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Managing self-initiated expatriates

An empirical research on different types of mentoring and their effect on employees'
cross-cultural adjustment

by Maria Eleni Kalampoka

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Foreword

Dear reader,

This dissertation was the research I conducted for completing the MSc in Strategic Human Resource Management at Utrecht University, Netherlands. It focuses on the cross-cultural adjustment of self-initiated expatriates and how this can be affected by different types of mentoring within the organization of a host-country. My interest in this topic was not clear from the beginning. It took me a lot of time to choose the concepts involved and formulate the exact research question, but after doing so, I realized that I was interested in this topic as I consider myself an expatriate as well.

Writing this dissertation was not stress-free at most times and especially in the beginning. Besides facing personal difficulties and anxiety, the pandemic of Covid-19 was an unexpected barrier that no one could have predicted. Having people by my side was the most important thing to help me complete this task.

First of all, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Mrs. Thunnissen. At my lowest, she was there to support, encourage, and guide me. She had the patience to listen to all my questions, complaints, and difficulties and help me in all ways possible. She was also of valuable help in finding participants for the qualitative research. Also, Eva Knies, the coordinator of this MSc program, with whom I and my fellow students had monthly meetings to discuss our progress, was always ready to help us.

Moreover, I would like to thank my father for his patience and love. He has always been there for me, ready to assist me. Finally, my friends in the Netherlands and in Greece whom I hold very close to my heart. They either helped me practically or were of great mental support as well as a happy distraction outside of this thesis project.

I hope you enjoy this as much as I did!

Maria Eleni Kalampoka,

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Abstract

The phenomenon of globalization has led to the increasing mobility of workers across nations and a lot of these people can be categorized as self-initiated expatriates. Since relocating to another country can be difficult, it is important that these international employees feel completely adjusted as their adjustment is associated to many things such as their performance in the organization. In detail, mentoring has been continuously proposed as an assisting tool by scholars. The current research examined specifically the type of mentoring that these expatriates receive in the host-country, and how does this affect – if it affects – and in what way their cross-cultural adjustment. The research question and sub-questions were formulated to empirically test the conceptual framework by Mezias and Scandura (2005), which this research focused on. Drawing on a qualitative exploratory study of 15 interviews in five (5) countries and within 11 different organizations, it was seen that indeed each degree of adjustment can be best influenced by different types of mentoring, although, in some cases, the type of mentoring was not explicitly the same for all respondents. This pinpointed the fact that the perception of each person regarding the mentoring he/ she received differed. In general, it was shown that individuals' experience in the organization/ host-country varies. In this way, this dissertation is a valuable asset to organizations and especially the HR department, which plays a major role in acquiring, developing, and retaining its workforce. Practical implications are rehearsed, exposing limitations of the study and areas for further research.

Keywords: talent management, self-initiated expatriates, cross-cultural adjustment, mentoring

Table of Contents

Introduction

Research Problem

Nowadays, the globalization of the world has made it easier for people to move across borders in hopes of searching for better opportunities and quality of life (United Nations, 2017). Especially the citizens of the European Union (EU) have the benefit of moving across the European labor market due to the phenomenon of the free movement of human capital, which facilitates European citizens to move across countries and enter the European labor workforce (Emilsson and Mozetič, 2019). However, in general, human resources traveling across nations is a common thing that comes naturally as the global labor market is increasing (Sullivan and Arthur, 2006). This means that workers can easily decide to move to another country to work. According to Froese (2012), there is an increase in the expatriation of people in foreign countries. These expatriates can be either assigned ones (AEs), meaning that they are sent abroad by the organization they work for, or self-initiated ones (SIEs), meaning that they decide to relocate to a foreign country on their own (Ibid.).

However, this increase, also, means that more people who tend to follow a global career throughout different organizations and across different nations, they encounter various cultures that they need to adjust to. Nonetheless, this is not something easy as expatriates may face several issues when working in a new location either professional-wise or personal-wise (Crocitto, Sullivan, and Carraher, 2005). In today's global economy, this adjustment has become crucial for expatriates (Liu and Huang, 2015), since relocating embodies several challenges (Rainoldi and Golzner, 2014). Particularly, this adjustment has been consistently referred to as cross-cultural adjustment. Black and Stephens (1989) identified three types to describe the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates. These three types are known as general adjustment, interaction adjustment, and work adjustment (Ibid.). General adjustment refers to the living conditions or culture of the new setting in the host-country, interaction adjustment refers to the interaction of the expatriate with the natives of the host-country, and work adjustment refers to the work-related responsibilities of the expatriate in the host-country (Ibid).

Several previous studies indicate that strategies that support the human capital of organizations such as training and development are associated with employee

turnover and performance (Huselid, 1995, as cited in Fahim, 2018). Moreover, according to Aycan (1997) as cited in Howe-Walsh and Schyns (2010), should the expatriate receive organizational assistance, he/ she can spend less time in dealing with issues and adjust easier to the working environment. Therefore, the purpose lies in the HRM policies that can facilitate the expatriate (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010). Adopting HR strategies that are internationally focused can also give organizations a competitive advantage (Ibid.).

