly in the 90s you could choose. In my days in the past the only reason that I know the company would change for your worker if you had a child with a learning difficulty, because there were a lot mix marriage in culture and language terms. And then for them, to add a third language to the child was disturbing. You could say, I prefer to go a English speaking country or a place with a English school. Or Dutch, because English is easy in Dutch. It was a Dutch thing or not, it would be more tricky. The British could go with the Americans and increasingly the international Bache laureate. Things became much more. Education, international schools blossomed. In our days there weren't many. Nations schools were all you would have, locally. When my children were primary school.

It was the schools that I was always really interested in. we set up a playgroup, kindergartens that the wives said up.

J: I asked you about training: you didn't go. Whether or not do you think, you didn't really needed training because you kept so busy? Made sure you had something to do.

Yes, I think you probably right. That and coming from an international family, having traveled a bit of well. Both mark and I, spend after school we were in Germany for several months. Chosen to go to Germany. I because I wanted to learn German because I was a chemist and ought to learn the language. I lived with I worked in a factory during the day. I suppose I was away for a while and I was in love with someone in Britain. That was my first time abroad, I went to France with a school, for a school to stay with a pen friend when I was 14. I think I've always positive other peoples set ups. I wouldn't have minded if they had said we send you to where ever it was., I remember, the place of the name in Kent. I would have gone, because I found it really interesting but nobody offered to me.

J: Do you have any advice?

I would start with saying it is a different world because I never went back for half terms and or children came out to us. I did not maintain, although my mother was a widow, I didn't made, she fact we send our children back to boarding school, they could keep an eye on my mother. That led me off till the time I got back to London when I we bought a house near, I should tell you this. We bought a house in 1996 near my mother where I was brought up. Although we didn't live in it we rented it out. We thought it would sheer my mother up. When we had no place to live Mark got hepatitis when we were between Malaysia and Turkey. He got really ill because he thought he had a hangover, he had partied in Britain and drank. It so bad for his liver. It was very worrying, he was hospitalized. When you don't die in the first week you will be alright. That was really bad. We stayed for 2,5 weeks between Malaysia and Turkey. (vv). For three months in fact. When we got to Malaysia in December they said you are the people who never came. We were due to get there in September because of his illness, it takes a while to recover, it was postponed. We did say those three months with my mother. I put the children in a local school there. We bought this house in down in Sussex. But lending it did made my mother feel we might be home near to her one day. Which is really important the worrying about your parents is one of the worst things. Some people really worry about their children, sending them off to boarding school. But because my husband's family had send them off to boarding school. I went to state school. It is such



a close family, we wrote to our children every week, both of us. Sometimes mark put the wrong letter in the wrong envelope. The children loved that. He wrote on the computer. I would say just I depends so much on your attitude to home all the time you were abroad. It's for everybody different. I did go when I first came back I did go to focus in London in 1996 or 5 to learn about national health service. You really do need to make an effort when you've been away for 30 years and to understand. So I did really more effort to train myself what was going on in Britain. I have never made such an effort when we were abroad. My expectation I knew I was going to be there for a while. Anyway I went to this thing new to Britain and I was mainly full of Americans who came to live in London. I got to say I learned more about Americans through hearing their questions and also about Britain by hearing what their problems were. I didn't really ask much, I listened a lot. It was quite interesting. Learning to make friends. Apparently in the united states you would become friends by saying, ow what a nice dress, where did you get it? I have to confess I had no idea where I bought I was not even interested in clothes, what I should I have done was asking what they were wearing. I never twigged to my shame I never twigged this interest that Americans they put in me and it was an effort to make friends. I felt friendly with them but I did not reply by saying I love the way, who cut your hair? Just dumb about it. I never lived in America so I rather hope I would. That is just a sort of side. If you come back you do need to make an effort to catch up. But what was so wonderful is that are a last in your own country I was a governor of a school, the children have been school, the prep school, the young age, before they went on to public schools, I was also governor's chair of the boys school. I'm a noisy sort of person, having to take responsibility. Mark and I set up two charities. Build around an ex prisoner. We both chose those down. I'm very active on the ngo circuit. One of the thing the main bit of advice is you have to be aware that you have to learn to say no to things. Because in the expatriate world, certainly of shell, you moved on every 3,4 years and something you really sorry to leave but some really happy to escape. You never have to take the initiative. You just say sorry we have to go. When you get back home you are stuck. Extricating yourself from things. You get used to the variety and it is difficult. When you retire, I never retired because I wasn't working anyway. I did actually teach, lecturer for 3 years in English composition in Turkey , she asked me if I would consider in the university of Istanbul. Very interesting because they were left wing and I spend my days with left wings, and my evenings with right wings business men. I think it is boundary ness. Volunteer work, no boundaries, no money, very different life than the rather I just say I doesn't have boundaries that you have to think about. I don't have any other advice. My daughter says to me, look mum you got that kind of character, because I was I used to say to people who had to send their children off to school. You have to trust other adults, it's you miss them, but you shouldn't feed off their actions and let them know how

much you are missing them, doesn't actually help the children. So I have few views on how to manage sending your children to boarding school. My daughter said to me recently she is hear she married to a musician firmly rooted in Britain. That's alright because you have that are person. She said stop saying you British, because it is boring. She was born in Australia, she is quite direct.

J: One more question. What is the Dutch way?

It is sufficient, you are aware of the neighbors, this sort of community, you and directness that you heard me talk about. Verbal directness and the meaning of it. One more thing, I don't know if I ever said it to a Dutch person, you are very queen rides the bicycle you can wave to her in the street that is all very flat and unhierarchical. Just as far as your collar bones, from your chest. You are very hierarchical. You found that people would be much more aware of the fact that my husband's rank and Brits not and other people not. The Dutch particularly aware acquired social status. Also back in Holland, if anybody a relation to the palace you'd hear about it. It is not a criticism, its interesting how galentarian you would have want first impression of Holland, but deep down there is a very real awareness. Which is not negative but just interesting.

J: What is the Dutch way? Directness etc.

Directness, you got your aware of your social position. It will govern someone's attitude to you. In Britain I think it doesn't. Britain has these classes. It is a class written society, you can still depending on your accent. I can talk people on the underground, ex-prisoners, I can talk in the exactly same language from Prins Philip to an ex-prisoner, whereas, I would have thought that their attitude would depend on their character. I haven't feel there's a difference in Holland when they discover you connection/position of your husband.

J: Anything to add?

I do think that you are my sort of person you do want to, I like knitting, paint a bit, have painted, I'm moderately good in lots of things, not very good at anything, I do like not to miss an opportunity. I'm very active, and you have to realize that. I also do feel if I see something that needs doing like setting up this, not just the archive center, much more important really was the reasons why we published the two books. The books, I just tell you.

Evening gathering, critical except ally aware

When you are wife of manager, grand-mother sister role in Malaysia, quite a lot of effort to listening to them, take a serious interest.

Most mobile nations: Nigeria and the Brits.

Dutch not: more direct criticism, lack of interest. In Britain not. Dutch women more pressure to continue their career and not sending their children to boarding school. In Britain it was natural to send them to boarding school. That is another cultural difference.

We laughed of the statute of the shell wife. Why is this so funny? Five suitcases and looking for the husband. How nice of them recognizing our contribution. Some were totally happy with supporting their husband, and were not.

Manager wife, everyone was totally nice to you. The women who struggled, had to go abroad for the money, or had an ambitious husband, all a variety of dependence of expats was enormous and interesting. Commeration to listen to our stories. Yes we thought, why not? Amazing, it was before internet.

J: Who know what if the wife would tell their story?

Wives were the reason why people were less mobile. Men at Shell that two things: information center, outpost, to help women, stories formed the bases. Everyone heard of the difficulties, this came all out in the open. Nobody moaned.

Woman of a high profile person/job, you are not a free agent.

## Appendix A

### Transcript interview 1

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

Yah. I can. Well, it began in 1990, so we were actually away for twenty years. So, we left Sydney when our children were five and six and my youngest just started school and we were going to the UK, to London, so it was very exciting. One, because the interest rates in Australia were at that time were 18,5% and we were running out of money fast and we knew that we would be paid much better if we went overseas. But two, the opportunity to go overseas when our children were young was a wonderful opportunity and we were very excited. So our thoughts were at the time were, well certainly mine was I am not sure how my husband communicated it to me but that we would go for two or three years and return to Australia. So, I at that time, going to England had no although I had been working part-time, I was an early childhood educator I had no intention or hadn't thought of working while I was there because it was for a short turn overseas assignment. We were very fortunate that our children were placed into a, well Shell at that time owned a number of houses in the Cobban Surray area, half an hour commute for Greg into work and we were allocated our house the second night on arrival in London. Very fortunate that our very good friends had arrived five months previous and actually were allocated their house about a five-minute walk away. So, my friend Jen being a very good organizer, had suggested which school we would go to for our with kids, it was a co-educational school, it was a private school but it was, it seemed like an appropriate thing for our kids to do so that was fine. So that was the very easy transition into life in London, the language was English; you know our heritage was English. For us it was very excited I had. So those two years, I worked voluntary at the school and did some work at the school, our children some coped in that school it was a very academic school and it certainly did not suit our younger child Dycynta because she was marginally dyslectic and there was a lot of pressure on her to do spelling and the stuff she would do on the very young age she wasn't ready for. So, it was very very difficult two years on. And we were told that Greg had said he was flexible to travel and we were told that we either go to Santa Domingo or to Norway and not back to Australia. So my family, we come from a very close family, I certainly do, it was a very difficult time for me to ring my father in particular to say that we were actually further away and we ended up going to Norway. So my heart was string in all directions as of an on as they go when you are living. So, my mum always traveled so it was not a concern for her, she traveled to everywhere we lived, she came almost every year but dad had a fear of flying and although we know that, he'd loved every location we lived in he wasn't getting on that plane.

So, the decision was after the summer we were two years we went to Norway, a new country and a new country where the language wasn't English, excited but a lot more tentative at least from my part, the children being two years older we really looked at the schooling and should we put them in, we considered Norwegian school so they could learn the language but the hours the Norwegian school ran were too different to what we were used to, we looked at the British school and the international which was an American based education and our daughter who was at time nearly seven, certainly had enough of the English system and the formality of then English system and she very clearly told us that she was going to the American school, to the international school. So the decision was made on her input but it was certainly the right decision for her. So for four years we lived in Norway. Much different for me at that point of time, I was then 38, I knew that my friend well and truly entrenched in Australia and I realized if I didn't do something then that when I would go back to Australia following this assignment I would be behind in terms of being able to get a job. So, it was a personal crisis really, in that I had to struggle with that and also struggle with the fact that for the first time in my life I was identified by the wife of. And when you are in a position, like that, you lose your identity really quickly and certainly, that's what happened to me. In the meantime, though, lots of good things came out. Norwegian and I had a really good Norwegian teacher, I had private lessons, and for nearly 12 hours, a week actually it was an intensive language lessons and Brit is still a very good friend. She was able to introduce us to her network of friends and that was a very special experience for us, we were expected to entertain a lot at home, Greg was in a position where and that was also a huge pressure for me because I never had to contemplate to that previously. So all in all, a huge steep learning curve for me, I found that subsequently when I tried to volunteer at Rudolf Steiners school that volunteering is not really a work ethic in Norway that most women worked, the first social function in their home, this is about ten weeks after we arrived and the women spoke very little English would say where do you work and I immediately found quite anxious about that because one I was not allowed to work on the work permit he came in on and two I was floundering with the language so huge identity change for me. For the children, it was much much easier. It was a great school, very competitive, very welcoming, one thing we seek to do was immediately was something to go to a Norwegian after school experience, and so Christopher became a member of surface bates, which was sea scouts, and that was totally Norwegian and Cynta joined 18 months later, so subsequently they learned, the dialect so that's for them and that's how I became involved in IELTS and I trained to become a leader in a Nor Norway support group which was challenging to say the least but that was the to get my daughter to go either she wouldn't go. So, we, thinking back it was an interesting time and the faulty of that is that Greg was promoted to The

Hague, we were told to go back to Australia, we came back to look at schools in Australia and six weeks later that was revoked and had a promotion to The Hague. By that stage I was able to work and I just started a job in an international pre-school teaching, part-time, so I was very determined not to let go of that so that was a very difficult time in marriage because he already moved and wanted us all to come and we were all entrenched in live in Norway. So Greg always tells me I am a very bad leaver but a good arriver, so I don't know if you've moved much but moving from country to country in another unexpected way I had to come in terms with the fact that I wasn't going to work for money I didn't I honestly I didn't the stammer to do that as well as to ran a family to accommodate the needs of our family back in Australia. And that was a personal thing. Having said all that, Shell in 1992, set up a wonderful support network for partners and I was involved in the foundation support group in Stevana in Norway that was with two Dutch friends and a British, two British friends, so that set me on the round to truly understand and embrace mending my relationship with the expat and sub sequentially I was asked in The Hague to do chair what was called Outpost services and their central office is based in The Hague. I chaired that for a number of years and also with a group some of the group the women who set up in Norway and we set an international women's forum called Connecting Women and that's going strong in The Hague today. So that was for people, it was an English speaking forum for women in and out of the workplace but who wanted to connect with one another and network with one another. And the significant proportion Dutch repatriates involved which quite exciting. So all in all I keep myself really buzzy. Still not being paid for all of this but I lost interested in being paid after I while because I, as long as my skills were dialed I was constantly I learned to use the computer and did some speaking in public and things like that so it became easier to move. Now once that we made that move to The Hague, the children started secondary school in the American school I knew we weren't going back to Australia while Greg was staged with Shell, we weren't going back to Australia. So, well I came in terms with that and so previously moved on to England, that is when our son was sixteen and had his first serious relationship with his Dutch girlfriend and was in no mind to make a move. So three months previously before our moving he was not moving, so it was a terrible time. Because he knew that, he could use me or trying to use me as a tool to persuade his father that he could stay in The Hague. He had the support of his school because the loved him, he had the support of his friends and supportive family friends but his father and especially me wanted him to move. So, he did move, and once he moved he adapted rather quickly, he spend his last two years of school in England. We were by then in Buckinghamshire, a different location to where we had been previously and in The Hague's four years, so that was four years on and then we were back in The Hague for another six. Now, in that time in England, I continued to

work with expats both with an organization called information service that had been set up in London to provide support for international families and also with the Outpost London network and started to write some policies on expats and doing a bit of research but by that time Outpost was going on for a couple of years, five, six years and were reviewing that at that point. So certainly keeping very much involved in that series of lines of time and also started an art-history group because a friend of my had graduated, she had done her PHD in art history and I wanted to learn something about that so we initiated a group that she would come and speak to the group and we would go and visit galleries and museums in London and around in Europe. So that was exciting. Having said all this, the decision we made when we arrived in Norway was that we would go home regularly so that our children would know their passport country was Australia. And, so we went home at least once a year and sometimes twice a year. And I felt it was very important, we made sure they met their cousins and extended family, with friends in different locations around Australia so they got to know their own country as well. So, that was essential for me as well as for them. It was certainly the reason when Christopher finished his final year in school, they both did international bachelorettes, but when he was given the opportunity to stay in London, but he chose to go back to the university of Melbourne and two years on our daughter decided to do the same. We were very fortunate that they did chose to go back home to the university. I always remember something that my Norwegian teacher Beret said to me she said, "It doesn't matter where you live while your children are at school but when they do choose to go home to the university because they are likely to meet the person they marry over there and certainly that's what happened. But technically, I think it is important, our son did his extended essay for IB on cross-cultural communication and for him is really was a soul-searching process to find out about his identity. He was at that age like all of us on 16 were like to find out where he belonged and they have this term called third-culture kids and many of them marry and go on in that sort of life and I suspect for Christopher, he really was to find out about what it was like to be Australian. In fact that's what he said to us when he left so and he came back and one of the funny stories he tells us and a year after he had been back, he was at a college, a residential college at the university and some of his friends invited him up to the pub and he put on, what he calls he put on his European clothes so he got quite dress up to go to the pub and of course they were in their jeans, wearing flip-flops and looking squeaky and I think I haven't seen him in anything but since except for when he goes to work. So it was a cultural cringe for him to return and something he hadn't quite got hold of or his head around when he first went back to Australia. So we lived overseas for 6 years when the kids were back here. So that was great for them because they could come over for holidays, and they loved The Hague so they loved being back whenever they had the opportunity to do

so. I continued working with expats that I became a member of the expat achieve center that you know of and chaired that for a number of years before we relocated. Now in 2009, the senior changed dramatically, there was no longer a position for Greg, and it was a very very difficult time for him personally. Also because our daughter had been diagnosed with a very serious disease. She was already in Australia of course. So for a number of months in 2009 we were in no-man's-land not knowing what the future held and it was pretty glazy/ghastly. We knew we were going back to Australia and that wasn't very important anyway. There is always good with bad and bad with good so although we were leaving Shell in an utmost unpleasant situation we were going home where we needed to be at that time. And at the same time, her wonderful man husband proposed to her and they were married three months after the diagnosis so we came home and two weeks later, we were hosting a wedding, mainly family and friends but it was official. So here we were, back in Australia, we did had a house to come back to, we had actually two houses to come to but one needed renovation in Melbourne, that is where we are right now. Well, it was a huge change, I mean Greg immediately got back to work he was asked invited to work as a consultant in India. So he started that pretty soon after he left Shell and fell into that traveling two weeks a month to India straight which is a 12-hours commute I had to get my head around that as well. So I was left with trying to do some home making here and being feeling good being back close to family I think struggling with the logistics of our relationship and how that was paying out, had to organize three properties that we owned and we renovated two and the third was really close to where my mum lived and she wanted us as close to her as much as possible although she very independent. So my heart strings pulling in all directions and it took I think probably two years to start accepting we were here to stay. I did have the option to go to India if I wanted to but I did not have the energy to do that. I've done that plenty of times and my time was to be at home. Meanwhile Cynthia improved, she stabilized, and she was actually working full-time and as well as Chris happily married and doing very very well. So, what did I do now? I joined the group Support Group for Women that was a support group here in Melbourne and went to Bangladesh on two occasions to look at that project and support that in any way we could. It was a freely related project so we couldn't pursuit that for very long but we did that for two and a half years here in Melbourne. And the other thing I uninvertly became involved and was an art society supporting artist promoting Australian flora and fauna and that was in the place of my birth, where my mum lived it was up in the country and I said I would help but after a year I took on the presidency and ran it for three years and festival for three years and did me really in actually I never done that before. It is very challenging working with artists to say the least. Although I made so wonderful friends in that. As a consequence of that, my darling husband he thought, he decided



to buy some land and on that land, he built a life art museum, so that is the next step and that is what we are very involved in at the moment. He had to become involved and we now have a board of directors and he is now on the board as expat, we're looking for funds and have this brochure out and talk to lots of people we have sub gained local support from the government and we're still in the infancy of that. That was all inspired by the way by a conversation I had with a Dutch chap who lives near you Bram Brouwers and he runs the artists for nature foundation, you can Google that in the Netherlands and he and I met accidentally, I think I went to an exhibition and I met him and I was very inspired by what he was doing and he actually has a group of artists and they sign up and go to different conservation areas around the world and spend two weeks, and they draw, they paint, they interact with the local community and many times they produce full books out of those experiences. So if Bram was really behind my thoughts when I decided to get involved in this project in Australia. Quite different from what I have had done else I had done. In terms of expatriates here, I haven't had the inclination to go to any support groups are any groups that are set up here. I have been invited but I have been neither went to one or two. I do have a network of Shell people that live here, one or two that I see on a regular basis, and we are really close friends. That's been very important to me. I have a new network of friend through associations but certainly through this art society so living I here and there I am not settled in one place so it is challenging while Greg is still working in India. Meanwhile our daughter, well this is interesting, this year she, her health did deteriorated and in June she had a kidney transplant and that made me live in Melbourne for a number of months and she was in the hospital for five to six weeks and then home but regularly going back to the hospital, so I've been a care for many many time together with her husband and so that's been interesting because I had to commit to, I was able to commit to different groups, to go to Yoga regularly and going to knitting regularly and doing things like that so that was very good for my soul, so that's a really interesting aspect of her sickness but she is recovering if so please to know and she is doing very well. How old are you?