Mentoring has been repeatedly proposed by scholars as an HR intervention for expatriates to overcome the difficulties they face for several reasons (Siegel, Mosca, and Karim, as cited in Rainoldi and Golzner, 2014). For example, international mentoring has been found to assist in the junior expatriate's socialization, development, and retention (Zhuang, Wu, and Wen, 2013). Also, when the HR department implements mentoring, this can have a very positive effect on the expatriate's experience in the new setting. This happens as the people who are mentored can advance their skills, carry out tasks more efficiently, and be more confident in the new environment (Blom and Meier, 2002, as cited in Rainoldi and Golzner, 2014). Especially mentoring can be divided into three functions. These are the career development, psychosocial support, and role modeling functions (Scandura, 1992). Also, mentoring relationships can vary in terms of type and number of people involved (Zachary, 2005).

However, in general, the literature on the 'international talent flows' has paid attention to AEs (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014, p. 2). Nonetheless, for the last 15 years, SIEs have started to gain attention. Especially, in the human resource management literature, SIEs are considered high skilled talents that can give both the host-country and organizations a competitive advantage (Al Ariss and Crowler-Henry, 2013). Zhuang et al. (2013) examined the effect of each mentoring function on the three aspects of the cross-cultural adjustment on AEs. They found that each function was uniquely and positively related to a degree of the expatriate adjustment, respectively. However, they did not take into consideration the type of mentoring that the expatriates received. Mezias and Sandura (2005) raised this question in the first place by providing a conceptual framework based on the needs of expatriates throughout the different phases of their expatriation as explained by them. Later, Herbert-Hansen and Rasmussen (2016) examined the role of formal and informal mentors on the

expatriation process of AEs by examining the concept of mentoring as a coping mechanism that can facilitate the adjustment of expatriates. However, they did not examine the explicit model, developed by Mezias and Scandura (2005), as they did not focus on the different types of mentoring the former proposed. Instead, they focused on the formality or not of mentors and their effect on employees throughout all different phases of their expatriation-repatriation process.

Relevance of the Study

The societal relevance of this study lies in the fact that SIEs tend to increase; Recent studies indicate that a large percentage of 50-70% of expatriates can be categorized as SIEs (Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari, 2008; Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009). This means that these SIEs tend to be on the move. This can be supported by the fact that these types of employees are associated with building a boundaryless career (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010), meaning that these individuals choose "a series of employment opportunities beyond the boundary of a single employment environment" (Liu and Chen, 2013, p. 1). On one hand, this seems to be a positive thing, since SIEs are considered as strategic human resources for multinational corporations because the latter can use them where labor shortages exist (Cao, Hirschi, and Deller, 2014) and, as such, are seen to be employed by organizations continuously (Jokinen et al., 2008). On the other hand, this means that SIEs tend to exactly move, hence, leaving organizations and creating labor shortages themselves. In today's 'knowledge economy', acquiring and retaining talented employees is of great importance not only for organizations but also for nations (Mahroum, 2005, as cited in Cerdin and Selmer, 2014, p. 1).

Moreover, according to Thunnissen, Boselie, and Frutier (2013), "talents are a long-term corporate asset and should be treated like one" (p. 1757). Therefore, for organizations to gain an advantage on the expatriation of SIEs, they need to facilitate the transfer from one country to another (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010), especially since SIEs are presumed to be the most frequently employed individuals by international organizations (Myers and Pringle, 2005; Przytula, 2016). On the contrary, employees who are not organizationally assisted (Begley, Collings, and Scullion, 2008), they decide to expatriate again (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014). According, also, to Zachary (2005), in today's competitive environment, organizations need to adopt more inclusive ways of mentoring and offer diverse opportunities. This can be supported by the fact that a major organizational advantage that comes from mentoring is its human

resource development (Holtbrügge and Ambrosius, 2015). Especially, an expatriate that is well adjusted regarding his/ her work may be more efficient in his/ her role and have higher performance (Aycan, 1997, as cited in Froese, 2012). In this way, this study is organizationally relevant as it can help organizations to develop a mentoring plan and facilitate the cross-cultural adjustment of their SIEs, which, for instance, can lead to them performing better within the organization.

Finally, scientifically, as previously mentioned, most studies pay attention to the AEs. Especially, the literature provides plenty of research on the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (Farcas and Goncales, 2017). On the other hand, some studies have been published for the cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs (e.g. Farcas and Goncalves, 2017, Peltokorpi and Froese, 2009, Froese and Peltokorpi, 2013, Froese, 2012), but they have not examined the variable of mentoring. SIEs compared to AEs have several differentiating criteria including but not limited to the time of stay abroad, their motives for relocation, etc. (Przytula, 2015). The personal initiative is the main difference between SIEs and AEs (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014), and according to Andresen, Pattie, and Hippler (2019), individuals who show personal initiative are "increasingly important for organizations" for several reasons (p. 2). This implies that more scientific research is needed. Moreover, this type of employees is considered "a hidden aspect of international labor market", which explains the need for more scientific studies on them (Jokinen et al., 2008, p. 2; Przytula, 2016, p. 6). Overall, SIEs are considered an important group that should be studied upon more thoroughly (Cerdin and Selmer, 2014).

In detail, whereas there is already a conceptual framework, developed by Mezias and Scandura in 2005, to the best of our knowledge, this has not been empirically tested to date. Therefore, the goal of this study is to empirically test this framework.

Research Question and Sub-questions

The research question and sub-questions are formulated as follows:

What type of mentoring do SIEs experience in the organization of the host-country, and how does this have an impact, and what kind of impact on their cross-cultural adjustment?

1. How do they experience their cross-cultural adjustment in terms of going through the phases of the adjustment process?
2. Which factors influence their cross-cultural adjustment?
3. What type of mentoring do they receive?
4. What is the role of the mentoring received?