So anyway, it's been an interesting year, I think next year I keep saying my New Year's resolutions will be to keep some sort of consistency and try to look after myself. I've been diagnosed with something called monies disease which is depicting my hearing and also affects my balance so the Yoga and plenty of sleep is what I need and so I have to make sure I don't overdo it but as you can hear I pretend to overdo it in many ways. Very busy, I am a very good networker that is my strength but my undoing as well. I love people, I love finding out about people and I learn to commit to many other things at the time. That is where we are.

I do have some other questions for you. Even though you already told me so many things. About reintegration, you say you're a good networker and keep really busy, do you think that helps with the reintegration?

*Look I do I think it is very easy not to do that. You go into a phase where you go into your own cocoon and think that is a really important because it is a reflective phases and it was for me a reflective phase and I really wanted to take stock of the person I was, the experiences I had and try to make sense at it back home. The thing you learn, and you learn it when you up in the country we have a country house and we have been involved with wildlife art society, I cannot talk at all about my life as an expat despairs no effect. And when I do, people glare their eyes over and it doesn't really matter. So that's something you have to come in turns with. Networking in regards to finding parts and things your interesting in is very important, though in fact you have made the first step; nobody ever makes that first step for you. So you do have to reach out, you might do that in various forms and ways, and I am lucky that I have a network of ex Shell people who I am really fond of here and that did got me involved in different activities. It is vastly different to being an expat in a community, a really defined community when you are overseas. And I think that is something you have to accept. I am with family, my family's all traveled except here didn't travel except for myself, they just visited me. So that's wonderful and they understand, very much so and that's really important. I think yeah if you can, I think it's very important to reflect on your time but I think it's very important to look for things that may interest you, and to reach out and become a new persona, that's the great thing about this life. You can just create you a whole new person that you want get and do it in a different way*

J: Do you consider yourself because you haven't lived in other places ever since you went home to Australia? Do you really consider yourself a repatriate or are you still actually an expat staying in one position?

F: No I'm definitely Australian but I love to travel. I was in your country in May. I think we will always travel. For example, next year we've organized a boat of 18 people of whom of four, six are coming from Australia, five are from Australia and the rest coming all over the world and that's our network. So Greg and I have always created opportunities for our friend from all over the world to get together and will is something exciting, we go to the Galapagos next September. So we do see opportunities, to reengage with that world that was very important to us the twenty years we were abroad. The mundane thing is

no matter where you live you still have to do your washing and you do those everyday things and it is not whether you're an expat or not. So, yeah that's a good question I, part of me really realizes how important that life is and you sort of forget that as well and you seem to think in reality nobody wants to know about that is something in the dark and past and you have to move on. Life is like. Illness, she had to go through this huge operation but she has to move on get on with her life. And you sort of do that. She's married to a man who first told was in Switzerland and he is working for an international company so they could well travel again and she really would love to do that, they both want that. Our son has married a lady who travels internationally for her work and although he's not, he is with an international company and has spent many summers in the Pacific Islands where with her parents and her father worked voluntary over there so they've all been, both married to people whom may encouraged them further on so I think that is some much part of your identity and you can't let go of it but it is not easy to keep reminding yourself of it as well you just get on with it, coping with it. The language is the same but you still you still find nuances you think gosh I haven't heard that before or you've missed twenty years of singers. For example, my sister loves this particular chap that's very popular over here and I missed his whole career so I got no idea of who he is. So you now, there are little gaps in history and the kids got huge gaps of course.

J: Did you receive any training at all? Also with the departures to the different countries but also with coming home?

No. no training at all. Well actually, when we lived in different countries we did. One of the best things we did is was a course called Understanding the Dutch when we first went to the Netherlands in 1999 and it was a two-day course and it what it carried, it was done by the, what's the institution called in Amsterdam?

J: I think Koninklijke Instituut voor de Tropen.

Yes, I think that is the one, they facilitated it.

One of the great things was they made us think of our own values and once you identified your own values, which we hadn't really done before, you could then look at the values of your observation of what you were seeing around you. That was a great thing to do. They had some actors, I remember an actor pretend the issues you find difficult to comprehend when you come from your country and that was really really well done. In Norway, we had an introduction we had to do a two-day course of living in Norway but my teacher was instrumental and learning the language was certainly instrumental in

learning the language there. And I did do an intensive course in Dutch, which I should have done three weeks as it would have given me more confidence to handle it and I can speak it a little bit. Yeah I was just lazy over there.

J: Dutch is a really difficult language; it has many exceptions and rules

Well that is copped out. If I persevered for another week because I'm certainly thinking in Dutch I may have persevered the confidence I may have the confidence to speak it. So certainly, we did the private lessons of reading in Dutch, learning about the history of Dutch, so that's been great. We have some wonderful friends who are Dutch. So that's was really important. So no, coming back to Australia, you're just expected to be Australian and I think that what's really difficult. Fortunately, for me, I worked with a lot of repatriates, I've read a lot of books about repatriation, and people say it is the hardest move you make. I am not sure about that. Australia is also geographically isolated from where we lived and that is for me probably harder any living anywhere else. The fact that it is a 22-hour flight back to Europe and it's not that long but geographically it seems a long way and it's evening here and it's daylight there.

J: it feels further away than any other place.

Yes and it is, it is. It is pretty well it is. We are very fortunate that our friends have traveled over here. We've made opportunities for them to come. That's very important to us to share our world here with our friends from Europe. And they are honestly very special friends from Europe and the States. And they are lifelong friends I am, we had some here but they are not the same, it's just different, you know. You make very special friends when you're in a community, an expat community because of the intensity of of survival, you know. And I think we had easy assignments, people have done Nigeria and Syria, that's much more challenging in the compounds. Yeah I am also I only gravitate towards positive people and I really try not to gravitate toward negative people and I've learned that in Angora. I find I am feeling highly affiliate, I would things of trouble with me and then, that wouldn't work so you know I only communicate with people who are very similar in mind and philosophy as me.

J: well that's a good idea actually. I take that advice from you. I was wondering. Can you tell me a little bit more about your stay in the Netherlands? And also what did you think of Holland? And the Dutch people?

Well I can tell you, I cried and cried when I left Norway. I was given some much to that country, I learned the language, I was a fluent speaker I loved the rugged mountains, I loved the freedom, I loved all of

that. Having said that it wasn't an easy country to live in. in fact, hard to learn the local people and I was only fortunate to learn them through my teacher and through sea scouts. Having done that, we arrived in Holland and we lived in Den Haag, which is right in the center of town, and two nights later, out of our windows down the canal was a band playing and they were playing Rolling Stone music and we thought wow this is fantastic aren't we lucky, we are right in the center of things, it was so exciting and so it was like coming back to civilization. You know, Norway is beautiful in its isolation and it's like Australia like that. And coming to the Netherlands was balancing and full of life, diversity and interesting places to see and interesting places to visit, so that was very exciting. Certainly, for our children, that's the highlight of their time away living in the Netherlands. I loved where we lived, I loved being out on my bike. And this is one of the things I found interesting because it is one of the density places of the world, high density but you could find your open spaces by getting on your bike, just riding and I think that's just a wonderful wonderful thing about the Netherlands. Frustrated about the traffic and trying to get out in the weekends or anything like that, I think that is horrendous. I didn't look really far into your politics although I could read about your politics. I think it's, I didn't really got involved with that part of my life, met some wonderful Dutch people. I found it important to maintain a balance between meeting Dutch people and learn about the expatriate experience. I was lucky to learn that through the organizations I was involved with. So I think, The Hague and subsequently, we went six years after that we bought a house the second time. We still own a house in the Netherlands because it's so terrible over there, you can't sell anything but we own a house. We bought it two doors down from where we rent it so our neighbors are still the same neighbors. And they are very very good friends and they've been out to Australia twice and great friends. Their daughter was with us for two months this year. So yeah, I felt very much at home when I returned this year, everything felt so familiar. I don't know, I love going out where you are and going further out, what's the name of the national park going out from Utrecht, you keep going out?

J: Veluwe ?

Yes, loving going out there, once you go out there. I think that's really a beautiful part of the Netherlands as sailing up north. We had friends with a yacht, sail with them. I'm forgetting the names, but you know up there in Friesland. I learned to love wherever I've been but the Netherlands is certainly unique, I think the Dutch are very creative people, very industrious people. I have to say they are very special people; I really have to say that. I loved having Sophie, our neighbors daughter, she's 19 she came a year ago she came over and she spend two months with us and it was really lovely because I could see quite a

different person to an Australian 19-year old. I think very freethinking, very independent. She was definitely very independent, free-spirited girl, keen to try everything, and to explore and very positive. So yeah, I think it really sums it up really.

J: What do you miss the most about the Netherlands or don't you miss anything?

Let me think, what do I miss?

J: It could be something like hagelslag or so

No, I never really like hagelslag. The food, I don't miss the food actually. I think, I suppose I miss the long summer nights, although it is almost summer here, the nights are coming up but it is still dark by 5.30 pm so I miss those lovely beautiful evenings where you could be out till midnight. It is just beautiful out there, but they are rare but they are very special when they come. I miss riding my bike, I can ride my bike here but I haven't got on it. No, we haven't got cycle paths as you got, so I miss that. What else do I miss? I miss the spontaneity of the people I think we are far more over governed I think you are over governed but I think that we are very over governed in this country, you know there are laws for everything, you know, health and safety laws, it just drives you up the wall. So I think that sort of aspect, you've got a bit more spontaneity about you. One of the stories they've told us when we were doing the Dutch course was we were all very upset about people having their dogs pooing at your front door. You know, they said to us, you know they won't never; they won't allow their dog to do that in their own neighborhood. She said, people will take them to them to another neighborhood and you had to laugh about that you know. People get really indignant and it doesn't matter where you were, you have to take up that dog poo, fair enough and that's very very true. And that has improved in The Hague, certainly the first time I lived in The Hague, my kids slipped on it and it was right out front of our door, we lived right on the street and one of my friends who lived there she set up a whole foundation to try to range a war against this because she had young children and would go to the playground and found this dog poo in the sand pits and she decided to put Dutch flags on every bit of poo that she found in the street. Yes, she did and she got quite well known for doing that. I don't know if it made a huge difference but she certainly made a point, for people taking responsibility for picking it up. So that's one thing but I don't miss that, I don't miss the dog poo. I miss the canals; I miss those beautiful days in the canals in the water. I think the water is a calming effect for all the people in the Netherlands. I think that is very very special and your history, we don't have that history, I miss that history and the beautiful old buildings and your art and I miss the Maurtiz House because we were around the corner from the Maurtiz House,

just being able to walk there and looking at those beautiful paintings there. That sort of thing you can't get at all here. Other than a truant visit or something like that, that's what I miss.

J: I can imagine. I have a few more questions actually. The comment you made earlier on in the conversation about your husband calling you a bad leaver and good arriver. What does he really mean by that?

He means, I think he means, he means that I embraced living where ever I was 110% 120% and that is because my personality is such that I think I want to make it work and I want to be very inclusive of live and want to make the most of it. As I was talking about it before, reaching out to people and finding out, I like finding out how things work and I like particular the culture. One point in Norway when I was coming into terms with the language and the culture and finding it difficult when people wouldn't say hello to you when you walked past, that sort of things. I decided I would call myself a social anthropologist because I felt that we really had to move close to the culture and try to make head and tail and try to understand it and I embraced that where ever I lived and whether it was through the children's school or through the community, that's what I did so and by doing that I immersed my whole personality, myself into that so when I had to relinquish that and knowing that life would never be the same, I will never have this experience again. It won't be the same when I go back and visit. We've been there, we've done that we have to move on. That's when I really grieved and found it difficult to leave. And I can cry about that now when I thought about that. I think it was very very difficult to leave. And having said that, coming to a new country, although there was a bit of a lull, there was the expectancy that it would be great and that we go through this euphoric time, everything is new and you're excited and you have a bit of dip really. I didn't experience those dips so much, because I really saw opportunities where I would become. I am very much an opportunist and those things didn't really affect me so much although I was a great arriver as I looked at the differences and accepted the differences and tried to get our family together as quickly as possible in a cohesive way. That's what he meant, I think.

J: did you also have, you just said that you have a euphoric state and then you have going into some kind of dip. You didn't really have that, going to the different countries, did you have it coming home?

I think in Norway I possibly did. I think there was a time after nine months I felt very very frustrated. I remember Greg wanted me to open something at the refinery that he refinery manager, he wanted me to speak Norwegian and it was just like, I'm not going to do that and I absolutely refused. I knew I got do

it I just decided I wasn't. I think it was to do with my identity; I didn't want to be seen as his wife and his wife doing his things and his job and in his workplace. So I stubbornly to do it. And I remember, I think then I can feel it now, the whole sort of feeling of, it was certainly related to my identity. What I was, where I was. Then I didn't do it and then I felt a bit of strength and character and he had to do it and then I got over it. And then I thought I can control my own destiny if I want to and so yeah. I think that's probably what that was related to. I can't remember going to the same when we went to the Netherlands and I certainly can't when we went to England. So I certainly do when we went to Norway but that may have to do the stage of life I was in as well.

J: do you have any advice or tips for people now who are abroad and about to go home, go home to their home country?

I think not to have too many expectations, thinking that it's going to be easy. I think that it's very, inevitably you will make comparisons and it's a challenge to even go into the supermarket and see the price of things for example, or to work out things used to be cheap in this country but they are not any longer and of course your whole scenario with wages and things have changed because you're not on an expat salary anymore, I think although it hasn't affected us too much. I can be very poor when you come back and realize you have to budget, you have to live within your means and you can't travel to you want to in any time and so there's lots of things. I think you have to come home really with an open mind, I think you sometimes do suppress and that's really important suppress these whole emotions and you don't express them to yourself and your family. It was interesting when Dycynthia was going into the hospital, she and Christopher and I were all sitting around the table and Chris said it is time for team Loo and the gang and we hadn't said that, the last time we said that was probably when we moved to England, you know you really have to get together as a family and really unit and support one another when you try to adjust to a new country. So that doesn't go away when you go home and that's really important when you come home and I don't think that we appreciated that enough when our kids came home. You know, we just expected them to get on with it and they did they found it really tough and was really lucky to have Chris support her but for Chris who is a much more reflective sort of kid, he at the time found it really hard and I think it must have been really tough. It's not easy and not having too much expectations and getting on with your life and start something new and different. I think it's time to say here I am and I am at this point in my life and what do I really want to do and get on with that. And in that way, you will meet new people and a friend you will relate to as something new in your life. Yeah, it's not easy, but you can do it. Still travel, it is important you can. It's important to go back where you've



been. For me it is, I have many friends who never go back to where they've lived and they've gone back to the States or the UK, but for me who put so much energy and life into where she lived it's really important to do that.

J: do you have anything else you would like to add or say ?

Well one thing we found when we set up the expat it was for Dutch expats this burden of unburden of life and I think for several years we just listen to their story, they had someone who would listen to their story. I validated their whole life and I think you can underestimate the importance of people diarizing their whole life and giving records or sharing their records or sharing their lives with others. I think that's why the strength of the expat archive center is enormous. The potential is enormous, but many a times many a day we wander and we would sit for two hours with you and it was like a counseling session and it was really really important and I think that t I have always been writing dairies and written a book on traveling and I think it is really really important to write down your experiences and bits and pieces. And people that brought in their photos and talk about those photos they became totally immersed in that life. Because as you know and your mum and dad have experienced, you come back and people don't give a stuff, they don't really care and that's why you need something like Outpost or something like archive center to acknowledge that life you had and certainly with Dutch repatriates that was very obviously particular who had lived in Asia who had a lot of support in their home and they come back and you have to pay for it or you do. It's the same here; you have to do your household and housekeeping. And you have to find time to do that. That's something little but it can undo you, really. And it really creates a lot of tension and it is really good if you interview the partners who are working. For Greg, my husband, going to India was a great revelation for him; one they acknowledge his contribution and his expertise, and that really important. He's found it really challenging to reintegrate in Australia and found new positions that he could actually work in, whether they would be born position or the university because he hasn't got a network here and that the other thing really important to think about, to know the don't have a network, they have lived abroad, often we have something called the poor puppy syndrome and we strongly who are you anyway because you moved overseas and you're no better than us and that is very prevalent in this country. So his name is not known here and he's been recognize by the government and that was really important.

## **Transcript interview 2**

J: Start with your preparation of the first posting and walk me through your postings.

I need to begin in 1984, but my husband was working for shell. He just got his first job at shell and that meant spending four months a basic training course in den haag. I decided to go with him. We were married at that time. From at the end of four month period. He was given his first posting. That turned out to be in den haag. I was very happy about that because I was able to find a job. But then the very last minute they said to us we changed our minds, you're going to assen. And all the people in the training course said I go anywhere in the world except for Assen. We had this awful image in our mind of what it was going to be like. We weren't looking forward to it, to be honest. I need to go back a bit because in preparation, before we were on this four months training . the kit in Amsterdam, for intercc training. We were about 30 40 of us. That was the first year they invited partners along. That was big depa, a positive step I would say. I was just a fantastic course. I remember sitting there, ow I can do this. One day I want to do this. We did that icc training. And I am looking back as a repatriate for sixteen seventeen years. That set me up very well for a life on the move. Very good preparation. Just even knowing the basics of culture shock and of what you experience if you go through a culture shock helped me every time I moved. Because you don't get any better in moving, you get better at packing, and planning but you don't actually y get better at psychological side of moving. Because it is a process that you have to go through at time. I did I feel I constantly went back to the training through the years and found it helpful. At the time I left Scotland, I was doing career guiding counseling. I knew it was going to difficult if not impossible to find a job in the Netherlands. So we had a kind of a five-year plan that if we were not happy in five years we would do something different. That is how we approached, we had a five-year plan through our lives. Checking if everything was good. SO the time in Den Haag was fantastic, the four months were amongst the most exciting in my life. The Dutch, half of the course, they stuck together and we didn't see them at all. But the rest of all stuck together, we were all European, so many languages it was just an exciting time for me as a Scottish girl. If I look back, getted to know French people were German of sorts of European people end their partners. We had to handle this move to Assen, it was difficult actually. We spend 2,5 years there and it was probably my least favorite posting. It wasn't bad. I wasn't an ideal for us in many aspects it was quite remote and my husband is a mountaineer. That was quite difficult. The big problem was finding a job, for me. That was really tough. So we I think after six months I could not find a job. I was doing so volunteering work in the Drents bureau that but then, yeah we were thinking maybe I should go back to Scotland and try some commuting thing. But as you know, Assen isn't really easy for a commute. We went on for a bit longer, and one day suddenly I saw this sign in English. We landed in Holland I expected everything in Dutch. I had my degree is in German, it was not so difficult for me to land. Having said that, you can't learn the

language that fast working in a working environment. That's not easy. Yeah, driving along. Saw this sign, English international, and said what do you do if you do it in English, can I have a job? They were teaching English as a second language, mainly to shell people I just begged, I begged, please please try me. I don't have any qualification. He tried me and then ok, teaching as a second language degree. I went back to Edinburgh and stayed with family, got my qualification, got back and was a lot better after that. I worked part time and was far more enjoyable. I actually then, so then, 198. There were only three people, 3 expats who were working in Assen out of hundreds. It was difficult. Yes, I spend 2,5 years there and then we were moved to Melbourne in Australia where we spend 4 years. From there we moved to Bangkok in Thailand for 2,5. From there to newplummers in new Zealand for 6 years. And then we decided to come home.

J: Where is home?

Home at the moment is 13 miles west of Aberdeen, in the north east of Scotland. We live in a small village.

J: Little like Assen?

Much smaller, more like villages like Rolde.

J: Did you have a job every posting? Or just one in Holland

Yes, I did every posting. I was importance for me. I have a desire to have I knew I couldn't have a career in the traditional sense of the work. But I did feel I could go which I did. Basically, I was teaching English in every location. That the perfect move in my career.

J: How long have you been back?

We've been back 13 years and can you tell me something about the return home? Preparation, process of moving, process of reintegration?

There was no preparation. Shell was very good in given that first course. But it was a trial to give a repatriation course but there was none. I knew it was going to be difficult because the Dutch on the course that repatriation that it can be the most difficult move. I was expecting it to be difficult and it turned out to be really difficult. It was awful, awful. It was awful for me, it was awful for my daughter. She was 12 years old. The boys in the family, my husband had no problems and my son who was 8 at the time was fine. So it was the girls who struggled.

J: Is there something specific which you can tell me about, exemplifies part of the struggle?

I think one of the things that is wonderful of being an expat is the excitement/it's exciting. Coming back here was slightly exciting because you know our family and we all had come back. It was nice to think we can drop in now in our families, we can come and live in a fortnight. That feeling goes very quickly. In this country work really hard, compared to the work life in Australia and new Zealand. Or a country like Norway. We more like you. We work very hard. The work life balance is not great here. We struggled with that as well. People are just focused on their jobs, they are tired and don't really have a lot of time for social side of life. So was one thing. I just felt foreign. That was the main thing, I felt foreign. Here I was back in my home country feeling like a foreigner stranger and I never felt that when we came back on home leaves, for our holidays. I never felt it. That's interesting. Coming back living is a whole different ball game.

J: Why was that do you think? Was that because you knew it was going to be difficult.

J: Maybe was it your expectation which was not up to standard?

No, I wasn't expecting to feel foreign. And while doing the icc training I sort of like you got your cup and let's say this cup is empty. And you set of on your adventures. In this cup is poured some Dutch, I think I can chose the things alike of that culture and add it to my own, and into that a bit of Australian the bits that I like and then into that goes Thai and new Zealand. So actually, the cup is completely different to what it was when it left. I see it like fewer Scott And now I'm not I'm something else, I'm a hybrid of different cultures all stuck together. It was the hybrid that was not adjusting very well. We had come from New Zealand, I dropped of the kids for school in the morning and then I would go the local café so I could hear the boys of the waitress who came from New Zealand that made feel at home. I was quite strange. I suppose the thing is, you come back and because we are living in a small village, I think it made it harder. As in Aberdeen, we would be part of the expat community. We chose to come back and live a Scottish life. So it was not to put the kids in an international school we didn't want them to be somewhere their friends were leaving. We wanted them to go to school where 10 years from now they could come back and the same friends also coming back to this village. Had I gone to Aberdeen, thing would have been much much easier. We small village and by the end of the first week, nobody invited us for dinner and that was really strange. When you are on an expat posting, almost the next day, you're invitations you keep going out of their way to make you feel at home. We had fluted back into normal life. Normal life relationships go much much slower. When you are on international assignment, you

have to speed your relationship building up. Otherwise, you'll be gone. So before, you really make a deep friendship with somebody. You end up people telling things you normally tell in the normal. I'm using the word normal, that is a bad word to use, but I can't think of anything else. Yeah in the sort of conventional Society. Relationships, Its just different. It was For a long time to establish friendships in this village

J: Was that one of the most difficult things, getting your social life back?

Yes, I probably think so. Also, because I realized that cause such a high percentage of women work, in Scotland, it is one of highest in Europe. There was nobody. There was literary was no one to socialize with. So that's why I really quickly thought when I thought I have to join them and find something to do. So I went back to the university actually a year after I came back. And after that I , I stuck to the business intercultural training. I think once I got into the study and into the job things improved dramatically. It took me 2 years or 3 years to feel settled. A long time.

J: You been away for 6/7 years. That is a long time

I'm sure the longer you are away the harder it can be. Not for everyone you see, the boys in my family were fine and didn't really suffer. It's about personality as well. I think when you got the corporate culture, you have juggle with two cultures. People with the corporate culture that adds some buffer to the culture they move into. A you got a purpose, you are the person working and moved there for a job, you have a job, you can identify with the corporate culture. Where ever you go in the shell world. I do think it is a lot easier who a person who had the job. Moved around m, much for the accompanying partner.

J: Other things you can name you found difficult?

I found wanted to come neither to my family I found it really claustrophobic. Actually, it is probably different nowadays because we have things like Skype and remember we were going back to a time there was not Skype. We had like a weekly phone call from Australia and New Zealand. And you save up the most important things and that is what you talk about. I think my mum first phoned me about 4, 5 times to say nothing. Just because she could. Very quickly found that very suffocating. I don't want to know her neighbor or this or that. And I felt bad, I felt really guilty about that. But you live a very different life as an expat. You get away from all the interruptions of everyday life.

J: Do you consider yourself a repatriate? Do you feel completely back home?

Not, no, well I am very settled, but I think one final posting before my husband retires. He is 55 he could actually retire now, but I think. I certainly like one more posting somewhere. I would never, having said that, I would never give up my house. My home, my village. I do love it here. I don't regret coming back, you know it was the right decision. A good decision at a good time. It was just hard. I do think if we could have had some sort of repatriation workshop that would have been beneficial. People underestimate the difficulty of going home.

J: Was it a really thought through decision or inspired by shell, you have a job back at home?

I was very carefully thought out decision because there were a lot of factors, actually. The first factor to choose to go home, before then shell policy was to move people from a to b to c with no choice or what so ever. At some point, 20 years they changed that policy and allowed you to apply for a posting. For the first time it became possible to actually choose where we might want to go. Then on top of that, a few things happened. Our daughter was 12 years old, she was coming up for secondary school, she already was in 3 different education systems. She was going to have to go old girl school in new Zealand and neither of us had had an experience ourselves. We didn't really want that for her. Then I had a dream, where my dad came to the door of my house, I didn't have a house e in this point. In my dream, I had a home it was somewhere here. I came down, ran down, opened the door and it was my dad and it was so over with joy to see him because he dropped in. I woke up the feeling of disappointment was immense. And I thought this is what chance you have, you cannot have someone dropping in for coffee. I thought wooo maybe it is time to go home. And a few days later we actually got a phone call from my husband's sister and just been with Ms. Yeah. So you know it's like some all factors all combined to think just give it a go and see how it goes on. No, let go home permanently and see if we like it.

J: Again, a five year plan?

Yeah.

J: Referring to Scotland as home. Did you always consider it home?

I thought very patriotic, even though we were amazing travelers, we are in that sense more like the Dutch, although we traveled to every corner of the world very strong sense of home, here in Scotland. However, I always felt I had two homes. Home I was living and I had had my Scottish home. And actually, it always interests me, we had some other friends and they had two children the same age as my children. They had a house back home in England and their boys all was, they didn't refer as home, they

referred to England as home, the family always referred to England as home. Now very early on when we got children we actually made a decision that to us it was crazy to teach that their home was somewhere they weren't even born and would only four weeks a year in . it was really important to create a home for them and that should be where ever we were living. That is what we did. We always wanted the children to think that where ever we live is home and the place that we visit was mum and dad's home. That's where granny lives and that is not their home. It is for my son definitely for my daughter. She is the older one. Very much an international child. Third culture. My sons interested he is arrives here age 8, and he is no 28. He is not Scottish in the way a lot of Scotts are but anti-English for example. He never said . but when you hear it, you absorb it. But things absorbed, maybe we got their late enough. That is one difference from the average Scottish person that makes him a bit different.

J: What was your idea of Scotland when you were away, before coming back. Did you have an idea of what Scotland would like or did you just not think about it?

I knew what Scotland looked like. I was coming home every year. I very romantic idea of Scotland in their heads. I would fly back from Australia, I would get in the plane in London, heading north to Scotland. I know looking out of the window and knew we were in Scotland and I would cry. Scots are sentimental people. I think we have a similarity with Dutch people but there are also some major differences. I think that is one of them, we are very very sentimental people. We love it.

J: Did that meet your expectations?

I think there were a lot of things that disappointed me. That was not merely repatriation. It is more that it is your own country and you feel it should be better . for example, my son played cricket from the age of five, he arrived here at age eight. I tried to find some cricket. They said, Children aren't able to play cricket when they are nine. And I was like I watched he play for three years and he can play cricket. So that's when you say what is wrong with this stupid useless country. Not much wonder and unhealthy. Multiply by that with lots of little things that happen when you are in that second stage of culture shock you become very irritable. You always compare and contrasting what you have, in nz they are much more, much better. It is such a curious thing as you know on another level I just love my country.

J: What was your image of Holland?

I never been before until I arrived there. I found a really busy that was a big problem for me. I mean there where we live in Scotland it is empty. Much emptier than Drenthe or Friesland. Much emptier. I

just found it quite busy. The communication style I struggled with because it is very direct. I can say that now looking back because I understand what it is all about. At the time, I thought a lot of Dutch people were very rude in the way they communicated. Another thing I found negative is that we moved to assen a lot of the mentality people did things in big groups, all organized, groups and groups. People liked to do things in groups. We are the exact opposite. We try to get away from people. When we go out for a walk here, our idea of lovely walk is not to see anybody else. That is a cute walk. Or when you see someone in the distance, we need lots of space because we have lots of space. So that was a problem. But what I liked the fact that society functions very well , it is very ordered cause it has to be. And of course, with time, 16 years abroad that we lived in Holland, we made a lot of Dutch friends and massive contact with Dutch people through shell. Some that really understand Dutch culture a lot better. That is now coping better with the Dutch communication because I understand it. I liked straight forwardness of people. And I think that there are a lot of similarities between the scots and the Dutch. Proletarian and Calvinistic, we work hard, then I think there is a difference. Dutch are very stoic, strong and non-sentimental. The scots are very sentimental and soft.

Three other women working. Several hundred expats partners. Most of them did not work.

J: Did you stick together with those three?

I don't think I would say we stick together we were all working doing our things. I found it difficult to fit with the expatriate lifestyle it didn't fit with what I needed form life. A lot of the expatriate would go out for aerobics class, they got mahjong group. It wasn't who I was. Working was always been important to me. That's what I wanted to do.

J: Did you look up likeminded people? Other expats?

I didn't really look up any other expats because I didn't really know who they were and the other thing is that going back in the 30 miles out of the city. There is not an expat community here. There are a lot of men who work abroad. A month off and month back in Nigeria. There is a lot of population who do those kinds of things. Maybe it would have helped if I were able to speak with people who were in the same thing as me. I guess it is kinda difficult for the company to run such a course, when you're dealing with such small numbers. It would take 6 months to get people in to form a course. By which time people who have been here longer would think they don't need it anymore.

J: Have you given reintegration course?



I haven't here. Just very that very reason that I was working primarily with shell that was a problem. There were not enough people to form a course. If I had left to other companies that might have been possible. At that time I was studying, a family, had my own company. I had a contract with shell and I didn't really need to

J: Training you had in Holland, did you learn about expatriates the whole adjusting, but did you also specific things about Holland, cultural things/

I think we had, I can't remember what it was called, it was general intercultural training, which is important to have. A lot of people I'm doing business in china I need to know all about Chinese culture. You do but before that, you need to learn about your own culture. Move away from this essentialist view of the world. You can only do that if you have general icc training. I do know that people who were going to the more difficult postings, like Africa or south east Asia, they did get a session on the customs and habits and culture. I think it was because it is Europe, it ridiculous expectation you will be fine because you are in a similar country. I didn't expect it to be big difference with the Dutch because it was just over the water. But there were.

J: Do you have any advice?

Get on some form of repatriation training it would be a very good thing. Apart from that, I would say expected to be difficult. Keep busy, very quickly. A lot of people don't get active fast enough so there in the second stage of culture shock and at the time you don't feel like doing stuff, you are not in a great place. Get active, As quickly as you can . it is a process you have to go through. You can't speed it up. It will just happen.

Two things that really annoy about Scottish, is one the anti-English feeling and didn't notice it before I left the counter and the second thing is the extreme drinking. It is also something that foreigners always remark on Aberdeen. The drunk in the cities. I was really shocking to coming back and to see that.

### **Transcript interview 3**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

Our departure to Holland was in 1991, so quite a long time ago. We were both leaving from England, it was my husband's first job after he had studied in Birmingham University, he did a PHD there. I had worked full-time. So when we left to Holland we had three months in The Hague. He was going to do a

training course, so was doing a training course for three months. We knew that after that three months we would be moved somewhere and we didn't really know where. so for me it was quite big change as I was leaving full-time employment and moving to another country, you know moving away to another country and not having any work. I was about 25, 27, 28. I was still very keen to work and I wasn't quite ready to have any children. When we were in The Hague, after a few weeks I became quite restless and I found it quite difficult because the initial pleasant experience became reality, the somewhat mundane every day, what I'm going to do with myself to fill my time and enjoy myself was quite hard to deal with. So , and I actually ended up, I probably should have mentioned that, I am teacher and I actually ended up contacting the British School in the Netherlands, in the Hague. They were actually quite happy to take me on and do some supply work. So I had had a lot of works but a few days, which were good. Because when we were actually then posted, after the three months we were sent to Assen, in the north of Holland. That was good, because in the north they have another branch of the British School in the Netherlands. Because I had already made contact with the basis in The Hague, it helped with feeling involved again. Although I wasn't working, I was only doing volunteer work. The school was small, there wasn't a lot of opportunities there for work so , am I going on too long?

J: Please go on. If you don't hear me then I'm listening. I don't want to interrupt you.

J: If I go on too long please interrupt.

J: You have plenty of time

So when I went to Assen, it is quite a different field in the north. As you know, The Hague is quite busy and buzzing and probably a lots of opportunities I could've probably work in a Dutch school as well, I thought, it was quit teaching English. But it was quite different when we went to Assen. For more farming country a slower peaceful life. I actually liked being up there because I'm not really a city person. So I like the more open space. But obviously, the opportunities weren't so much. I actually ended up teaching after a while, probably after six months. A job in a in school in Groningen, a private school. Teaching English to international children. That was really nice, but I was only for a day-and-a half and I really wanted to work full-time so after a year., a post came up in the British school in the Assen. I was able to get that job. I stayed there for two and a half year, maybe three years actually. I really enjoyed staying in the Netherlands. Actually, the first time my husband and I were earning money together. Probably the last time we were both earning money, together. So it was good. We made lots of friends, we were free spirits, we were able to go away in the weekend. We weren't students and you know me

having to work, in ad dorm as well. Money wasn't actually spilling over, it was quite a difficult time. It was great in Holland I w-would say out of all postings, that was the one I really enjoyed a lot and found quite fulfilled with. And then after do we need to talk a bit more about Holland?

J: I would also like to hear about your different postings.

J: Holland was the first posting right?

I tell you what we did right after that. I was there from 1991 to 1994. In 1994, we left and we had a posting in Oman the least and again it was a big change. Going from Europe to being in the Middle East where the culture was very different, the climate was really different. It was also a camp life we were living. All people we were living with, or amongst, were all Shell people. And that was my first experience with a camp and it was quite difficult when you've been living in a city and you feel anonymous in a situation, living in that camp, and socializing with people your husband is working with. It all quite incestual. I didn't really feel happy with that, I did manage to do some work. School, which was again in, it was a Shell school. It was called Pedu school. I worked there three times a week. That was good, I didn't really work more than that because we then decide we wanted to have children. We then our first child, not in Oman but actually to come back to school and have him and didn't really felt confident to have birth in Oman because of the more primitive side of the hospital and medical situation. A lot of women did but I just felt like, I was just happy with that. I came back and then we had, we were in Oman for 1994 to 1998. So we had four years there. After Oman, we left and we decided then we wanted to go back to Scotland. Because we wanted to put some roots done. Once we had children, it was funny, we changed about international life, expat life, we felt that it was important for our kids to have a bees. And for us as well to have a fees. We came back to Scotland and we lived here for, from 1998 until 20005. We were in Scotland. 1998, when we came back I was pregnant with my second child, he was born just after we came back. So, that was again a big change, sometimes I think that coming back to Europe home country would be a lot easier than going anywhere else. But one of the things I found the hardest, was living in in Aberdeen, we had a situation, you had all the choices to make, where you bought your house, what type of house you bought and in Scotland we have a situation we have to live near a school and in that environment and in that you go to a particular school. You might want to get into a good school and therefore you have to live in that area, so for having had your house to you, the school shown to you, your job shown to you and the shops shown to you when we were in Oman, suddenly choice around were you know it was quite difficult to decide, ok we are going to be here for a long time, hopefully we make the right decision and we want have our kids educated. So that was quite hard and took quite a lot

of time. Housing was difficult to get because house prices were really really high, a lot of competition, a lot of relocation in Aberdeen. As in London, to Aberdeen that was causing a big influx in the house and lots of competition. You went and get a house, in fact, we had to I think bit four or five plans on house, we were unsuccessful. That was obviously, you go. We rent an accommodation for quite a period of time. That was quite hard. I think everyone has this grizzly picture of what your house will look like going back to your country and suddenly you know, it was tough.