Literature Review

Types of Expatriates

Literature has been consistently defining expatriates as the "highly qualified experts in their field that are sent on high profile assignments abroad" (Herbert-Hansen and Rasmussen, 2016, p. 1). However, when referring to expatriates, scholars are mostly referring to AEs, meaning people who are sent abroad by the organization they work for (Froese, 2012). Nonetheless, as previously explained, there is a new type of expatriates, which is characterized as SIEs. In this paper, SIEs are defined as "internationally mobile individuals, who have moved through their own agency to another country for an interminable duration" (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry, 2013, p. 2). Studies between AEs and SIEs have found several differences. At the same time, the literature on AEs is vast and studies have been rather ambiguous and inconsistent when using the term expatriate. Therefore, this paper will be based on the theory of AEs and, thus, it is proper that some differentiating criteria between these two groups are identified.

Initially, what differs between these groups is the reason for relocating abroad; AEs are sent on assignments by their organizations (Froese, 2012), whereas for SIEs, the initiative comes from themselves and not by their employing organization (Suutari, Brewster, and Tornikoski, 2013; Cerdin and Selmer, 2014). Secondly, AEs are financially supported for their relocation costs by their organization or other organizations (e.g. UN) throughout the expatriation process (Przytula, 2016). On the contrary, SIEs do not receive any kind of support from the parent organization in the home country and, thus, are put in what is called a 'weak situation' (Mischel, 1977, as cited in Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black, and Ferzandi, 2006, p. 111). Instead, these individuals decide to finance their expatriation and choose the country of destination on their own (Tharenou, 2009, as cited in Przytula, 2016). Moreover, contrary to SIEs, AEs usually receive some type of training before going on their international assignment (Howe-Walsh and Schyns, 2010). Also, the duration of the expatriation varies; AEs' duration abroad is dependent on the parent organization and their contract and is usually limited (Przytula, 2016), whereas SIEs are described as "foreign national employees, temporarily living ex-patria" (Guzzo, 1997, as cited in Cerdin and Selmer, 2014, p. 10), however, their time abroad can also be unlimited based on their plans (Przytula, 2016).

In general, SIEs decide to relocate to another country with the purpose of finding a new employer or becoming self-employed (Jokinen et al., 2008). In the first case, they are employed directly by a new organization (Tharenou and Caulfield, 2010; Tharenou, 2013). This motive of theirs to relocate abroad can often be initiated by their desire for adventure and the desire to explore new things and experience new things (Inkson, Arthur, Pringle, and Barry, 1997). They mostly decide to move abroad to a country that they choose (Tharenou, 2010). These professionals encounter several opportunities abroad such as economic, career-related, working-related, employment-related, etc. that prevent them from repatriating to their home country (Tharenou, 2010).

Cross-Cultural Adjustment

The concept of cross-cultural adjustment is rather a complicated one (Haslberger, 2005). This happens because of the many facets of the concept (Anderson, 1994) such as various variables and approaches to take into consideration when examining adjustment (Haslberger, 2005). For this paper, the concept of cross-cultural adjustment is defined as the "degree of a person's psychological comfort with various aspects of a new setting" (Black and Gregersen, 1991, as cited in Zhuang et al., 2013, p. 3). In the expatriate context, this means that the expatriate will be cross-culturally adjusted when he/ she feels psychologically comfortable to deal with issues that arise while he/ she lives in the new environment of the host-country and how he/ she aims to perform at work efficiently (Aycan, 1997, as cited in Halim, Bakar, and Mohamad, 2014).

Process of Adjustment

The model of "U-Curve Theory" was initiated by Lysgaard (1955) as cited in (Black and Mendenhall, 1991) and it is the most used in the expatriate literature and process of cross-cultural adjustment. The literature review that was done by Black and Mendenhall (1991) indicates that the curve explains the adjustment as a process that occurs through the time of stay in the new country and that, in general, there are four different phases that someone must go through in order to adjust. In the first one, the "honeymoon stage", people are fascinated by their new cultural experience and the things that surround them (p. 2). Pedersen (1995) indicates that individuals act as tourists to the new environment and they are curious about it. The second stage, known as "culture shock" or "disillusionment phase", takes place as people are starting to be frustrated by their surrounding environment and try to find ways to cope with it (Black and Mendenhall, 1991, p. 2). The third phase, that of "adjustment", means that

individuals start to feel more familiar within the new environment and they gradually adapt to the new setting by comprehending behaviors and acting accordingly, and, finally, the fourth stage, known as "mastery stage", means that people will gradually learn to operate more effectively in the host-country as there will be small increases in their abilities (Ibid).
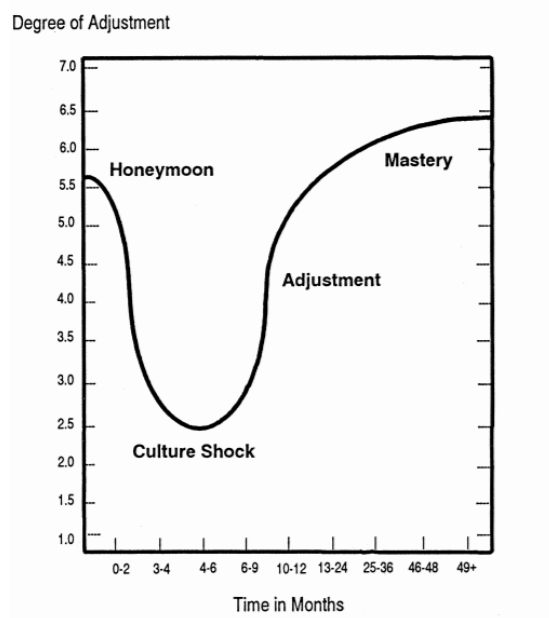
Figure 1. U-Curve Model. Adopted from Black and Mendenhall (1991).