J: Did you also have that rosy idea going back and expectation of how it would be?

Yes very much. The idea of all the things I was feeling, I wasn't getting when I was in Oman. You came stronger the drawback to Scotland, and when that actually happened it was actually quite tough. It was probably quite difficult because we were trying to sell our house in Scotland and it had become a different sale. Basically, because we had tenants in it and they were not getting out and we had to dangle down with an obituary mortar. In some way, our whole settling was deleted because we had to deal with this. This crock case, the guy who had been renting, was along the pay rent and we were trying to evict him and try to sell the house and move on as well. So it was difficult. But that is life, sometime when you, people as an expat you don't experience a lot of the reality of life and kids don't get when you're living on these camps it can be quite focused on family and so you know mum dad and the children. Usually the dad is the one who is working and the mum doing the shopping and those kind of stuff. They don't really get to see old people expect from their grandparents they see every time they go back to the UK. But they are not seeing them in the real world of times. It was in some way, the whole business being on the camp felt like false. Having said that, in 2005, when we had our two kids then, my husband was given the opportunity to go abroad again. We kind of thought this is something we should do. Both the boys didn't really experienced living abroad. Because Andrew the oldest one had his first three years when he was in Oman, he didn't remember anything about it. We thought it would be great a foreign posting. With both the boys, they were both older. The one was nine the other was five. We had the opportunity to go to Malaysia. Again, it was something we choose to do because we wanted the kids the experience of living abroad and give them the experience of life and mix in with other people and give them the opportunity to learn about different cultures, practices and the world. So we left, in 2005, and I think we had probably a really family time there. From the first couple of years, we did a lot of traveling, it was exciting, and then we had the situation that my older school had to go to boarding school in order to carry on with his education. He could have gone back to Scotland and boarded, but we didn't wanted that. We had the opportunity for him to go to a school in Brunei, which was a two-half-

hours drive away. So we boarded him and he came back on the Friday night and he left on the Sunday. So he was away for a week. That was hard. He was really happy because he was really happy we felt we could carry on with it. I was happy with the situation but I felt that he was happy, we all had to, you know, carry on. Get on with it. It was a great grounding, I must admit. He is now going to the university. He is doing math in . he is quite independent and quite used to living away from home because he did it when he was young. I'm talking about my kids, I shouldn't talk about my kids.

J: after Malaysia, did you go anyplace else?

No, after Malaysia, we came back home. In 2009, that was December 2009. So home in 2010. We had 5 years in Malaysia. We came back and came back ever since. We came back because my oldest was about to go into important life of secondary school when they need to start do work for their qualification for going to the university. We felt he had enough of living abroad and it was again time for them to be young people in their home country. And, they were teenagers and I think when you're a teenage it is important to have normal life around you. And to build up experiences of getting the boss in the town, being independent becoming a bit more street wise other than you would have become if we had stayed in the campsite in Malaysia.

J: can you tell me a little bit more about coming back the first time and also the second time. Was it different?

The second time was different because we had our house established. Having the house established. We had rented this house out, coming back to this house it means a huge difference. We didn't need to hunt for a house. The first time that took two years which that was long. I guess a lot of the decision-making had been done the first time and you know, it was a lot easier the second time. Having said that, my husband didn't come back with us. He had to finish off his work and there wasn't a job for him here. So we had about four five months on our own back in the house. It was unfortunate actually, was also had sudden damage to the house because the winter was really cold. When the tenants moved out, we had a burst pipe, it created a lot of damage to the living room, so we were inconvenienced by that. I had to spend a lot of my time on that on my arriving back, sorting that out. That was quite time consuming. I tried to find builders, dealing with the insurance. It was fine. I spend about 8 years to, just trying, trying to get familiar with things again, setting up the house again, establishing the boys, I chose to go back to work. But shain, after about a year, I carried on with supplied thing, just twice a week in Aberdeen city. So that's been good.

J: can you tell a little bit more about the reintegration. Coming back, figuring out how everything works, can you specify or give an example?

For me, coming back it was it all felt all quite familiar. Because in a way we had only left Scotland for 5 years. We did had the opportunity to go on a course that Sheila young organized. Through Shell, shell had this system called Outpost, when new people come back, not only foreign people, you know natives. When we reintegrated there's a course, which I don't think it runs anymore which is a shame. I don't know if shell stopped it or that they couldn't find people. But it was a course basically to reintroduces us to Aberdeen, I think there were about six of us about it. We talked about Scottish culture, practical things, how to set up a bank account/situation. How to know to reconnect your phones, basic things you know, services and what they were for. It was useful not so for much for me, but it was to be able to go to that meet people who were coming back and

J: People With similar experiences?

Yeah. I think it was much more useful for someone coming to Scotland for the first, you know, foreign, for us it was useful but not as useful as for them.

J: Did you have this course the first time or the second time or both times?

Just the second time actually. I don't think it was running the first time. I can't remember. But when we used to arrive in a foreign country, as we arrived in Oman and in Holland, there weren't courses like there being set up for the newcomers. It was basically coffee mornings, meeting people, here's your. We used to have what they call a meet and greet lady who would come and welcoming you and give you a pack with information about how to, as I was saying, how to connect your phone and how to get your services back on. So a lot of the Shell wives had put together a magazine that would help you commerce find it easier to find things. Set things up. That was, I find it quite funny, it was called the meet and greet lady. In Scottish, greet is a word, it is a cry. So like you know she would come and meet you and you greet. In Scottish, they felt like.

J: Can you a little a bit more about. You are now back for quite some time. Do you feel like a repatriate.

No, I don't. we have shell club where we can go sometimes and it is equivalent any club that you would find in any shell country in any shell posting. I never feel as if I'm somebody who is not Scottish there, I always feel very Scottish, very you know blending in. you can look around and see a lot of foreign people from foreign countries. And I feel very much native here.

J: can you a bit more about your stay in the Netherlands, more specifically what you think of it and the Dutch of course.

Of all my post as I, say I really enjoyed it. I think I I was at my happiest there. We met some great friends we had remained our friends. Since. It was quite wonderful Dutch girl but she was married to a British man. She was a shell wife. What a terrible name, shell wife. She still lives in Holland, but I. so we met great people. I really liked Holland. I loved the shops, the shops were fantastic and just so different than the Scottish shops. I loved the Hague. Probably more than Amsterdam, the sofistaction. I loved the idea of cycling. I used to cycle to work every day. We used to go up to Groningen. Take the train and enjoy friet met. Bitterballen, I can still remember. Enjoy. But I really, I am not saying not just because your Dutch. Of all my posting, I really enjoyed. I don't know it was because I was working, I knew that working provided a lot of fulfilment in my life. I'm not really that much a career person. I think it to be when you are married to a shell guy. So I was thankful for what I am . I was really fulfilled and I had my boys. I see my role as a mum at foremost. I think the postings we went on were just necessary tick of the boxes as Holland. It was exciting. We were aspirational, we had freedom we both felt fulfilled whit our new roles. We had a great house I guess it was just the contrast, not being so well off no having all these things and enjoy the country. It felt different but not that different. If we gone from Scotland to Oman that would have been a big big change. There is so much to get used to. We were going abroad in a more gentle way . so cushioned. If you go with a company. They are you are not taking so much of risks. It is not as if you're setting it all up and doing it yourself. The Dutch people were not friendliest of people, I got friendly with some at work. They were Dutch. I didn't make an awful lot of friends who were Dutch and living in Holland and you know. I guess in Assen there was a bit of transient feeling about us because the Dutch would see us coming and going. And the necessarily make a big effort because you would move off. We didn't really make Dutch friends. We friends that we did made were probably international people who were working at Shell. And were good in having an international life as well.

J:What do you miss the most about the Netherlands? Can be something silly like licorice

What I really liked was koffieboontjes. Chocolate beans, coffee bean inside, they were good. Some of them were pure chocolate. I really liked them. I liked the cycling and going out on a Sunday weekend, we often take our bikes and go cycling. We also did a lot of hashing, running in the woods, we would follow trails, we don't do that kind of that things now. We had time at our hands. We were volunteering, that was a great way to see a bit of the countryside. It was pretty boring and flat. One of the things I didn't like was the monotonous of the flatness, especially in the North. We, it was I guess an opportunity for us

to travel for the first time. We had money, Europe was so accessible, we went over to Germany and enjoy the Christmas market and we went down to Champagne region. We did a holiday there. It was just a gateway to opportunities. We did a lot of skiing. Took the overnight trains. I loved the flowers, I used the 10 guilders in Groningen on a Saturday on the end on the market and get three big bunches of flowers. You had fresh flowers in your house. Every week three bunches. God know how much that would cost here. The cheese as well , the old farmhouse cheeses. The food wasn't al that great. You don't do suppers. So we did enjoy steak and chips up in Groningen. Good rib eyes. Friets met.

J: Any advice who is now in the stay abroad and in Holland or anywhere else and on their way home? Any advice to this do that?

I think one of the most important things is that you enjoy, it so obvious, if you're going abroad, you've got to be able to the opportunities to be ready to take the opportunities that the county offers. Not sit there and feel sorry for yourself, and you know, try to just make the most of where you are. It can be hard at times, you can be missing your family or feel the change that you've experienced is it is so different. You might have to give up work or your kids, or whatever. There is no point in going abroad if your actually take on the chance of the country and enjoy the experiences it has to offer. You just got to make sure to make the most of it.

J: and for the return home? You have to make of it the most of it?

I would say wherever it is, don't always think that it's going to be, this image of, you been, idyllic when you come back, sometimes as I expressed you can think of the home country and the romantic things, that you have, that you owned, it's not necessarily going to be like that quickly. As I see, you used to complain about the opportunities buy another house, have a house in a certain house. We used to be told that our kids would go to this school when we were abroad. And suddenly when we came back you have all these options and it can be quite breath taking . complaining not having, is certainly , the reality of it is quite hard to get right. I think that's probably, be more realistic, it is not going to be as easy as you think you will.

J: I remember, your expectation may not be reality.

Yes, that is right.



**Transcript interview 4**

J: first if all thank you for participating. Did I send you a topic list. Or not?

I just go through it.

J: The main idea is that I don't really interview you, I just go through the topics, I'm interested in and you just tell me everything you want to tell me.

Ok

J: Topic list, is about your departure from your home country, and your stay in the Netherlands and I also like to hear about your integration to your home country, the whole expatriate repatriate experience. And I tell you in advance I'm really fond of all the stories I hear. I found it very interesting and I don't get bored, so I don't want you to bore me with your stories. I find them fantastic. Nothing is too much, nothing is irrelevant, I love to hear everything.

OK, I hope I can remember everything; I've been back for quite a while now.

J: So where do you want to start. Do you want to start with the first departure?

We left Scotland early 2000; my daughter was almost three when we left to The Hague. It was quite a difficult time. When we had my daughter I had worked for twenty years up till that point, we had her, moved to Aberdeen and I just got into this motherhood thing, not working and having a child when we decided we were going to move to The Hague. So it was a lot to take in in one time. It was the move; it was other things as well. I was really apprehensive I must say about moving because we're a very close family and although it wasn't far away, it was still the idea of breaking things and so. It was quite a difficult move. We initially were moving for two years; well it was one plus one that made it a much easier because back in my mind I thought if it does not work out, I can move back here and it is not really long so that made me feel a bit better out of most. Friends who had moved since, talking to them, they seemed to take comfort in the fact that they are all moving for a short period of time. So psychological. The move went well and well I don't know how much information you need, initially we were in a sort of transit accommodation so that was a bit more difficult. We did not have our own personal things so; we were living in an apartment that wasn't ours and so all unfamiliar settings, unfamiliar surroundings, though it took quite a bit to getting used to. The company my husband worked for had a good supportive network so they had a kind of department that took you under their wing and giving you lots of

information of what's there to do and how to meet new people, so that was really good, really good. And because my daughter was small, she was just a baby, she was two-and-a-half, I made a big effort to meet people with children, you know. So toddler groups, so yeah that was really good.

J: and Holland was your only stay abroad?

Yep, this was our only stay. We initially we're going for two years, but we ended up staying for eight. Because we absolutely loved it and The Hague was absolutely fantastic and we met some gorgeous new people, made some really good friends and I ended up living in a part of town that wasn't really expatty so we decided we didn't want to go down that routine expat route and live where it was predominantly expat, so we stayed in a part of the city that was traditionally part of town. And our landlord, we rent a terrific apartment a quite historic part of town. And our landlord was a neighbor and the neighbors became good friends and they were just fantastic. So we still see each other now, we still visit each other and so yeah that was a fantastic aspect, moving to The Hague and meeting these new fantastic people. So yeah we loved it, we absolutely loved it. We loved the life, we loved the fact that everything was so flat and everyone cycled and embraced that whole Dutch lifestyle, yeah it was great. Unfortunately, my Dutch was never great, I did take Dutch lessons but I do understand quite a lot. I do know if it's my Scottish accent but everyone was always so keen to speak English, I'm not making excuses; everyone was always so keen on speaking English. My daughter went to a British school because we thought we were only going to be there for a short period of time, so we sent her to a school that was British and English speaking so she didn't go to the Dutch school, she wasn't incorporated in the Dutch school system. I think that would have made a difference, I'm sure my Dutch would have been much better. We loved it, we absolutely loved it.

J: yes Dutch is a difficult language and all the Dutch people enjoy speaking English and they always want to practice

Yes everyone told me that and everyone said its ok its ok and my pronunciation is quite OK because it's quite a glottal language and it's a bit like Scottish so my pronunciation was ok but I had wrong quite a lot of time and my confidence dipped. It was a lot. And after we left my Dutch friends were like yeah yeah don't worry were going to parties and everybody will be speaking Dutch but I was like yeah yeah getting it all wrong. But my Dutch friends were all like if you wanted to learn you would have learned by now ...so it was good, it was really good.

J: after eight years you returned to your home country /yah/ and you've been there, if my math is correct, for five years? /yeah that's right yeah/ so what can you tell me about your return home. How did that go? Actually the same or.

It's funny because we had only lived here for a short period of time before we moved to The Hague and all our family living in different parts of Scotland, so Aberdeen in itself was quite new from when we left. So coming back it was strange, it was really strange, because a lot of my friends although we kept in touch, I kept in touch with my close friends, we didn't really see them over the years because we didn't travel much back to Aberdeen because for holidays we would go to Glasgow or wherever our families were. So we didn't really come back to Aberdeen, at all, I think. I came back once because I had some work to do in the house but we kept our house and rent it out while we were away. And we came back and the house was a mess. So that was, you know a big blow. That was a big downer. People've known, people were down here a lot of them were still around but I has some kind of reluctance to barge back into their lives and I felt like they had moved on with their lives and I had been living somewhere else for three years, and not that I did not have the right to barge in but it seemed things were different. We all had grown up, our children were all older and I had a few really close friends and I still, we picked up where we left but for those people, we were just acquaintances and organized things for the kids before we left. I didn't really pick up the things. that was the difficult thing, coming back and like, my daughter was a lot older, she was eleven, and a lot more independent, and when I took her to school, the first time we came back, I expected a lot of gaze or picking up acquaintances but it didn't happen because a lot of kids were walking to school and their parents would just open the doors and throw the kids right out. So I didn't really got the chance to get right back to that socializing. So that was quite difficult to start with. But yeah, it did feel strange; it did feel strange coming back. And everything was different. Our lives had moved on and we had big plans for the house when we came back and that took over my life in a bit. So one aspect that was, just before we left Aberdeen, my life had changed because I had a child, I had worked for 20 years and I had this child early on in life and then coming back I hadn't really had the time to think about what I had to do with my future so I felt under pressure a bit, to get back home, looking for a job, getting myself out there, start working, and I hadn't really giving myself the chance to think about what I really wanted to do. That was difficult. I put a bit of pressure on myself, think. Yeah it was strange; it was quite strange coming back.

J: can you point out one specific example, moment that is really symbolic that it was difficult for you? Because you say it is difficult, it was strange but can you try to explain?

I was probably more I was different and I was changed, you know. We had left this place years before and then enjoyed a kind of different life, you know. It was really really sociable; we met a lot of friends in The Hague who became really close friends. We saw a lot of each other and we had a great social life. And coming back, it was very quiet. I didn't really know it, it seems bizarre but I felt a bit like a fish out of water. I didn't really quite fit in and yeah I had to start making new friends, I think that was the biggest problem. I felt a bit isolated. The city wasn't drastically changed, the house wasn't drastically different I think it was me who was different. I needed a social life, that was the problem, I needed to build up new friendships, new friends, it think that was it yeah yeah.

J: you said you had worked for twenty years and then you became a mother and after a short time, you left. In Holland when you find a bit of order did you find a job or did you stay at home with your daughter?

Yeah I stayed home, I did a few things, I set up gates, or scouts you have in the Netherlands. I set up a quite a British equivalent, brownies and rainbows and gains and that sort of things. And I set up a unit in The Hague with a friend and we did that for six or eight years for the time, we were there. So that took up quite a lot of time and yeah my friend ran a shop in The Hague and I did a bit in the shop and but it wasn't anything serious, I hadn't gone back to full-time work and I didn't even feel about doing so when we lived in The Hague. Because although we lived there for eight years our contract was originally two and it kinda grew and each contract was kinda for a year or two years so we never really knew how long we were going to be there. So I never really felt compelled to do something, fill time you know. I had quite a traditional view of bringing up my family, if I had the opportunity to do it and not have to work then I decided I would do it and I just took on that kind of traditional role.

J: and now, back home in Aberdeen, are you still at home or did you pick up where you left off?

I haven't, I didn't go back, I haven't been back to work. Actually when we moved back home we had huge plans for the house. So we've had massive renovation work done that took approximately three-and-a-half years, and I have been involved with that and it probably over the last year-and-a-half that we've been a bit more settled, so I haven't gone back to full-time employment and the initial panic that I had when I moved back to Aberdeen so what subsided and a lot of people said it's just some kind a neiger reaction , coming back home and be with other people and find people. No, I haven't gone back to work and I am still a lady of leisure.

Well it sounds like you do keep busy. Renovating and that sort of things, it's not easy. Do you think that helped that you had something to do? In Dutch you say om handen.

Yeah something to keep my time with, to take my mind of things, yeah probably. Yeah you know, the career that I had for the last twenty years wasn't necessary something I wanted to do for the future. I was involved with, I worked for a big telecommunication company as a training manager, so I traveled the country and I didn't have a lot of time at home and I didn't really saw myself in that kind of role again, you know. Being absorbed for work for twenty-four hours a day, so you know. It wasn't a case of going back to work it was a case of finding something else to do. Once I got that frizzled out I got involved with the control management of the house so that all frizzled out yeah. I'm more content now not working and I'm thinking about skill, doing some voluntary work or something that doesn't take up all of my time.

J: we talked about your reintegration a little bit and you said it was really strange because Aberdeen was quite new when we left and when we came back it was also a strange city. Was it really the city or did you have somewhere in the back of your mind the feeling but it is my home country?

Yeah, I knew, I can take that from the back that, when we were back in Scotland, we wanted to see the family and jump in the car and drive there. So that was good, that was nice. To know that we could visit any weekend and go down and see my mum during the weekend. That was a big plus, that was a big plus. And although The Hague is only an hours-flight back, it is still; it is still an hour a week on a plane. It is not the same as jumping in a hute and driving and although it wasn't far away, we could have been on the other side of the world that would make the difference you know.

J: do you think emotionally it doesn't matter it was the other side of the world or just an hour away with the plane?

Well, most of the time. Well I may same it could have been on the other side of the world but I have friends who live in Brunei, Sacry, but realistically if we would have lived there and not in The Hague, I think I would have felt quite differently. There's no doubt. When you live further away, you feel that distance a lot more. The fact that we lived in The Hague, there's no doubt in my mind that, I wasn't really easy even though it was close you could pack up the car and jump up the ferry and being back in the UK for a couple of hours. It definitely, I'm sure it would have been much different if we had lived much further away but there is still that, you know, you can't go home really quickly. When I was living in The Hague, my father was taking ill rather quickly and he died while we were there. And although we were so

close, I still didn't have time to go back so you know. It is when something like that happens that you realize, although, saying that, if I had lived in Aberdeen and he in Glasgow, the same would have applied. Still couldn't go back home if I was living in Aberdeen so that still applied. You still cannot pack up the car and leave. Yeah

J: yes that the distance is bigger than more than an hour away.

Yes, that's right, that's right.

J: what is the biggest thing of your reintegration that you remember, something funny or something new that you thought, gosh, is this really my country

That's a good question. That's a good question. I suppose the scale, I remember the first time I went to this huge, out of town, not shopping malls but more like a big warehouse shoppy place and I remember the first time I was there and I thought, when we moved to The Hague there wasn't even a big supermarket and everyone shopped every day and you went out and shopped and it was, not a much simpler kind of life, but everyone just didn't go to the really big supermarket shops and there weren't really great supermarkets. When I came back home, the first time I went to the big huge supermarkets I thought Ow my god, I think two -store supermarket and I thought Ow man, when we moved to The Hague, I think you had two packages of cornflakes to choose from and when I went back I thought ow my, I had too much choice to choose from. That was quite extreme. I got used to that quite quickly though.

J: It is convenient, everything in one place.

Yeah that was a big thing.

J: and do you consider yourself a repatriate

It was funny, living in The Hague; I didn't feel like an expat, it felt like home to me. It certainly felt like home to my daughter, she spent eight years there. She still considers herself, she's like, I'm Dutch too and you know. No, I don't consider myself an expat at all, no, no.

J: funny. Did you receive any training before going to Holland or when you came back?

No, training as in, opportunities if you wanted to work. Training, I had Dutch lessons but that was about it really.

J: so no training in the sense of if you want to take the train you have to buy a ticket by the lovely lady and you have to stamp it, no ?

No that was weird, getting a strippenkaart and how to use it. Yeah that was funny because it was very different the strippenkaart, when we moved in at first, no one really explained the machines or that the machines are actually on the trams or on the bus stops. No there wasn't, no information about that.

J: and the return home, you didn't get any information like that either.

We did go, it was called Welcome back to Aberdeen, it was mainly for foreign people who recently had moved back, Scots, or had repatriated to Aberdeen. So there were lots of nationalities. That was really interesting. That went into a lot of detail national health system and statute and all that sort, history. I found that was really interesting. There's the same thing, the same things applies in The Hague, I must be honest, a group with Shell and it's called Outpost and it's this whole unit of, you probably heard of it, to a support group for expats, and you can ask them anything you like. If you got a question then you could just called and asked what should I do with this strippenkaart. You know, when I moved to The Hague, they would have told me. Yeah, that support element was there. I do consider myself quite lucky that we moved with a company like Shell who have a good support network.

J: I know Outpost, Outpost is actually the place where I started finding people to interview. Via via I wound up with you and my main contact is at Outpost in The Hague.

Very helpful.

J: Even for students who want to write their thesis about repatriation.

The wealth of information on every country that shell has employees. I could have found out everything I wanted. Maybe because I had at child I didn't used Outpost as much as some people did. It can be really useful if you're an adult with a grown up child, or no children at all, you know. They have a huge number of contacts, as for me, I was too involved with my young child, taking her to school and I met lots of new people in her school. That was a big help for me.

J: yeah I can imagine. Your image of the Netherlands, before you went to the Netherlands. What was your view, everyone walking in wooden shoes or?

No! I had no preconceived ideas at all. Yeah, I knew that people didn't wore clogs anymore, the only thing I knew was a Dutch football team and Ronaldo, I thought he was gorgeous so. I really liked the idea,

I knew it was flat and small hills, but I didn't go round thinking people walked around in clogs. No. no any kind of preconceived ideas actually.

J: you went quite blank.

Yeah, you know, The Hague, with traveling quite a lot within the Netherlands, The Hague is quite different from the rest of the country as well, you know, so I wouldn't say it's a typical Dutch city, town, if you consider that's quite big, quite cosmopolitan. A lot of cities are quite different compared to The Hague. So I didn't go with any preconceived ideas and I was really surprised, presently surprised

J: so your image of the Netherlands is quite positive?

Yes, I love it, I love going back and my sister in law moved to The Hague a year before we left so picked up where we left, so yeah we still go and we still love to go. If we go on holiday and we have a transit flight through Schiphol, I think my daughter will always call it home. She loves it, she really loves it. Even going through Schiphol, she's like ahh warm. It's quite strange.

J: what do you miss the most about of the Netherlands

I think cycling, the outdoor life, we did a lot of walking and cycling, just the whole attitude of people, getting around on their bikes, that's just fantastic. I miss that. I miss my Dutch neighbors.

J: do you have any advice or tips for people, after their stay in the Netherlands?

If they are returning back to their home country, it different for any one. I think to keep an open mind, its different, it's not necessarily the same when you move back home. Unless, you spend, unless you came back home a lot then you would probably won't see any differences. But if you're living away, when you have been away for a certain period of time and you haven't been back for to your country, just keep an open mind when you come back. Things may have changed, you have changed as a person. That's one thing I would say .

J: to keep in mind that you have changed?

Yeah, I think so. The country that you moved to could have made such an impression on you that you may have changed as a person. I would keep that in mind. And the fact that so many people stay in the same place for their whole lives that abroad you change personally, broaden your horizons and you may not feel like the same person when you move back home.



J: I can image. Did you when you returned home to other expats?

Yeah, I met some when I moved back. At the course, I was telling you about. Yeah and they became really good friends. Yeah we had a bit in common. Some of the others thought that .. Depends on the stage you are in your own life. If you have young children or your children have grown up or left home and your own personal circumstances can make a huge difference in how you deal with moving back home.

J: did you find it that you had people who had similar experiences?

Yeah, definitely, definitely, because we had friends who moved to The Hague shortly we had did and they moved back just before us and we have the similar experience as us. Though they have no children, which makes a difference I think. But they had similar experiences and how to it back into my home country and my life. Yeah.

J: made it easier?

Yeah it made it much easier, to talk to other people. When I came back initially, I was like a told you, I had an uneasy mind. I thought I have to find a job, I have to do something, other people accommodate well. I just takes time, think about it first of all and. So yeah, that was good.

J: so do you have anything else you would like to add, funny story of information ?

I would say that living abroad certainly made me a much more rounded person and in retrospect, learning the local language would have been much better. It certainly helps you to create more, even though everyone speaks English in The Hague, virtually everywhere, old ladies at bus stops, everyone speaks English, I myself was a bit disappointed that I didn't make the effort to learn the language, because everyone so appreciates it when you speak the language so much. So that's something I would say, if you can have the opportunity to learn the language, do it. For sure.

J: thank you for participation. If you have any questions, please fire away.

No, I don't think so.

J: my thesis is about how to keep the partner happy.

Well. I didn't know either, I thought I was going back to work. It all depends on the individual. Some could have been really focused and made plans or when they got home and got themselves really

organized or set up a job. I think that could make a big difference if you have an immediate focus for when you get home, something you are working towards. Yeah it could be a study thing or going back to work. If you got a focus then I think, definitely makes things much much much easier. For me, until we started working in the house, I didn't really had a focus. For sure, my friend who came back to Aberdeen just before us, they have no children as I said before, she went back to work and that was a necessity for her, to find a focus and so.

J: first I had a preconceived idea that if you have a job you have a social life. I was right about one thing, the social thing is the most important thing, if you have your network then or if your busy getting your network then you will be fine but if you feel like isolated and that doesn't really resolve that it becomes a problem. Whether you have children old enough to go to school or not, reparenting on the playground or go around the corner to the coffee shop, either way, if you have a network, or building your network, most of the people will find their way eventually.

Definitely. I think that's so important. You definitely have to find, not necessarily like my, people you can talk to and feel you belong. I think it's a sense of belonging that you have to recover, that sense of belonging.

J: My mum and dad had such a different expatriate experience

How you actually feel in your posting, what your life is like is in a foreign country can really impact how you feel moving back home. You might not want to leave because you like it so much you want to stay.

J: thank you very much.

I'm glad I could help.

J: If you have anything to add or have questions. I am always available.

That's fine. Ok let me know and looking forward to read about the subject. Thanks very much. Bye

**Transcript interview 5**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

I was a trailing spouse with my husband. He was working with the government. When we went over there, we did have two small children. 6 months old and 15 months old. The government does not do counseling anymore, in fact, they didn't do it. Now in the industry they do more. Now they do more family counseling. They didn't think they offered courses to learn the language. I sort of did it myself because I took German in high school. So that's why I was excited to go to the Netherlands. I was born in Germany actually. So we made the move over. My husband immediately had to go off on business. I am a very independent woman and that is a lot to do expatriate, that is how strong the trailing spouse is. It's not for everybody. I had no car, I had two babies, all of the facilities that I knew were at the American base. I had to get myself there by bus, to do laundry, to. We were in a hotel for three months downtown Rotterdam while we were looking for house. There is a housing officer, and Kapel was very small base, so there was a housing office, but there was not much available. We wanted to be on the the economy , we didn't wanted in the military, we are not military with the government. Again, we are very independent. I'm a very much a go-getter. I went out on the economy, I looked at local real estator, and found a very nice family house, which was what I wanted. So for you know I may do, I'm a courageous, dedicated woman, I may do. Anyone may have had a different experience. Mainly because my husband was away so much and I was left to my own devices. But Holland is great. The people speak English when the do so. And I prefer they do so when they have an American or English speaking person. So that was good. I picked up my son, my oldest of two. He started in kleutersschool in the town of ours. Crimped aan de Lek the first time. We had a farm home Krimpen aan de Lek. That is where I met Ingrid. Because her two little boy were almost as old as my two sons. Put them in the kleuterschool. So my son started speaking English and I was speaking English and the youngest. The time would not refuse to speak English. So but my we try to speak, and of course she was willing to speak English, to practice her English. And I was willing to learn Dutch. So she was a huge influence on my getting involved in the economy, and the village .and feeling more comfortable. There was no counseling, there was no preparation on coming over and we had a large enough home where we knew we could welcome family. And in the five years, we were there. the first time we did have a family member come over, every year summer did over. We did come home and as soon as the opportunity came to go back, we came back to Holland for another two and a half years. Then this second time we were in Berschenhoek. And again, I went out in the economy, and found my own home and negotiated with the homeowner and everything.

J: So your total period in the Netherlands was 7,5 years. Was there a long period in between.

No, it was only about two years.

J: You said you were born in Germany. Can you explain more about your life?

My father was with the CIA. He spends, he's an interpreter, we were in and out. My sister, my older sister, and my younger sister, we were all born in Germany. We came back in 1995, I think and he got out of it. We were born to, in Germany, to American parents so it is not as if we didn't have dulls and things like that.

J: You are a little bit a repatriate child as well as a repatriate partner.

Not that I remember anything about my time in Germany. It was not difficult, like a lot of being an expat is repatriate, coming back to your country. And because we had rented our house unlike military, we left our home, we rented our home, we came back to our home, the same neighborhood. We were not like military, employee free maybe getting orders, you know, having a new job in a whole other area. And again the family is further and again the family is some place and having everything relearn, whether it is an American or not.

J: so you had a house and rented it out but did you also when you came back maybe holidays or something?

We did, the first five years we did because my third son was born there actually. With the midwife, the town's midwife. That was a very good experience for me that have him born at home, so we did. He was born and the three of us went back to the states. Probably, three times in the five years we were there.

And did you then stay in the house you rented out or every time in a different place?

We would go to, my mother was in Florida, so we would go to Florida, twice and to ... where my father in law lived because they didn't come over. My mother and father and sisters, all came over.

J: so only actually, the actual repatriation you went back to the house you rented out. You rented it out for the whole period of time?

The first time we left, we had a town house and we did rent it out and we came out and sold it. And bought a single family home and then we left the first time we rent a single family home and came back

to that home. Because we were able to save a lot of money. So that is why we were able to that. That is what certain companies do when you go overseas, they added income .

J: You already mentioned repatriation is actually more difficult than moving. Can you tell a bit more about your repatriation?

My repatriation was not a problem in that it was for me it was a problem because we were coming back to the same county the same state. For the children obviously they were two years older than we came back I fourth grade and then happy to coming back. Coming back was difficult, going to a new school. When we left for the second time they were 14, 13 so they were teenagers. They had to they were expats, back in an international school as teenagers and then had to come back, again. But We were only gone a 2,5 years so they did still have friends to hook up with because we were in the same county. Mine issues only that repatriation was I don't have a job. I left I quit my job and cannot over there and then I came back and found a job and then again I left to go to Holland. And came back and had to find another job. That was really difficult. But as trailing spouse, you're giving up your job, and then your deciding do you wanna work again and then you have to go and find a job. It is very difficult for trailing spouses. As I said to my credentials in the relocation industry, that is why more more company are doing this counseling not only for the money but also for the reality of the trailing spouse. And for the children. So it really is, it depends on what the circumstances are for your overseas move whether you are coming back to the same place or somewhere different. And the family ties, I on the transfer free drama that is involved and getting back, the trauma is a lot for a lot of people. My husband was a military brad and he moved a lot but it was in the country so it was different overseas. But we do have some great memories, and my kids of some great memories of Holland.

J: did you only stay in the Netherlands or also had expatriate experiences in different countries?

No, the whole time we were living, we did traveling, the whole time we were living in Holland.

J: you were repatriated two times. The first, we are now back, we are going the repatriation process or did you then already know somewhere inside know that were going to back.

The time we came home, that experience was over and we were back in the state. We did not even consider the fact that, my husband said that we could take another trip, if something comes available let's do it. But for first coming back, it was to come home for good. It was, for kids, it was good, for us it was a bit difficult because we really liked Holland. We very much liked it. Coming back to the states, you

get used in the new country, the transportation, and something you just don't do in the states but they became so natural. So coming back to the states it was really annoying not getting back on the train or ride your bike. I didn't want to hop on the bus to go where I wanted to go. That was difficult. I missed going down to the local flower shop and bakery and getting my fresh vegetable. You came back with the mega stores and the food was you know 2,3,4,5, days old. That was, I felt cheated almost. Holland can do it, why can we have fresh vegetables, fresh breads. Our flowers are so expensive. We missed a lot of things from Holland coming back. And it were those things. And of course traveling, we love to travel and of course Europe but we missed the beach and the summers and we were very bored. To go to the beach. The weather was not something we missed of Holland.

J: the only

J: Did you experience a difference between the first time and the second time back, something to do with expectations?

Coming back the first time, no we knew, coming back to the states?

J: Did you have that the same second time? More prepared for the States the second time?

Yes very much so, the entire move home was. Very much was like many vacations. Getting back in to the routine, having done the routine so many years, having growing up here. So yes, that was very much different. I'm sure ... interruption by technology.

Coming back, the second time was more of inconvenience and nuisance. I was ready to come back the second time though. Having been there for 2,5 years I was ready to come back. And maybe it was the age of the kids, they were teenagers I felt they needed to come back. That they were, had their friends at high school. But getting used to the traffic and the shopping that . there is a big difference between two years and five years. The length of travel and is also a factor.

J: Were you surprised? Did you really experience it as readjusting? Did you get right back into the flow?

No, I got right back into it. I did, this is the type of personality I'm. you take with you got and go with it. For me it was not a problem.

J: did you, when you came back did you go back to work?

Yes but ended up getting my real estate license. Because the kids were younger and so, I was able to get my real estate license. Flexible schedule to be with them. I did not go back to a full-time . the second time, the kids were older, so I did get a full-time job.

To not have to work, to be available, that was very nice. That was a good time for me in my life. That part I really appreciated.

J: reintegration problems other than no working?

No my husband took care of all of that. We went right back into. If there was anything, he took care of it. Taxes and that stuff. I had the kids they were my responsibilities. One thing I did run into was that children had to have vaccination. So I would take to them the village doctor and their medical records and their medical book was in Dutch and was different and it was something I hadn't really considered. So when the kids were back in school and they had to do sports facilities and every time they asked for the kid's vaccination records and they were in this little book in handwriting that you couldn't understand. That caused some problems. There was a date, they had to take it. That was one of the things that spouses who have children need to consider all of the records that go on for your children. And the time that your overseas, are legible, in a format that can be translated if you go back to the states. That has been an issue through school. Vaccination records.

J: no information or training. Did you any assistance on you return home?

No. no. and if it was offered my husband turned it down, we knew we had family, we knew where we were going.

J: did it well

It helped my, yes it did, I helped my husband, it is a very small compound. It did help that we were going back. We were probably very fortunate then when this is something you do every three four years and you have to get used to everything all over again. It did make it very much easier. Finding the place, was the most difficult. But we found a great house.