Factors of Adjustment

According to the empirical framework of International Adjustment by Black, Mendenhall, and Oddou (1991), the expatriate's cross-cultural adjustment in the host-country can be divided into two phases. The first one refers to the anticipatory adjustment, which occurs in the home country of the expatriate, and the second one refers to the in-country adjustment, which exactly occurs in the expatriate's host-country (Ibid.). This framework of adjustment is the most used in the expatriate literature (Montenegro, Nascimento, and Neto, 2014). To recapitulate, both phases of adjustment consist of several factors, which later influence the cross-cultural adjustment or, as presented in the framework, the degree of adjustment. These factors are depicted in the following figure.

Figure 2. Framework of International Adjustment. Adopted from Black et al. (1991).

Anticipatory Adjustment

Anticipatory adjustment is divided into individual and organizational factors (Black et al., 1991). Since, by definition, SIEs relocate to the host-country through their own agency, the only factor that is relevant in this study is the *previous experience* of t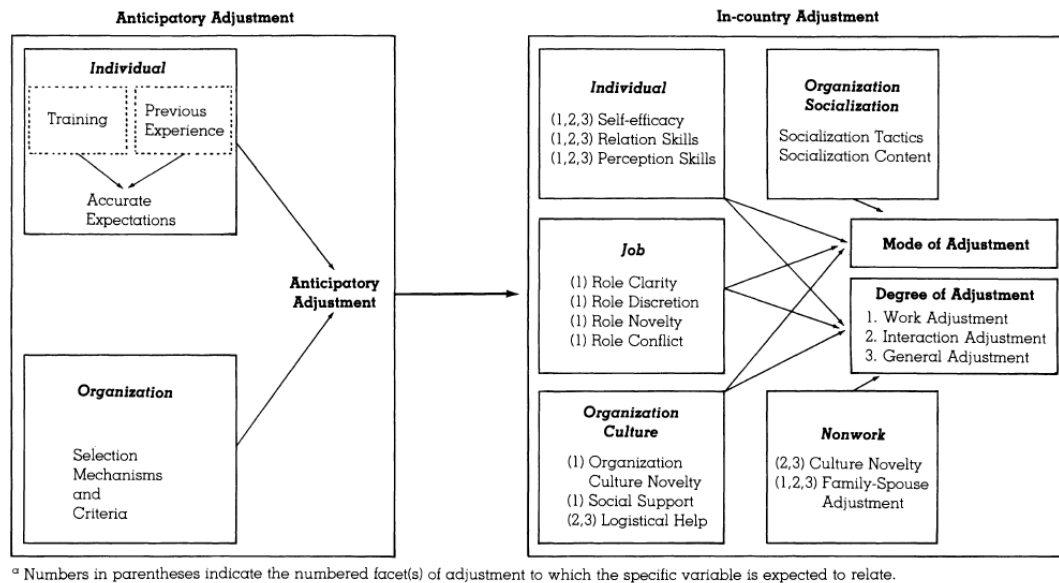he expatriate. In detail, expatriates who have traveled internationally before and are often on the move learn how to adjust to the new environment, as "each successive transfer helps them become comfortable and productive faster and more easily" (Nicholson, 1984, as cited in Waxin, Brewster, and Ashill, 2019, p. 4). This can happen especially if the host-country of the expatriate is a country that he/ she has been assigned to in the past (Black et al., 1991). In the SIEs context, this means that the expatriate will have expatriated again in the past.

In-country Adjustment

Individual

According to Mendenhall and Oddou (1985), there are three competency-based dimensions that help the expatriate to adjust in the host-country more easily. Initially, the *self-oriented dimension*, which translates to the self-efficacy in the expatriate context, refers to the self-esteem, confidence, and mental health of the expatriate. Self-efficacy has been defined as "an individual's past experiences with success and failure in a variety of situations which should result in a general set of expectations that the individual carries into new situations" (Sherer et al., 1982, as cited in Shaffer, Harrison,

and Gilley, 1999, p. 5). The dimension encompasses three components that harness the abovementioned characteristics (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985, p. 4): a) reinforcement substitution refers to the substitution of activities that the expatriate used to do in his/ her home country, yet he/ she now does them in the host-country, b) stress reduction refers to the ability of the expatriate to manage his/ her stress, which can be developed when entering a new culture, and, c) technical competence is associated with having the necessary technical expertise to fulfill a task and it is positively related to work adjustment (Waxin et al., 2019).

The *others-related dimension*, also known as relation skills dimension, "encompasses activities and attributes that enhance the expatriate's ability to interact effectively with host-nationals" (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985, p. 5). Based on them, it can be divided into two subfactors: a) relationship development and, b) willingness to communicate. The relationship development is defined as the "ability to develop long-lasting friendships with host-nationals" (p. 5). According to studies, it eases the work adjustment and performance of expatriates (Shaffer, 2006, as cited in Waxin et al., 2019). The willingness to communicate is defined as "the individual's confidence and willingness to use the host culture's language or any other common language to communicate with locals" (Waxin et al., 2019, p. 3-4). This ability to interact and communicate with the host-nationals is important for the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (Abe and Wiseman, 1983, as cited in Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985).

The *perception-related dimension* refers to the ability of the expatriate to comprehend why the people in the host-country behave the way they do (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985). In this way, expatriates will learn how to behave as well, which can later reduce issues in their communication with the nationals of the host-country (Ibid.).

Job-related

According to Black et al. (1991), the adjustment of the expatriate in the host-country is also influenced by job factors. These include the *role clarity*, *role discretion*, *role novelty*, and *role conflict* (Ibid.) Both role clarity and role discretion are positively related to the work adjustment of the expatriate as, in this way, the expatriate is more certain about his/ her work tasks and, thus, can adjust more easily to it (Ibid.). Lack of clarity has been shown to produce stress (Ilgen and Hollenbeck, 1991, as cited in Waxin, 2006). Additionally, role novelty refers to the difference of the new job task of

the expatriate in the host-country as opposed to the previous job task in his/ her home country and role conflict refers to the conflicting signals that the expatriate receives from his/ her new organization (Ibid.). Compared to the role clarity and discretion, these are negatively associated with the expatriate's adjustment as these factors augment uncertainty (Ibid.).

Organization Culture

The culture of the organization encompasses three (3) factors (Black et al., 1991). Initially, *organization culture novelty* refers to the differences between the organization of the expatriate in the home-country with the organization in the host-country (Waxin and Panaccio, 2005). This dissimilarity between the culture of the two organizations can hinder the expatriate adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Secondly, *social support* encompasses the support offered by supervisors and coworkers (Ibid.). Social support is rather a complicated concept that has received several interpretations. In this paper, social support is defined as "an asset to coping that contributes to the striving sentiments" (Gore, 1973, as cited in Pearson, 1986, p. 390). In the expatriate context, social support takes on the role of socioemotional and instrumental support (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). The former is set out to ease the adjustment of expatriates through the development of emotional and supportive networks in the new country (Farh, Bartol, Shapiro, and Shin, 2010). The latter is addressed to helping expatriates who are stressed by meeting specific needs (Caligiuri and Lazarova, 2002). Finally, the *logistical help* that the expatriate receives for his/ her travel and relocation expenses will not be considered in this thesis because, as previously explained, SIEs decide to move through their own agency to the foreign country and are not sent by their employer, therefore, they do not receive financial support (Black et al., 1991)

Organization Socialization

Organization socialization is defined as "the fashion in which an individual is taught and learns what behaviors and perspectives are customary and desirable within the work setting as well as what ones are not" (Van Maanen, 1979, p. 4). The concept can be divided into two categories: *phases* and *efforts* (Ibid.).

a) Based on the model of Fisher (1986) as cited in Black et al. (1991), there are three phases. The first one is called *anticipatory socialization* and means that people make prior adjustments "through means such as organizational choice, organizational

selection, and expectation formulation" (p. 7). The second phase is called *encounter stage* (Fisher, 1986, as cited in Black et al., 1991). This means that the individual starts to actually encounter the tasks of a work role and the relationships in the new organization and gradually masters at both (Ibid.). Individuals are through with this stage when they do not feel like newcomers anymore (Feldman, 1976, as cited in Dailey, 2016). The third and final phase is called *role management* (Feldman, 1976, as cited in Black et al., 1991). In this stage, people are gradually fully accepted by the organization (Ibid.).

b) The second category refers to the tactics that have been found to influence the adjustment of the newcomers. Several studies have pinpointed at various socialization strategies (Fisher, 1986, as cited in Ashforth and Saks, 1996). However, according to Black et al. (1991), Van Maanen and Schein's 1979 model of these socialization tactics is one of the most detailed in the scientific literature. In detail, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) proposed six socialization tactics: i) *collective versus individual*, which means grouping individuals new to the organizational setting to introduce them to the same experiences instead of experiencing these experiences on their own, ii) *formal versus informal*, which means that the newcomer is segregated from regular employees for a specific period of time as opposed to not be clearly distinguished from the senior employees, iii) *sequential versus random*, which refers to the fixed sequence of steps that specifies the tasks of the new job role, compared to steps that are ambiguous, random, or have a changing sequence, iv) *fixed versus variable*, which refers to having a specific timeframe for the socialization or not, v) *serial versus disjunctive*, which refers to the newcomer being introduced and socialized through the help of an experienced employee as opposed to not, and, vi) *investiture versus divestiture,* which refers to which extent is the organization going to identify and support or not the employee's previous socialization experiences.

Nonwork

The nonwork-related factors are divided into *culture novelty* and *family-spouse adjustment* (Black et al., 1991). Culture novelty refers to the "cultural distance" (Church, 1982 as cited in Waxin and Panaccio, 2005, p. 7) or "hardness of culture" (Tung, 1986, as cited in Waxin and Panaccio, 2005, p. 7). Basically, this means that the more different the culture of the expatriates' home-country to the host-country is, the more difficult the adjustment of the expatriate in the new setting will be (Waxin and

Panaccio, 2005). Furthermore, the social support that the expatriate receives from his/ her partner is considered an antecedent to cross-cultural adjustment (Black et al., 1991). Several scholars have explained that the inability of the spouse's adjustment can negatively affect the adjustment of the expatriate (Malek, Budhwar, and Reiche, 2014).