J: Ingrid. Did it make the a bit easier if you had social contacts like with her

Yes. Very much so. Because, not being military, I didn't really have anything in common with the military wives. That is one reason to live where all the Americans lived. Here are certain neighborhoods where they live. So having her was fabulous. Having her, our kids being the same age and it was great. For

somebody, I am an open person it is difficult for me to make friends and stuff , she had been so forthcoming and out coming it might have been more difficult. If you meet children, she was a life safer, a lifesaver.

J: back home, people like her or who also had an experience abroad?

No, no, because we don't have any communication or socializations of military families and my husband's department of the government he was with we didn't socialize with hem either. So no, that was kinda frustrating. I had all these great experiences, we went to all these great places, we had tons of great pictures. To go and talk to somebody, last weekend we went to Frankfurt to pick somebody up. We hid four countries in three day. It is too bizarre to even believe, unimaginable people cannot even grasp it. It is very frustrated to you know. When I did come across who had experience or whatever it was so much fun to talk about it. Again, another thing they say about repatriation is that companies try to hook you up with families who have done it so that you can get some more understanding and I can see how that can be helpful. Not only going away but also coming back and that you can share that experiences. So no other than my sisters, I didn't really have anybody to share that with.

J: repatriation not really difficult. Even more easy if you did have social contacts with other repatriates who share similar experiences?

I think don't know if it would have been easier but I would have been very enjoyable. The memory of the travel would have lasted longer, the experiences would have. As you talk about things you remember things and it might have had extended the experience if I had someone who had similar experiences, traveled to Europe we could share the same kind of things. But you know I had my husband, my kids, my family, friends who came over and traveled to France. It is not as if who hadn't go over there. We were with them we were there everywhere we took them.

J: do you consider yourself a repatriate?

No, I don't. I consider myself somebody who, just because I guess after seven years I should be. Just because I don't but I am probably, wrong. I don't because I moved there and fell in with the lifestyle and with my kids and came back here and continued my lifestyle. I don't what somebody who had to move and it was maybe the experience was so huge and when they came back and that experience was also huge. Maybe in a negative or positive maybe you feel that way. I don't know. I haven't talked to too



many people. I talked to military people, they say we were in Iran and in Hawaii as it was nothing. Maybe I'm wrong maybe I should feel like an expat? What do you think?

J: what was your general image of the Netherlands, the Dutch and everything?

I think they are very tough people, they don't wince as Americans. People that accept for the most part whatever it is they need to accept, how to get on the bike, oh it is raining, yes that is how you go to work. So they are very tough people. My neighbors, the first time we were there, the woman she had 4 children and she was a tough tough woman. Wow, Karen Hillenbrand, she was a big help too, she tough. She was a no-nonsense woman. And the Germans can, the Dutch are much warmer than the Germans. They like to socialize very much and they are so good in making you feel welcome. But mostly, they are tough. I think they put up with a lot more than the Americans do. And that's the way it is. I think that when they come to America they think it is so great, besides the weather. I don't. For the most part, they were all friendly.

J: what do you miss the most about your stay in the Netherlands? Something silly like licorice

The beer. Hertog Jan, oh my gosh. Absolutely favorite beer. I liked to drink beer. When I left the states to come to Holland. The beer I drink was bud light, but after being in Holland and drinking the beer, it doesn't have the fermentation and you don't get the headaches. Beer is just pure tasting. We came back I cannot drink domestic beer. I have to drink foster's, Stella, or Mexican beer. I can't just drink but and miller . the beer for sure we miss. But we also miss the history. Omgosh the castles, just the history. We love European architecture. We had so much fun going to all the castles, bridges, om gosh the town of Delft and Amsterdam. O my goodness, it was just amazing. Walking through Bruges, you won't find that in America,. That's for sure.

J: is there something you miss the least?

The weather. You know we learn though I go and plan something, rain or shine. On Saturday, unless it's a down pour, you are taking the bikes and go there. If you planning a party, you plan for rain.

Here you know if they are predicting snow, half an inch, everybody runs out to toilet paper. In Virginia, here omg ownoo everybody stay inside. Get the fire going.

J: do you have any advice who has a posting in the Netherlands and return to the USA. About repatriation ?

I would recommended start reaching out to family, friends, and their new location asap and can all the information they can, talk to people, by the time the get the new area that they already know it. They know somebody or the area, so you don't feel like a lost sheep. Because that's, that's terrifying, the feeling of where do I get on the bus or how do I get bank account. Get as much information they can get before they go to the location.

J: Do you have anything else to add?

People who have the opportunity to have their children to take them to an international school. I think they should take that because the memory they get of an international school, is huge in preparing them for the multicultural society that we are going to continue to face. Their field, here you get on bus and go the Washington monument, there they went to Paris for the weekend. No comparison. If you have the opportunity to get involved, I was the present for a couple of years. Getting involved is the best way to really get the memories and feel like involved. Definitely get involved. Don't just stay home. Definitely get involved.

J: You always got involved activities beside work?

The first time the kids were in de kleurterschool. My with Ingrid they were so close, we did a lot of holidays together. So the second time the kids were in the international school and I got involved.

**Transcript interview 6**

J: Could you start by telling me something about your expatriation and repatriation experiences?

I myself am an expat child.

A brief history of my life and my parents lived in and worked abroad. My mum and dad are from Scotland and they went away in the 60s. and my dad worked for shell and went to Venezuela and my mum was a school teacher and she went to Venezuela and they met there and got married. I was born in Venezuela. They subsequently moved all over the world. I obviously moved with them. We lived in Venezuela, Zambia and my two brothers were born. Sierra Leon in Africa, Jamaica and Kenya then London then back to Kenya and my dad retired. I traveled with them me and my brothers all the time. But when I was 12 years old I went to boarding school in Scotland. They stayed abroad and I stayed in boarding school in Scotland. My brothers did the same when they were the same age. Mainly because then schooling in Africa was poor. My parents felt that they were giving me the best advantage in life by having a stable education. Then when I graduated from college and everything I went to teach in the Netherlands and met my husband there who is English. He also works for shell so it's a bit like history repeating itself. We lived in the Hague for two years and then we moved to Assen. We lived in Holland for four years and then we moved from there to Oman in the middle east. Then we moved from there to Aberdeen in Scotland and from there to Brunei and then from Brunei to Qatar. That is where we live now. We had the experience as a child having moved around the world and now as an adult moving around the world.

J: Your first stay abroad in the Netherlands?

I met my husband in the Hague, yes.

Second time you were married and had an assignment in Holland

The first time we were young, free and single and no children. The second time we had three children it was completely different the first time we were able to travel and explore and go out. And do all sorts of

things young people do. The second time we were parents. Our children to the school where I taught. The first time where I met my husband. I loved the teacher who I met when I was teaching were still there when my children went. I taught at the British schools in the Netherlands. Two completely different experiences living in Holland.

J: One or the other more difficult or the same?

The first time around as I said we were young we went off and did lots of traveling and young friends. The second time we were a bit more restricted, children, school holidays and but when we went back to Holland for the second time I was very much looking forward to going back because I really really liked living there the first time. And we chose a house in very local area and I thought we will have Dutch friends and really reintegrate well into the Dutch society . but as it happened because our children were at a British school mixing with British friends it was actually very difficult to become fully integrated into Dutch society. Because our lives tended to revolve around school which was then expatriate. That was you know that was the way it was. I think to be able to fully fully immerse yourself in Dutch culture and have Dutch friends you have to be able to speak Dutch.

J: Only the language as a barrier or are there other things?

Not really, no. I remember going out met Petra who gave you my number. I think it was her birthday and we were sitting around a table in her house. It was really lovely and she had her sister and her husband and another Dutch friend and other Dutch friends and they had to speak English because our Dutch was not good enough to join in the conversation. I always felt bad about the fact that Dutch people always felt they had speak English to me or to us to you know make you feel involved and so on. And then it means they are not fully relaxed or having to speak a different language. I was always very aware of that. Really my Dutch should be a lot better.

J: Did you really experience it or made people feel that?

I think it was just a feeling I had. I don't think that people necessarily felt it like a burden that they had to speak English to. It was mainly from my own point of view I found that they couldn't fully relax if they weren't able to speak their own language.

J: Do you feel like home? You live in Qatar. Did you also lived in your home country again after the Netherlands?

Yes we did , we had a posting to Aberdeen. Which is near enough home country. It is Scotland and although Aberdeen is not home, it felt like we were back home. Home is Edinburgh, which is a different town. Although I had absolutely no connection with Aberdeen before I went there. Knowing a few people living there again being expat it still felt very familiar, very Scottish really.

J: So you felt like at home?

Yeah maybe it was just the time in our lives. We had two young children and they started primary school and they we bought a house there and it was the first home that we had bought and we got into all the things happen when you have a young family and your own house. You spend your weekends doing the garden and very kind normal things. Things you don't do when you are an expat. When you are an expat you live in company accommodation and it, you normally have a gardener. If you want something done you call the men and they do it. A garden you don't take as much interest in because it is not yours. Back in Aberdeen we had our own house we had to do our own fixing and mending and decorating. It was very much much more real life situation than living abroad.

J: Did you feel, integrating, reintegrating was easier or more difficult than you had expected?

I was quite a long time ago. No it was difficult that we had come from being an expat when you live in a little sort of bubble, expatriate bubble. Everything is kind done for you, you don't have to worry about fixing your house or doing your garden. Where we came from in Oman we had help in the house. We had a fulltime maid which was very much the expected thing where we were. She would help with children and laundry and cleaning the house. Plenty of time to do exercise. If you wanted to go out there was always babysitting. When we went back home there was none of that. You had to do your own cleaning, washing and cooking. No child are and own garden. Yes it was, it took a bit of adjustment really. To get used to living a kind of normal life again.

J: Going back Home country more difficult than the expatriate life?

I think especially in Aberdeen if people know that you are expatriate and that you will be moving on. They are sometimes a bit worry to be friendly to get friendly with you knowing that you are probably going again. That is quite a difficult of life. Always on the move and never never really putting down really solid roots. Peoples 'lives go on and they actually aren't bothered by the fact you are an expat and that you move around and go to all these different countries. They feel like, their life is full and have

family commitments , they've got all sort of things in their lives. One thing that I have learned is that if you come back and talk about being an expat and how wonderful it is and what sort of life you have, people are interested for 10 minutes maximum. After that they are, Ok I have enough of that. A lot of people can't relate to what it is like to live that kind of expat life. Stories are interesting for a little while but not too long.

J: Did that bother you?

Yes in the early days you are telling your stories that you think are really interesting and exciting and you get the distinct impression that they are not really that interested in hearing them. They are interested in are the thing that are here and now. What is currently popular in television , local politics here where they live in the time. Not your weird and wonderful stories living in the middle east or whatever. It took a while to realize that actually just come back and tell people how you are how it is but don't go on and on you know expat life. Because firstly they don't really understand and secondly they interested in the here and now and quite often people have conversations and family have conversations about what the current television programs were and we didn't know any of we didn't have seen them. So we couldn't be involved in any of the conversations. And you then sort of realize that you have missing out. Their lives go on their lives continue as they would do as where you've gone and come back. Life doesn't stop because you've gone away. Aberdeen gets on. Its taking to realize. And even now for me coming back, ive come back to Edinburgh on holiday. I'm here for 2,5 months. Last week I called all of my friends and I said I'm back and it would be great to meet up. And I said call me and nobody called because they are all busy and they have their own life. I think it is not great why are they not calling me? Then you realize that they will call and I will see them and I already have seen them just because I've come back they don't have to drop everything to see me. It takes getting used to I would say. Stories can be very interesting and very funny and they can be quite often hard to relate to in many ways. Although people are interested and do want to know not into too much details more some more general what it is like and so on. A lot of people, another thing of being an expat, people say, you know, they expect expatriates have a lot of money because they've got maid at home and gardeners and they sometimes, almost make assumptions of you being an rich expat a spoiled expat. You don't know what it is like living in the real world. This is what is like, it's hard. A lot of people think that about you. Where I think, I, come back, I know it was a very privileged life to be an expat but it is also very hard to be an expat. There are many many compromises you have to make even though you have that nice life living gin hot country with beautiful beaches and have opportunities to travel to fantastic places. It's not always just I do kind

know what it is like to live back here, maybe not fully having to cope with. I do I have lived in Aberdeen I have experienced I haven't been an expat. I have been an expat my whole life. I have experience a bit of real life as well.

J: Real life is hard ? where did you go in your mind?

I think everybody thinks that expat life is a charmed life. It is a charmed life. But and the real world the real world the non expat life is a sort of drudge. It sort of hardship not hardship and but doing all the mundane things like cooking and shopping and cleaning your house. Taking your kids to school in the wet weather, biking, cycling to work when it is pouring down with rain and all that kind of things. There is definitely a perception that the expat life is the easy life. There is a lot to it. An expat is an easy life but there are also a lot of hardships that come with it. The fact that you are moving around all time, the fact you have to make friends all the time, the fact that you re uprooting your children all the time, the fact that every time you go somewhere that it takes a lot of time to set up some kind of network of support in a new country. That's all quite hard work. So even though it is charmed and easy life it is also a challenging and tough life. If you go to a new posting and you husband disappears to work and you are left what on earth do I do here where do I shop ? If you don't know anybody having to go for that for the whole business of making friends again that does get quite hard. I think it is a lot easier when you have young children and your children go to school and meet other children at school and have play dates and you speak to other mums in the playgrounds. But when your children get older that is much much more difficult. It is very nice life there are drawback and similarly if you live a normal life there are drawbacks as well. I quite like this feeling of belong to belonging somewhere and have a history with somewhere to build up friends and for those friendships to be long lasting. Not one of you leaving after a few years.

J: Why do you call it normal life?

Because I always think that expat life we always call it you live in this expat bubble, you go into this country and Holland doesn't necessarily count in this. This is more in Qatar or Brunei places like that. Qatar and Holland you actually experience much more of a life similar to what you would have at home in the world for us, British. We always talk about expat bubble when you live in places like Qatar. You don't really get involved in the infrastructure of the country. You very much passing through, you very much a visitor to their country and that is pretty much all. You don't put down any real roots. You dot put done any roots at all. A lot of this activities that you do maybe in this expat bubble of things that you wouldn't be able to go back home. Because firstly you don't have the money to do them, secondly you

don't have the time to do them. You must spend much more time much more normal things. So it is this sort of unrealistic bubble that you live in. being an expat. Where we live in the moment in Qatar, we live in a compound of twenty houses and they all back onto a park in the evenings or late afternoon, all the maids go outside and with the tiny children and they all play and the maids talk to each other and watch the children. But only two minutes by the beach, you can sit on the beach and watch the sun go down and there's a tennis court. It is really really lovely. It is really pleasant. When I say expat bubble that's the kind thing I mean. This kind charmed life you live. It is really nice. If you have got young children, you can go out with your child while the maid is preparing the meal for the kids. You can go out and meet your friends and have a chat. That sort of things. You do it back home it is not there are so many other demands that you have at home. On the other hand, you know this nice compound that we live on it can also be very lonely. You really have to put yourself out there to meet people, you have , people don't really necessary enjoy a gym, you have to go to classed, you have to come involved. It is you could become very lonely and isolated and that is all takes a bit of effort you know to keep doing that again and again if you keep moving around the world. Everything else, there are huge plusses. There are minuses not everything is roses there are really good things, there are some lots of good things.

J: Expat bubble, what exactly is your image of the Netherlands ? your ideas about it?

For us it is a great vesting its actually quite similar to home in that it has the same ideal same sort of outlook saying kind of culture in a way. But it is also quite different there are lots of things that are different. The food can be different , the whole shopping, street life is different the whole even just things likes shops. The shops are really lovely, all the nice house shops, flower shops and all the rest of it. It is quite similar to home in many ways but then it gets a nice extra as a kind of bonus. One of the biggest things is that it is so close to home. You can close there and get back home so easily. Being an expat there but still have experience different things. Experience different cultures and you know the things I just described. But then it is quite similar to what we are used to back home. The same kind of weather is fairly similar, the while we are now in Qatar you couldn't go much more different to living back home in Scotland. The weather is different, an Islamic state the culture the religion you have to be very very aware of that. Where in Holland you just felt kind of, I didn't really belong here, I know a lot of people who stayed there a very long time and it is very much home for them. For me it was never really home because I always knew that it was only going to be for a short period of time. But we could make it home. You could very well feel comfortable relaxed there and for a long time because it has that familiarity. I could not ever feel like that in Qatar.



So yes from that point of view Holland has many benefits .

J: Also benefits or also experience another side of the Netherlands?

It was definitely another side of the Netherlands. I remember once or a couple of times actually once going down to the beach in Schevening and ordering kibbeling and I wanted to order tomato ketchup with it who was serving it you can't have tomato ketchup you have to have mayo. So sort of laughing and everyone around laughed thought it was really funny. I thought they are laughing at me. I had been in the situation that people in speaking Dutch and hadn't understood and I felt a bit isolated and intimidated. A bit out of fit. So no, not always great. There were definite times you do feel gosh and I think the language is a big thing. If you were able to speak in Dutch I do know what you are saying then it probably would be different. Holland is very very accepting of I think lots of people passing through and English widely spoken. He interested in speaking to you and learning what you are doing there and so on.

J: Expatriate again? Did you ever feel like an expatriate ? even you were in Aberdeen that felt like home, did it feel like a posting?

A bit yes. I always felt like although it was very nice at the time, we probably that wouldn't be it. We would go abroad again. It was a kind of passing through.

J: Never felt like a repatriate?

No no not really. Part of me we lived in Edinburgh, is our base, part of me is absolutely desperate to come and live in Edinburgh fulltime and never go abroad again and settle and feel a part of city to have a full involvement invest in the city. Getting a job or working or my family. Live here, just being a part of the city, sometime I'm really desperate for that to happen. But at the moment that is not going to happen but I hope one day in the future it will. Our ideal is that we would come back and live in Edinburgh and retire here and stay there. I don't want to be an expatriate the rest of my life although I have done it for quite a long time.

J: After the first time in Holland? Aberdeen?

In Aberdeen, it went from the Netherlands to Oman and they were born there and then we went to Aberdeen and after Oman. So the children were really young 4, 2. And then we went from there from

Aberdeen back to the Netherlands. They were sort of 10 and 8. And then we had another child in Aberdeen so we left Aberdeen with three children.

Now 18, 16, 10

J: They lived with you abroad or like you in a boarding school?