Mode of Adjustment

The mode of adjustment refers to the strategies of adjustment (e.g. coping) (Festing and Maletzky, 2011). It is defined as "the manner individuals adapt to the environment or seek to change the environment to correspond to their own needs and abilities" (Nicholson, 1984, as cited in Peltokorpi and Zhang, 2020, p. 2). According to Dawis and Lofquist (1984) as cited in Black et al. (1991), there are two ways in which people can behave in a new setting that can help them to adjust; The first one is the active mode, which means that people will change the setting according to their own needs, and the second one is the reactive mode, which means that people will alter their actions and behavior to adjust to their surrounding environment.

Degree of Adjustment

As previously mentioned, the cross-cultural adjustment, also known as the degree of adjustment, is divided into three facets: general, interaction, and work adjustment (Black and Stephens, 1989). In detail, general refers to the generic living conditions and culture of the host-country of the expatriate (Ibid.), such as climate, accommodation, food, and health care (Farcas and Goncalves, 2017). Interaction refers to the adjustment of the expatriate in interacting with the natives of the host-country (Black and Stephens, 1989). According to Aycan (1997) as cited in Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri (2014), the engaging of expatriates in positive relationships with the nationals of the host-country can be an antecedent of high work performance towards his/ her new work. Finally, work refers to the psychological adjustment that the expatriate feels regarding the job-related tasks in the host-country (Ibid.). These include for example the expatriates' performance, responsibilities, and supervision (Black, 1988).

Coping Strategies

Coping has been defined as the "thoughts and behaviors that people use to manage the internal and external demands of situations that are appraised as stressful" (Folkman and Lazarus, 1980, as cited in Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004, p. 2). According to Stahl

(2005), the adjustment process of the expatriate can be influenced by effective coping strategies. To understand more about the correlation between these two links, Herbert-Hansen and Rasmussen (2016) examined the role of mentors in the adjustment process of expatriates and they concluded that mentoring is a sub-factor of coping strategies, since the core values of mentoring rely on someone "who has been in a similar stressful situation and offers his/ her knowledge to help inexperienced colleagues" (p. 18). Especially, their study focused on the role of mentors based on their formality or not. However, part of the limitations of the study as explained earlier was the fact that the authors did not focus on the conceptual framework developed by Mezias and Scandura in 2005, which distinguishes further types of mentors besides them being formal or not.

Mentoring

The origins of mentoring are based on Greek Mythology, whereas the king of Ithaka, Odysseus, trusted the upbringing of his son, Telemathus, to his trusted advisor and loyal friend, Mentor, while he was away to war (McQuade, Davis, and Nash, 2015, p.5). Mentor and Telemathus developed a relationship based on trust, as Mentor was responsible for guiding, coaching, and protecting the young boy (Gutierrez, 2012, as cited in McQuade et al., 2015, p.5). According to Ragins and Scandura (1999) as cited in Scandura and Pellegrini (2007), mentors are "influential individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégés' careers" (p. 2). The term protégé has also been referred to as mentee in the scientific literature.

In addition, mentoring is seen to help reduce workers' anxiety or fear by supporting them (Ojedokun, 2011). With the ability to take on various roles, mentors can have a supportive and advisory role to their protégé (Ibid.) As mentoring can lead to a combination of being a learning practice and a way for socializing and connecting individuals, it is crucial for people who continuously are challenged or be within a changing environment (Zachary, 2005). In particular, mentoring, in its formal form, is widely used as an intervention for facilitating the socialization of new employees in the organization as it can aid the interaction between these new employees and the rest of the groups within the organization (Chao, 2007, as cited in Son, 2016). In the expatriate context, mentoring "enhances expatriate's adjustment and development, as well as boosts the successfulness of knowledge homogeneity and transformation" (Mezias and

Scandura, 2005, p. 4). However, mentoring can be an assisting tool that can be offered to people via different types and different functions.

Mentoring Types

Mentoring relationships can vary in terms of type and number of people involved (Zachary, 2005). Based on the relationship created, mentoring can be divided into two approaches: formal mentoring and informal mentoring. Furthermore, mentoring in its traditional form has been defined as a one-to-one relationship, upon which an experienced individual shares his time and knowledge to support a less experienced person (Santamaria, 2003, as cited in Inzer and Crawford, 2005). However, these definitions are characterized by the hierarchical distance between the parties involved. Nonetheless, the mentoring concept has expanded over the years as there have been other types of mentoring that have been introduced that do not rely on the traditional form of supervisory mentoring. In this thesis, besides the traditional type, the concept of peer mentoring is also introduced and analyzed.

Formal Mentoring

Formal mentoring programs are defined as programs that have been developed by the organization (Douglas, 1997). The approach of formal mentoring relationships is developed within an organizational context (Herbert-Hansen and Rasmussen, 2016). In this case, the relationship is characterized as a partnership and these partnerships are developed based on various processes or policies, etc. (Zachary, 2005). For example, the organization may assign a mentor to a person or the person can decide who his/ her mentor wants to be by choosing from a pool of mentors (Ibid.). Compared to informal mentoring, formal mentoring lasts less time (Kram, 1985, as cited in Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Also, opposite to the spontaneous development of informal relationships, formal mentoring may result in the involved parties seeing their time together as obligatory, thus, resulting in them not developing a trusting relationship (Mezias and Scandura, 2005).

Informal Mentoring

The approach of informal mentoring occurs between two people, where one shares the knowledge and experience he/ she already has and the other person receives this information (Inzer and Crawford, 2005, p. 6). These informal relationships are sometimes referred to as "unstructured, casual, and natural" (Zachary, 2005, p. 188).