18, 16 year old are in boarding school in Edinburgh. And the 10 year old is with us in Qatar. Probable the 10 year gets to boarding school. That is also a huge consideration. When your children go to boarding school that is very very big decision. For them I feel that is very important that they when you are moving around at that sort of age 14, 15,16 it is a terrible age to be moving and making friends and normally around that age they are studying for important exam and to move around and have disruption is not good. So we want to provide with stability during that time also its very difficult for them making friends and leaving friends and making friends, when they are at boarding school they have friends and stay friends with them through their schooling. And I think it is also important they come from Scotland Edinburgh is home this is where we do belong even though we don't live there fulltime. They are Scottish this is where they are from. If you go to school in Brunei and all the other places, it is so temporary. But then obviously with the decision of going to boarding school comes with it a whole lot of other implications because your separated from your children. You know all that sort of things. They are quite tough decisions to make. I know in Dutch culture that completely foreign thing to send your children to boarding school all of my Dutch friends, say ohh gosh we could never that, we would never do that. I know htat it is not for everybody. It is common in Britain, much more accepted thing than in Holland for sure.

J: Living part time in Edinburgh part and fulltime what do you mean?

We have a flat there, because the children are at school here, we come back fairly regularly and we have a home here and we move in and feels like home it is home. We have also another home in Qatar but. So at the moment we live there part time it is only holidays and so on. I am actually here for 2,5 months this summer. You could argue this is home for this time.

J: Still feels like home?

Yes it does fell like home because my family is here. This flat is very much home you know we don't rent it out to anybody we just keep it empty. We can just move in when we need to. For the children as well they see this very much as kind of second home.

And then they come to Qatar in the holidays as well. For them is going to lovely hot sunny paradise where they can swim in the sea and play tennis and so on. Have a nice holidays, it's the best of all worlds.

J: Did you receive any training?

Yeah shell have very good network called outpost and you can get a lot of information from that about schools and culture and things to do and sort of official paper work that you have to complete and that sort of things. There is always help, shell help you to settle in these countries by giving you information and sort of educating on what to expect when you get there and that sort of thing.

J: Does it make that you search for mind liked people?

There is definitely, yes a definite element of cause we got a lot of friends that wave met in various part of the world who have may have come back to Scotland. Definitely easier to likeminded people who had similar experiences to yourself. You do tend to have probably more in common and more to talk about, yeah

J: Does it help you with the sense of your stay abroad and turn stay in Edinburgh if you have that place to share your stories? Does it make it easier.

Yes it does. All the friends that I will see this holiday or a lot of them, not all of them are friends that we met in Brunei and who are back on holiday. Or who live in Aberdeen when we lived there. They have also had to be abroad. Yeah you do look forward seeing them and catching up with them hearing how their lives are going. Some of them still live abroad and some don't but there is definitely a feeling of closeness and kind camaraderie that you get having lived abroad and having lived and socialize quite closely with a group of people. They have become very close friends. Friends you keep in touch with forever probably.

J: Did you always have a job in every country?

Yes. For the first few postings I always had a job. So I taught in the Netherlands, when we were in Oman I taught part-time although we had children there. When we were in Aberdeen I taught part-time, back in the Netherlands I taught part-time. The last two posting in Brunei and Qatar I haven't worked.

J: Having a job makes it easier?

To some extent yes I do. It gives you a purpose and identity and something all for yourself and your able to feel fulfilled. In many ways because if you don't work there is sometimes the feeling of emptiness. Gosh what am I going to do with my time, how am I going to fill my time. Quite often you end up filling it with quite sort of banal activities like going to the gym meeting people for lunch having coffee that is ok vfr a certain time but after a while it gets a bit boring. I think having a job and working does can help.

J: Do you Have a specific story?

Aberdeen it is maybe not a good example, in Brunei it's, you live in a middle of the jungle and its completely I think 90 percent virgin rainforest. Where you live is just been hacked out of the jungle and houses have been put up and gardens have been made it is still very much a jungle. The monkeys troops of monkeys is to camp through the camps every day and through the garden every day and come on the veranda and they let eat candles and pick plant and come up to the windows and looking turn all the furniture over. I mean repeatedly and they make a complete mess that is almost they are telling you it's their jungle and you've come here to live in their jungle they still own it. It is their home and yes that can be real pest. That is very very scary. You want to go outside when the monkeys are there and yeah. So people are interested in that and say wow wow you have monkeys in your garden how exciting that is kind of all they need to know. If you then stop going about the monkey and go on about the other thing, they lose interest after a while. In Brunei, in specially, very isolated place there wasn't really much going on apart from where we lived. People would organize parties all the time, all the progressive diner, and dressing up parties, queen's birthday part, there was Dutch night, Latino night. When you it is very very so sort of specific to place and very interesting to that place for people who live there. But out of there t is not interested at all. You are sort of parties dinners or things you got up to. I can't think of something really weird and wonderful. Stories have got to be relevant to peoples interest in some way to, otherwise they just quickly loose interest.

J: Any advice?

Returning home after staying in the Netherlands, euh, one thing about the Netherlands is that it's a , the summer the atmosphere in the summer, people out of the streets and eating on the streets and drinking on the streets, on their bicycles and sort of out with their dogs and their dogs sitting up at the table. That is a very nice atmosphere, kind nice gezellig feel. Maybe when you get back to the UK, not quite the same atmosphere but. It is always nice when you go abroad when you live abroad and you eat and try different foods . things taste a bit different and then you go back home and it's nice to be back to the

familiar things you maybe didn't get in the Holland that you do get back home. Then you miss the things you miss the things you didn't get in Drenthe and get in Holland. I don't know it is just of period of readjustment. There are things you miss and things you don't miss. So getting used things again.

### **Transcript interview 7**

Well, there are always two sides to this. The actually physical business of it and once mental decision making the motives. You want both of those?

J: I want to hear all.

Ok. Right. Ages ago in 1963 when I graduated from Cambridge, I hope, I was already engaged to my husband and we got married in 1964 I hoped to get a chance to do a soil science diploma because I thought that would be useful because the chances were that my husband would work for shell. He is geologist and they were paying for his PhD. Which he was about to start. And I thought while he's doing it would-be e useful if we traveled the world. Neither of us had made this decision. He was born in the west indies. My father was a low poor, so an immigrant. Neither of us had problems with other countries and cultures. I like languages, I spend quite a time deciding the age in 15 to do science rather than language although I was probable better in languages, mainly French and Latin. I thought I can do that on my own, whereas science I cannot do that on my own and without a lab. My curiosity probably weights everything else. I already made ... (decision)one around the age of 15 one can do language on one's own and I probably would. Then got engaged to this. Both were at Cambridge, at booking, and when I went for my interview with the British grant giving government, they saw the engagement ring on my finger and they said, well Mrs. mc Cleavy may we ask about your intendat. I told them that this little story about you if we did go abroad I would be useful as a soil scientist because I took some geology and chemistry in Cambridge. Ahh they said, well if I think if your intending to go abroad, this is UK government money this is a problem. So did two things they would never have done this age, a spot my engagement ring and ask about his plan b cut me off because I wanted to go abroad. Just a little of background there. Next, I went to Sweden and did some work for the geological survey there. There was a kind man I knew in the Cambridge geology department and he asked if I wanted to be his research assistant because he needed a chemist. Although he was a botanist, he needed a fairly sort of practical cookery style to support his extract procedures. I was delighted ,because mark and I were e in the same place. So I did in the about five years in research, had a baby in part of that and mark joined shell in the middle of that. But I this is quite I doing a bit of motive about. The man I worked for a Norman who has

now died, he was in a main paleontology mag and he I did his research for him he put my name on five papers, his and mine. I actually was even in print. I felt by the time we did go abroad first of all to Holland, in 1966, I didn't, I wasn't feeling grumpy or anything I was already doing some translation. I had translated some Norwegian into English and some French, the anatomy of the earth. It was in English, from French into English. I was quite English, I was age 24, I was born I was 24 or something like that. I thought anything goes. I was expecting our first baby, about four weeks after I arrived in Holland and we had the baby at home. Mark had already joined shell and I arrived with I think I just came over by , yes we had a rather aged, second hand minivan. I drove over. And then we had the baby at home quite comfortably, Dutch fashion. Then typically on the day the baby was born, shell send mark off to to Scotland for training. So I didn't complain, I really I'm not a complainer. It is a bit of a surprise if you leave your own work to join your husband have a baby and on the day the baby is born, or two days, he's send of for 2,3 weeks for training. I felt about bad about this. We were prepared for life as it came so this wasn't a problem. I spend the time reading Dutch newspapers sitting up in bed, with a resident as a sort of midwife, that was typical Dutch, just fitted in with the Dutch way. I learned important words like stoffelijke overschoten, in de Telegraaf. I was reading newspapers I had not used this vocabulary very often. Anyway, it was fine, we were really happy. Torbeckensland 62, subsequently, that was in October by January I had returned to England with a new car, Dutch registration the baby in the back everything we had in the back, which was very little because we were students. Mark had been sent to Spain without further leave, because he was only going for five months. And shell regulations were bad, so my past departure, my first repatriation, was in 1967 when I peered at hook of Holland, Heriage, I to be told that I had to import my car. I said that I can tell you I the day I will leave this country. No he said, he started his , like a parking meter person once started their docket whatever you call it. I was pretty cheesed of at this point and had to pay 100 pounds which was for us at that was all lot of money in order to come back home. You know he said you can put it up at blocks, it is full of the baby stuff and everything we possessed. It was a ford station wagon, I can't put it up blocks. He was not sympathetic and I have to tell you, this formed my view of the customs regulation worldwide there is no right wrong about them, there are simply regulation, you just fall into their clutches or you don't. I think, I still feel like that. This is quite useful when you are an expat to have your own view of the world sort of clear in your own head. I'm a Quacker I take ethics seriously but that doesn't that I always obey the rules. We are allowed to break them. This is quite helpful for moving around the world. I went back and stayed repatriation at this point meant showing the baby off to the family staying with my husband's parent who came just from the west indies and his father was very ill. We didn't have a home. I spend the entire

five months with bits of the family, with all my stuff in the car. I would arrive in with everything, which wasn't much in those days. The market hadn't got to everybody I had quite a modest pile of stuff that fit in the back of the station wagon. I think all I decided was that I had enough of my office to help , rejecting my, you have enough to do my dear, you look after the baby. Which you don't and a young baby doesn't really take a lot of feeding, I didn't have a home, I was pretty under occupied apart from being family friendly. The next thing was about , my husband went a spend a little while in Spain without telling the company, just on our own. They weren't against it but weren't going to pay for it. I just trailed round. Next time we went to Holland, no then he went to Holland and they said next assignment was going to be Oman as a field geologist flying around in a helicopter and he would not be taking his wife and family. This point my husband having missed the first 6 month of his life, 8 months, said oh him going, I'm giving up, I'm leaving the company. This is why we got married, and this is not what it is about. When I learned a bit more about his job, flying about the Oman mountains with a Dutch, French, Austrian looking at oil field with all the facilities of an oil company he had a penny less university. If he give this all up for me and the baby I will be eternally in debt this is not good for a marriage. Is it just too much for him to give up, he didn't say that but for me. I persuaded him to go and I said I just go back to the university and continue research. Which I did, I didn't go with I went back to Cambridge. This is till part of the repatriation. I went back to the university and putting the baby under the table. My boss the man I was working for I didn't, this is my other life lesson don't ask questions you don't want the answer no to. Because so much hangs on it, just don't ask the question. There are various ways of rephrasing it or just completely not saying it all. So I put the baby under the table. Most of the work was with a microscope, the chemistry work was minimal and I had an assistant and I was in the geology department of Cambridge of sciences. That was pretty comfortable, and I did that I really glad I did because the because of the publication and so on. I just made me feel I hadn't wasted my expensive education that I paid for. I felt it was a resource. That is one of my bases of life; don't waste anything, opportunities, money, food, time, contacts, anything. Don't waste. It is a sort of bottom upward views. I safes you time worrying about the environment and things you can't do anything about anyway. Right, wait a minute, now the next thing was that while mark was still on the Oman mountain project, they had all moved to Holland to write up their results. So then, I abandoned Cambridge and went to Holland where we lived in Rijswijk. Jacobvdewielerlaan 12, we weren't there very long I just the Hague, this is a good moment to tell you. The Hague is so welcoming I already heard that it was a city servants living beyond their means and I you know which is a good sense of humor thing. I also was also really interested in your social services that particularly the riag, not that I have mental, by now we have some of our family has mental

problems. But I always have been on the edge of society, prisoners, criminals. People who don't fit the norms. I was just so impressed the way the Dutch managed their yes they have high taxes. I really was full of admiration the way you managed your society. I remember going to a meeting and asking, I don't remember his name, he was an official in the government and I asked afterwards why couldn't say the UK just follow the good practice which I had seen in the riag, it really upset me, that such good practice was around and that people who cared couldn't copy it. He said something that I found, that, really interesting ow I think you will find, he believed, very firmly you cannot lift something that works in one country one jurisdiction just pick it up and put in another jurisdiction. It doesn't work. Cause you well he just said that firmly, there were questions at the end of the meeting. It was a very useful comment in a way and I I'm telling you this because it is how much you admire the Netherlands and how you do things. And another thing, and I hope you feel this is complementary, coming from the British side where we are rather diplomatic and hear me say rather there., and this man whose name begins with Joris Voorhoven, he said to me I didn't say you'll find, or maybe you, because that is rather diplomatic he which is so good about the Dutch, you just simply go into the issue straightaway. You just say it isn't possible. I have noticed over a time in Holland that the combination really of the British rather cautious diplomatic, as an Nigerian once said, when we were living in Nigeria, this would have been in 1982, no sorry 1980, the person the faire well speech of my husband was chairman of that part of Nigeria of shell. This Nigerian manager was saying goodbye to a Dutchman. He was the finance man he was saying goodbye, I worked for the British and I worked for the Dutch and I would rather work for the Dutch any day because you know where you are. With the British, they say one thing, they mean another, and they do a third. This is the Nigeria view of working. I do think that between the Dutch and British we understand one another, because the Dutch helped a great deal with our agriculture. The side, Britain and went to Holland, first they went to America, a whole lot of connection between the duct and the British and I really like it.

J: Overall view the Netherlands I think, you sound really positive, so can you elaborate a little?

We'll have the same weather which , I do think makes the difference, although you don't have the mountains, not I my part of , in the randstad, not in my part of Holland, but you can really , you're a more compact country, which I like and you are also actually do understand British sense of humor which people like. Americans I think don't. you know. Although there's nothing nicer than people laughing at your jokes, it such a bond. We could laugh at the sometimes-disastrous directness of the Dutch or zuinigheid. I feel laughing at the Hague being self-termed by the Hague measurements residents and civil servants living beyond their means. We laugh at Dutch jokes. I think we are quite close. I definitely think



that the Dutch have developed this directness, which makes life easier really. Is that enough? That sort of things? I tell you something, the first time we went there in 1966, even the melkboer speak English, wanted to speak English. I say hoeveel have you, I had a sort I was trying to speak Dutch, I liked languages, not just stoffelijke overschoten. He replied in English, that was sort of I had post war sense. In those days even I noticed in Norway trying to speak Norwegian this would this is comparison at same time period in the 60s, there were a lot of wellingtons in Norwegian, they were really unhelpful in the shop because I they thought I was German. When they discovered I was British trying to speak Norwegian, I almost had the boot of price. And I won't there was a sense and we knew that the British had bombed or the allies, out of bombed had quite a bit of the Hague, bang the state, It wasn't really much point about it. Nobody ever made or was bitter about it. One felt humbled because I discovered amongst the Dutch how difficult it is to be invaded. We as Brits were never invaded. I was constantly, royal Dutch shell, half-and-half company, you know. I have my whole life, working life compared the Dutch with the Brits, this is one of the early bits of it. To realize, the differences between those which were are, less the weather more the recent history of European the WW2 they were different. You were just so stoic, non-bitter, non-bitter about it. Just reinforces one's international views. Both mark and I felt totally at home in the Hague. What I can say is that later, when I, mark was you want me to do? You see we lived three times in the Hague.

J: Can you give me a short overview?

I think that is a good idea. After that, where were we now. Second time in Holland, we were then from Holland about six months to Brunei, for the first time, expecting our second time that was in September 1968. We left Holland but not to go back to Britain we went to Brunei, which was an oil camp, and we were all together. At long last posted somewhere together. We were really in the shell system by then. Up to then I hadn't had much to do with shell. We just lived our own, we rented houses and felt perfectly independent and comfortable, however, *daughter rings*

So we were in Brunei, 68, that we had then our second son in 1969, we left in 1972 we went to Australia directly. Initially we were on a two-year contract. You didn't go back to Europe for two years, you had a local holiday. We saw lots of the far east, taking the children with us and our son, all fine. Nowhere was I unhappy or uncomfortable or were there tragedies. It was already different in the early sixties, the late 60s two year contracts and you certainly couldn't phone unless you booked a phone call. So you were really separated from you family. Took three weeks say you would wrote back it would take 10 days for the letter to get there and 10 days for the answer. So you weren't really in touch with your family but

you were really in touch part of the shell family including Dutch. I actually I set up at that time as you can imagine, being an academic and being sort of cheerful and we set up a language exchange. Well we got three levels of language, beginners, intermediate conversation. So we each amongst us all, the 400 expatriates, mostly the women, we either taught or learn a whole group of us. Spend a lot of in learning languages. I improved my Dutch I think and certainly learned Malay, I thought lots of English. I did things explain to the Malays why we ask why on earth do you apologize someone when you touch someone by mistake? Which we do. Because in Brunei, the Malay practice is that when you talk to someone you put your hand on the shoulder. It is part of the communication thing. The Dutch are not great teachers either. One becomes aware of all the differences societal norms. We went to Australia 1972 we were there till 1976 when we went back to Britain. By then we had 4 children, 3 sons and a daughter. The daughter was born in Australia. So the children were 2 in Holland, 1 in Brunei and 1 in Australia. I used to say it's all to do by the way the bathwater goes about the plughole in the southern hemisphere. Or had something to do with us producing a daughter. And we just this is now this is repatriation moment because we send our eldest child we decided he was going to boarding school. This is something interesting to tell you about. This is an overview that I give you, he was well you know he was born in October he would have been 9. We sent him when he was nearly 9 when he went to boarding school in Britain. And blow me, shell didn't repatriated mark to Britain. Because we didn't know that and in those days, you didn't choose, you just got sent. I have a comment on getting sent, I found better in a way, if you didn't like it or there were problems, you didn't blame yourself for not foreseeing them. It was the company's responsibly. It was the company. If we had chosen to plan our career, for any reason really other than shell's benefit and mark's interest. I would have felt more stressed. I like being it somebody's responsibility and it's my job to make the most of it. That's one thing. My father had just died while we were in Australia so it was good staying with my mother and I send the boy we send to boarding school, stayed in boarding school and I could watch his matches. So I went back with him early September. The right time, that's really important thing is, when you're moving If you start your children you children are new as well it is much less stress upon the child. Then mark arrived in the new year we had a house and we stayed for 15 months and I at that time I decided to do part-time teacher training graduate. I didn't realize that. But we were only there for 8, I was only there for 18 months. I didn't take the final exam although it did do all the training. We were then sent back to Brunei, all of us. That was quite repatriation to Britain. I didn't really last very long. We thought mark was running a team in the north sea. He said to ow I think we will be here for a while. And we decided to have a room in the roof and all sort of things. Which we are only there for a years which I wouldn't have done certainly. Back in Brunei,

that is 1977 I think. We went we were 72 to 76 in Australia 76 78 that right back to Brunei and we were only there for 15 months there was a murderer in Nigeria and I think they thought that Mark was a good person to deal with such things. So we were sent to Nigeria. 79 82. Mark was chairman half of shell in Nigerian only the western part of Nigeria of the off shore producing area. Nothing off shore that happened then. Hard shore was on the other side. There was a Nigerian at charge. We had a lovely time there, living on a camp side, it was the camp side why they would think Mark would be good there because in Brunei it was all oil camp.