These characteristics are some of the reasons for informal relationships to be special as each relationship is based on the dynamics of the personalities involved (Ibid.). According to Kram (1983), informal relationships are developed spontaneously within a variety of contexts and do not require previous preparation. Moreover, this sharing and exchanging of insights lead to several positive individual outcomes such as support, advancement opportunities, or wisdom (Inzer and Crawford, 2005). Also, this relationship is characterized by its own pace (Zachary, 2005). This happens as the parties involved build their relationship based on their needs and wants (Ibid.). In this way, both parties involved have the time to build a trusting relationship and be employed in a psychosocial support function (Mezias and Scandura, 2005).

Supervisory Mentoring

Supervisory mentoring takes place between a more senior and a less senior employee (Zachary, 2005). These types of mentors can have a supportive and mentoring role over those whom they supervise. (Ibid., p. 196). Supervisors can act in several ways, such as boost employee's participation, offer opportunities, give feedback, etc. (Ibid.). According, also to Murphy (2001) as cited in Holtbrügge and Ambrosius (2015, p. 5), supervisor mentors may be more effective in developing their mentees' skills and network as they can share their knowledge on matters of their organization and also "enhance the visibility of the mentee". Tepper (1995), as cited in Lapointe and Vandenberghe (2017), indicates that supervisory mentoring is performed based on the usual supervisor-subordinate relationship. Moreover, through daily interacting with their mentees, supervisor mentors can influence the work-related roles and tasks as they perform their mentoring functions (Scandura and Williams, 2004, as cited in Lapointe and Vandenberghe, 2017).

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring, on the other hand, refers to people who are at the same level of, for example, experience, age, expertise, organizational position, etc. (Zachary, 2005). It is seen as a crucial relationship that employees can develop in their work, and, thus, can supplement traditional supervisory mentoring (Kram and Isabella, 1985). The relationship can also vary; it can be dual as each person can either be the mentor or the mentee (Zachary, 2005). This type of mentoring is not effective in all cases; for instance, if the goal is to make an employee more politically competent in some way, then it is not wise to use peer mentoring (Ibid.). However, if the goal is to make a new

employee more familiar within the organizational setting, then peer mentoring can be effective (Ibid.). On another occasion, Murphy (2001), as cited in Holtbrügge and Ambrosius (2015), explains that peer mentoring is best used to provide emotional support to the mentee or act as a role model for him/ her for his/ her performance in the organizational context.

Mentoring Functions

Mentors can provide different types of assistance to their protégés and these types have been described as 'mentoring functions' (Kram, 1983, p. 7). In detail, mentoring can be divided into three different functions, them being the career-related mentoring, psychosocial support, and role modeling (Scandura, 1992).

The first function refers to mentors providing professional assistance to mentees regarding career and skills advancement (Zhuang et al., 2013). This function includes "sponsorship, coaching, exposure, visibility, protection, exposure, and challenging work assignments" to the mentee (Kram, 1983, p. 7). The goal is for the mentor to support the career progress of the mentee with these specific behaviors in order to increase the possibilities of the latter succeeding in the working environment (Kram, 1985, as cited in Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Also, this type of developmental relationship is characterized by the ability of the mentor to provide or create career-related opportunities for the mentee (Ibid.).

The second function refers to providing psychosocial assistance such as friendship or consultation (Zhuang et al., 2013). Through the psychosocial function, mentors can help their mentees by assisting them in matters of friendship, consultation, and care (Ibid.). For example, a mentoring relationship based on counseling creates a safe environment for the mentee that enables him/ her to discuss potential concerns or challenges that may hinder his/ her development (Kram, 1985, as cited in Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Moreover, this type of function can help the mentee to feel stronger in his/ her identity (Baugh, Lankau, and Scandura, 1996). Opposite to the career-related function and the ability of the mentor to create opportunities for the mentee, this type of function is characterized by the relationship developed between the parties involved (Kram, 1985, as cited in Mezias and Scandura, 2005).

The third function is called role modeling and refers to the provision of mentors of "role definitions and work behaviors to be imitated by protégés" (Zhuang et al., 2013,

p. 4). It is one of the practices that can create value and visibility in the organizational context (Zachary, 2005). This occurs as positive role modeling can strongly influence individuals when mentors are seen as the example that mentees should follow (Ibid.).

Conceptual Framework of Mezias and Scandura (2005)

According to the domestic socialization scientific literature, both peer and supervisor mentoring relationships are crucial for the adjustment and socialization of newcomers as in both cases mentors have the right information and knowledge to share with their mentees and thus reduce their stress (Collings, Wood, and Caligiuri, 2014). On the other hand, according to Kram (1985) as cited in Mezias and Scandura (2005) and Kram and Isabella (1985), peer and hierarchical mentoring relationships differ regarding their developmental functions. For instance, regarding vocational functions, hierarchical mentors sponsor, coach, expose, and protect their mentees more compared to peer mentors, whereas regarding psychosocial support, traditional mentoring is seen to provide mentees with acceptance features and counselling support and peer mentoring provides them with "psychosocial support, personal feedback, and information" (Ibid., p. 6). Therefore, Mezias and Scandura (2005) developed a conceptual framework based on the needs-driven approach to examine what type of mentoring expatriates would need in the different phases of their assignment. These phases refer to the pre-departure adjustment, adjustment needs during the assignment, and repatriation adjustment needs. In this thesis, this framework is going to be tested, with a focus on the second stage, the on-site stage, which, in this case, translates to the expatriation of SIEs in the host-country.