J: Only shell?

If few contractors like slumber see, I don't various others. Only in the minority. Shell ran it, shell standards of safety and watch health in Brunei, most interesting in terms of I thought things like child safe guarding is coming in. new societal norms coming in a small community. I watched health and safety coming in the seventies, in Brunei. After that, 82 we left Nigeria, crosses the Sahara at some point. Then we were in turkey for four years. 182 86, 86 19 we were in Malaysia, and then, in 1990 we came back to Holland. 1990-1994.so affectively 5 years in Holland where we live in archipel, we spend about in Mariahoeve waiting to buy in the house in the house, not in Wassenaar where everybody somebody on the Mark's level to live. We wanted to live in the Hague because we liked it so much. We had enough living in levy nice spot we really wanted to live in the city. We had we had lived in the city in sort any way Kuala Lumpur and in turkey, in Istanbul. Not in the city city, you know what I mean. We were active. We decided again to suburban. When we finally got back to Britain. We bought where we are now, in 1992, we sold the house we bought in repatriation area, we kept for quite a while although we only lived room in the roof for 15 months, we kept it for quite a while but never lived in it again.

J: Not even for holidays? Did you got home quite a lot?

Yes. We went back for three months, we always hired a camper van. Not a VW, but a Bedford camper van we could all sleep in. our family called it the ice cream van. It was so could front up in any one's friend house and sleep in their drive. If you are, a family of six you are a bit of a burden. We actually got to the stage, although I was not in the car at the time, ow yes. It was. One stage we got the baby Elisabeth and mark would be in the van and me and the tree boys could push started. It had a wobbly feel and was somewhat inclined to fail to start. But. So we had quite a relationship with this mobile home. I did embarrass the children in boarding school. It did once broke down at the corner of the football pitch. I caused huge embarrassment. It enforced their wish to kick start it and get it moving. All

things, all those relations very important. Since then, we were then in Holland, then we came home. That's it.

J: Do you think that it was easier to come back after you have been back a few times?

No because we missed Mrs. Thatcher entirely and she changed Britain. It was just such a shock. Are you like this. I don't go in for culture shock. It's a sort of aggravating word I found. But I think I had. When I came back in 1995, although we bought the house in 1992 we lent it out because had to have a British house. He would go back and would live in the club, the travelers club when he left Holland. Because he was by then on the committee manager directors. The company's center was in London because he was also running expiration of production the center was in the Hague, still is, he needed to be based in the Hague. I was totally happy to stay in Holland as long as we needed to. There, I actually, am not answering the question, I finally, I had to make speeches and being the wife of and meet the queen and such things. Not that I did, I got to learn Dutch probably and I went to take lessons, which I had never done before. I learned something really interesting that it's your pronunciation that gets people to talk with you. It is not your grammar and certainly not the Dutch I noticed in the intervening years. I am likely to have culture shock coming back to Holland because we felt so at home there. We've been away and I both repatriated to Holland, for five years and then repatriated to Britain. I felt that attached to Holland feeling repatriated to the Hague. Especially because it was Mark's he. so I'm good in repatriation. Anyway, the difference I noticed in Holland because you had so many people from ebonize, people were used to foreigners speaking their language in a funny way which we weren't didn't happen in the first time in the Hague, people spoke Dutch properly or should speak English. Whereas I found people this is Mark's series he ran the Dutch got used to hearing foreigners speak it. Anyway, that is a notice a thing that we noticed different and liked and that's why "ik ben bereid met jou te praten". You of Jij it doesn't matter if I got the grammar wrong it doesn't matter if I have the pronunciation right. People will then reply to me in Nederlands. If I got the pronunciation right, they don't mind about the grammar. This is useful lesson, which I learned that time that would have been in the 1990s. yes, that's right. But when I got back to Britain. I said quite soon we are now in 1995 I used to say I know this because my children complained, you Brits, I can't think why you ....and I complained because Mrs. Thatcher it's been a huge change in British culture from where we left in 1966 the short time I was there. My mother had a sort of depression, my father had died, we had our first son in boarding school. We were renovating the house is as doing a post graduating thing. I was a bit busy. So didn't really take in the culture was then in that short period. I was just too busy organizing the family and our immediate surrounds. Come back in the

90s finally because I said , frequently I hadn't noticed it bit I did, you Brits, the children said: mum, you really have got stop saying that. Nobody want to hear it and anyway its boring. I managed ow really yes, I did adapted to the thing about the Brits is, I had a sort of objective way expressing my feelings about the place, Britain that is. I must have taken me 8 years, to be able to say we Brits. I can do now, we Brits. The inheritance of the thatcher years and all that changing culture, health and safety, child protection, I don't were coming in then, health and safety certainly. More money, different education, so many changes, I hadn't seen happen. You asked me, coming back on holiday I didn't really catch on with things. I saw things on the television but we were forever on our van. Bussing round the family. We have a huge family. Mark being the youngest of 6. We our family sticks together. I didn't spend and we didn't have a home to come back to. We were in the van. The whole time just not really sampling British as in the . It was potentially quite a shock between 1966 and 1996, those 30 years. In others peoples place they are not interested in as h=you have heard in other peoples norms and societal. Ok.

J: I was wondering, do you , you repatriated to NL and the UK, do you consider yourself a repat now?

A repat, yes I think because there are, yes, because I still hear myself because we miss Mrs. thatcher, that I mean maybe doing a her injustice but that is how I refer to the 30 years we missed she's the one who changed such a lot. I do hear myself saying that. And also , you know there is now question, if our an internationalist, also, you are just an internationalist, it got to be better open and less nation stage, more global, that is self-evident for me. I am a repatriated expatriate. But I two things 1 I have analyzed the expatriates round my life into two main sorts. Sorts like us who put roots wherever they are and learn the local language speak Turkish Malay Nigeria it wasn't wise to learn a tribal language and there a so many and you would chose a special favor to one of them. So I rejected the idea to learn the language there for reasons. Put down the roots and learn the local language and possibly and help in old people's home or an orphanage. I did all those things wherever I could. The other sort are really looking forward to go home. They have a home whether in Holland or Britain, I'm mainly judging the Dutch and the British here. They are just the play bridge, golf, they I you ask them in the turn in the library, they would say we are going to leave in three months and I have to get ready. You image it taking it three months to prepare to leave. Their mind is still back home and I others of course at the other end of the spectrum focus on their lives where they are and I'm that variety. But we all noticed the when you get back on holiday to your own country and your own people, they say what is it like in Holland or Nigeria, what's like and they have an attention of about 5 minutes. You don't more than 5 minutes to tell them because they have the experience on the hang of what you want to say. I certainly found that that when

somebody what's it like abroad or whatever place, oww you don't just have time to tell them. So you give up.

J: Do you look up other expats to be able to tell your stories, does it give you comfort?

Yes, what you can do is share the experience you know when we were in Nigeria, nobody says Nigeria, isn't that dangerous? Ow what about the corruption. Even anybody hasn't lived there but is an expat does not do that because you are those there's a sort of brotherhood, sisterhood as expats its lovely. They might be soldiers, it not just oil people you immediately known. You have a huge amount in common without any details being shared. There is as sort of people that are expats and they get repatriated. I had quite put some effort with other shell friend in holding annual lunches and we set up the archive center. I had put some effort into it and I think my experience now is that after how many years, not yet 20 years, good 15 years we were back in Britain, that people and getting grandchildren and so on people are less don't, to begin with they do want to see one another, You know we went on outings and look, people were wiling a smallish group but a definite group of expat were really pleased to get together and that has faced. That is because we settled and we filled our lives with other things. That has surprised me.

J: Ex/repatriates. Did shell also help with your stay abroad or return back home in the form of a training or information?

I never went , I was a thing somewhere in Kent that people used to go to. I was never off to it and I never inquired about it. Partly because I think we were in exasperation and everybody in expiration is mobile and also. I never got any training, a part of the offering languages. Language training, shell always offered lessons in the local language whenever you. I used I describe it shell's attitude to us families as I was a wonderful big Shell umbrella but you have to stand under it. So which is quite I'm not complaining about it but one has to realize there are rules and regulations and they are only held the umbrella in a certain way. There are exceptions but Shell used to pay for you to go home once if your parents were critically ill. And also offer a funeral. If I can remember one person in Brunei, it wasn't us, rushing home his critically ill parent and then they recovered and then actually a little while died. And the question was would he then be able to go back to the funeral or had he used up his term. On paper he used his term up but what my husband calls you strong management. You can make an exception. This is what is great which shell was and I was accused not setting a precedent. A job of human resource or a personnel they had the sense they were dealing with a large group and they didn't want to set a precedent. A very tricky

job and my husband's view was that it you really shouldn't being that frightened of setting a precedent if there was a really humanitarian need. It wasn't a precedent it was a guide and that's was always an issue in a way I can remember it. Points system for houses and so on. This was rather aggravating thing because once on a camp, the son the managing directors was working for shell and on the camp his mother came on a state visit with the director and commented on the quality of the houses he had. The local personnel man upgraded the housing for this local. This Dutch , they were Dutch family. And this caused as you can imagine in the camp huge embarrassment difficulty the point system was actually overwritten by the request of the managers/directors wife. They had to live with this nasty feeling go nth camp. You know oehhhh you get to be connected to the right people to get anywhere in shell. It was then that at top shell level as a result of this to my mind It was the personnel man mistake he shouldn't have done it. But as a result, the top of shell, no children of directors should work for the company. And when our son wanted to work for shell, who now works for slumbers Hai, of course he couldn't because mark was then a director. And there was no way no way our son was going to work for another oil company because he had such a sense of loyalty to Shell. In the end, the oil companies were denied to him by my husband's job. There are little things like. The went to start to work with slumbers Hai and he still works there in the oil industry that is alright. But it is I am just telling you it as if it is a sort of. The affect the family as dependent we used to be exported, what is the word, send abroad, where the expatriate was the worker and family were dependent. And then in 1990's it was changed to the unite of the expatriation was the family and you might have a one person family. That was the expatriate with no dependence. So that, this is actually different philosophy. It was in the 90's, I was particularly interested to set up an information network between all the families. We could do then by email and fax, telephone, to help people who would go abroad, to be able to work because a nurse. It was only the families, whether they should retrain and should bring their papers with them, what are the opportunities, and volunteering, and how many boys, would there be a football team, all sorts of things. Help you made your decision, because increasingly in the 90s you could choose. In my days in the past the only reason that I know the company would change for your worker if you had a child with a learning difficulty, because there were a lot mix marriage in culture and language terms. And then for them, to add a third language to the child was disturbing. You could say, I prefer to go a English speaking country or a place with a English school. Or Dutch, because English is easy in Dutch. It was a Dutch thing or not, it would be more tricky. The British could go with the Americans and increasingly the international Bache laureate. Things became much more. Education, international schools blossomed. In our days there weren't many. Nations schools were all you would have, locally. When my children were primary school.

It was the schools that I was always really interested in. we set up a playgroup, kindergartens that the wives said up.

J: I asked you about training: you didn't go. Whether or not do you think, you didn't really needed training because you kept so busy? Made sure you had something to do.

Yes, I think you probably right. That and coming from an international family, having traveled a bit of well. Both mark and I, spend after school we were in Germany for several months. Chosen to go to Germany. I because I wanted to learn German because I was a chemist and ought to learn the language. I lived with I worked in a factory during the day. I suppose I was away for a while and I was in love with someone in Britain. That was my first time abroad, I went to France with a school, for a school to stay with a pen friend when I was 14. I think I've always positive other peoples set ups. I wouldn't have minded if they had said we send you to where ever it was., I remember, the place of the name in Kent. I would have gone, because I found it really interesting but nobody offered to me.

J: Do you have any advice?

I would start with saying it is a different world because I never went back for half terms and or children came out to us. I did not maintain, although my mother was a widow, I didn't made, she fact we send our children back to boarding school, they could keep an eye on my mother. That led me off till the time I got back to London when I we bought a house near, I should tell you this. We bought a house in 1996 near my mother where I was brought up. Although we didn't live in it we rented it out. We thought it would sheer my mother up. When we had no place to live Mark got hepatitis when we were between Malaysia and Turkey. He got really ill because he thought he had a hangover, he had partied in Britain and drank. It so bad for his liver. It was very worrying, he was hospitalized. When you don't die in the first week you will be alright. That was really bad. We stayed for 2,5 weeks between Malaysia and Turkey. (vv). For three months in fact. When we got to Malaysia in December they said you are the people who never came. We were due to get there in September because of his illness, it takes a while to recover, it was postponed. We did say those three months with my mother. I put the children in a local school there. We bought this house in down in Sussex. But lending it did made my mother feel we might be home near to her one day. Which is really important the worrying about your parents is one of the worst things. Some people really worry about their children, sending them off to boarding school. But because my husband's family had send them off to boarding school. I went to state school. It is such



a close family, we wrote to our children every week, both of us. Sometimes mark put the wrong letter in the wrong envelope. The children loved that. He wrote on the computer. I would say just I depends so much on your attitude to home all the time you were abroad. It's for everybody different. I did go when I first came back I did go to focus in London in 1996 or 5 to learn about national health service. You really do need to make an effort when you've been away for 30 years and to understand. So I did really more effort to train myself what was going on in Britain. I have never made such an effort when we were abroad. My expectation I knew I was going to be there for a while. Anyway I went to this thing new to Britain and I was mainly full of Americans who came to live in London. I got to say I learned more about Americans through hearing their questions and also about Britain by hearing what their problems were. I didn't really ask much, I listened a lot. It was quite interesting. Learning to make friends. Apparently in the united states you would become friends by saying, ow what a nice dress, where did you get it? I have to confess I had no idea where I bought I was not even interested in clothes, what I should I have done was asking what they were wearing. I never twigged to my shame I never twigged this interest that Americans they put in me and it was an effort to make friends. I felt friendly with them but I did not reply by saying I love the way, who cut your hair? Just dumb about it. I never lived in America so I rather hope I would. That is just a sort of side. If you come back you do need to make an effort to catch up. But what was so wonderful is that are a last in your own country I was a governor of a school, the children have been school, the prep school, the young age, before they went on to public schools, I was also governor's chair of the boys school. I'm a noisy sort of person, having to take responsibility. Mark and I set up two charities. Build around an ex prisoner. We both chose those down. I'm very active on the ngo circuit. One of the thing the main bit of advice is you have to be aware that you have to learn to say no to things. Because in the expatriate world, certainly of shell, you moved on every 3,4 years and something you really sorry to leave but some really happy to escape. You never have to take the initiative. You just say sorry we have to go. When you get back home you are stuck. Extricating yourself from things. You get used to the variety and it is difficult. When you retire, I never retired because I wasn't working anyway. I did actually teach, lecturer for 3 years in English composition in Turkey , she asked me if I would consider in the university of Istanbul. Very interesting because they were left wing and I spend my days with left wings, and my evenings with right wings business men. I think it is boundary ness. Volunteer work, no boundaries, no money, very different life than the rather I just say I doesn't have boundaries that you have to think about. I don't have any other advice. My daughter says to me, look mum you got that kind of character, because I was I used to say to people who had to send their children off to school. You have to trust other adults, it's you miss them, but you shouldn't feed off their actions and let them know how

much you are missing them, doesn't actually help the children. So I have few views on how to manage sending your children to boarding school. My daughter said to me recently she is hear she married to a musician firmly rooted in Britain. That's alright because you have that are person. She said stop saying you British, because it is boring. She was born in Australia, she is quite direct.

J: One more question. What is the Dutch way?

It is sufficient, you are aware of the neighbors, this sort of community, you and directness that you heard me talk about. Verbal directness and the meaning of it. One more thing, I don't know if I ever said it to a Dutch person, you are very queen rides the bicycle you can wave to her in the street that is all very flat and unhierarchical. Just as far as your collar bones, from your chest. You are very hierarchical. You found that people would be much more aware of the fact that my husband's rank and Brits not and other people not. The Dutch particularly aware acquired social status. Also back in Holland, if anybody a relation to the palace you'd hear about it. It is not a criticism, its interesting how galentarian you would have want first impression of Holland, but deep down there is a very real awareness. Which is not negative but just interesting.

J: What is the Dutch way? Directness etc.

Directness, you got your aware of your social position. It will govern someone's attitude to you. In Britain I think it doesn't. Britain has these classes. It is a class written society, you can still depending on your accent. I can talk people on the underground, ex-prisoners, I can talk in the exactly same language from Prins Philip to an ex-prisoner, whereas, I would have thought that their attitude would depend on their character. I haven't feel there's a difference in Holland when they discover you connection/position of your husband.

J: Anything to add?

I do think that you are my sort of person you do want to, I like knitting, paint a bit, have painted, I'm moderately good in lots of things, not very good at anything, I do like not to miss an opportunity. I'm very active, and you have to realize that. I also do feel if I see something that needs doing like setting up this, not just the archive center, much more important really was the reasons why we published the two books. The books, I just tell you.

Evening gathering, critical except ally aware

When you are wife of manager, grand-mother sister role in Malaysia, quite a lot of effort to listening to them, take a serious interest.

Most mobile nations: Nigeria and the Brits.

Dutch not: more direct criticism, lack of interest. In Britain not. Dutch women more pressure to continue their career and not sending their children to boarding school. In Britain it was natural to send them to boarding school. That is another cultural difference.

We laughed of the statute of the shell wife. Why is this so funny? Five suitcases and looking for the husband. How nice of them recognizing our contribution. Some were totally happy with supporting their husband, and were not.

Manager wife, everyone was totally nice to you. The women who struggled, had to go abroad for the money, or had an ambitious husband, all a variety of dependence of expats was enormous and interesting. Commeration to listen to our stories. Yes we thought, why not? Amazing, it was before internet.

J: Who know what if the wife would tell their story?

Wives were the reason why people were less mobile. Men at Shell that two things: information center, outpost, to help women, stories formed the bases. Everyone heard of the difficulties, this came all out in the open. Nobody moaned.

Woman of a high profile person/job, you are not a free agent.