Expectations

Regarding the first sub-question, it is expected that SIEs will more or less experience all phases of the adjustment process. It is believed so as they may be self-initiated, however, they are still expatriates. This means that these people relocate to a new country, therefore, they can be excited. At the same time, it is most likely that they will face at least some challenges. These challenges, as indicated in the U-Curve theory, are explained through time and take the form of culture-shock. What may vary is how long it lasts. Also, what cannot be anticipated is that all SIEs at the time of the interviews are adjusted as it is not known how long they will have been in the host-country. Also, if SIEs are adjusted at the time of the interviews – when exactly did this happen.

In terms of factors that influenced them, it is expected again that more or less, SIEs will have been influenced by several factors. This can also vary as, for example, the family spouse and prior experience factors cannot apply to all individuals. Therefore, it definitely depends on the study participants. Furthermore, it is believed that new factors might have influenced their cross-cultural adjustment. The framework used is rather old, hence, it is logically expected that more factors should exist. For instance, technology-savvy individuals should be prone to gathering information online, thus adjusting to the life conditions and work more easily. Also, expatriates that are native in the language of the host-country should be better adjusted in their interaction with nationals. Overall, it is expected that a variety of factors led to their adjustment – have they been adjusted - and that the more the factors that influenced them, the easier the adjustment was for them.

Moreover, with regards to mentoring, it is believed that all people will have been formally mentored as this is going to be a requirement for the participants. However, it cannot be expected if the mentor will be a supervisor or a peer. Furthermore, it is expected that all individuals will have experienced informal mentoring either peer or supervisory, as informal mentoring is characterized as a natural relationship between two or more people.

Finally, according to Mezias and Scandura (2005), the following types of mentoring are expected to be the most effective for each degree of adjustment. In detail, regarding the general adjustment of expatriates, informal peer mentoring is expected to be a suitable type of mentoring. This happens because the general adjustment refers to the living conditions and culture of the new environment and, therefore, the provision of information to the expatriate needs to be reliable (Ibid.). Moreover, the adjustment of the expatriate to the host-country is dependent less on vocational support and more on the information provided and the psychosocial support of the mentors (Ibid). As previously mentioned, peer mentors are seen to provide psychosocial support and information rather than vocational support, therefore, it is expected that they are a better match for expatriates and their general adjustment.

In addition, expatriates who receive guidelines on how the "sociocultural contexts determines work attitudes may more rapidly gain insight into host-country office culture and politics, which affects work performance and the rate of social

inclusion" (Ibid., p. 11). Regarding mentors, they can aid the expatriates to grasp the culture of the office in the host-country, by giving explicit information on the work tasks and roles, and, thus, resulting in the expatriate's adjustment and comfort with the rest of the work groups in the organization (Morrison, 1993, as cited in Zhuang et al., 2013). Taking into consideration the research done by Jackson et al. in 1993 and the fact that newcomers would mostly not receive social support in the new environment, and, thus, a formal program would be more effective, as well as the fact that, as previously mentioned, peer mentoring is seen to provide to mentees more information and psychosocial support, Mezias and Scandura (2005) expected that formal peer mentors would be the ideal fit for the adjustment of expatriates in the office culture of the host-country.

Finally, regarding the work adjustment, mentoring has shown that it can provide mentees with career development functions that include career related assistance, for instance, in order to aid expatriates (Zhuang et al., 2013). According to the expatriate literature, expatriates who are well-adjusted are prone to completing their assignments (Mendenhall and Oddou, 1985; Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall, 1992). Formal mentoring programs that have been developed by organizations serve as a mechanism that helps expatriates reduce their stress and increase their comprehension of local practices amongst others (Mezias and Scandura, 2005). Also, according to them, the superiors of expatriates have more knowledge and experience regarding the work tasks than peers do (Ibid.). Therefore, they are more qualified to give job-related clarifications to the expatriate (Shaffer et al., 1999). As a result, it is expected that because of hierarchical mentoring providing mentees with more career-related assistance, formal mentors are more eligible in providing expatriates with coaching and career advice for the long run (Mezias and Scandura, 2005).

The following figure represents the conceptual framework by Mezias and Scandura (2005) and includes the three different phases of the expatriation process. As previously mentioned, this research focuses only on the on-site phase, and thus is bordered to distinguish from the other two phases.

Propositions	Stage of international assignment	Expatriate protégé's developmental need	Formal or informal relationship	Hierarchical or peer mentor
Proposition 1	Pre-departure	Advice on accepting assignment	Informal	Hierarchical
Proposition 2	Pre-departure	Host-country adjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 3	Pre-departure	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 4	Pre-departure	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 5	On-site	Host-country adjustment	Informal	Peer
Proposition 6	On-site	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 7	On-site	Host-country office culture	Formal	Peer
Proposition 8	Repatriation	Home-country readjustment	Formal	Peer
Proposition 9a	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 9b	Repatriation	Work role adjustment	Formal	Hierarchical
Proposition 10a	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	(Sponsoring mentor) informal	(Sponsoring mentor) hierarchical
Proposition 10b	Repatriation	Home-country office culture	Informal	Peer

Figure 3. Needs-driven approach. Adopted from Mezias and Scandura (2005).

To conclude, as there are a lot of definitions and frameworks in this study, to make it clearer for the reader, the researcher has combined both frameworks of Black, et al. (1991) and Mezias and Scandura (2005) as illustrated below.
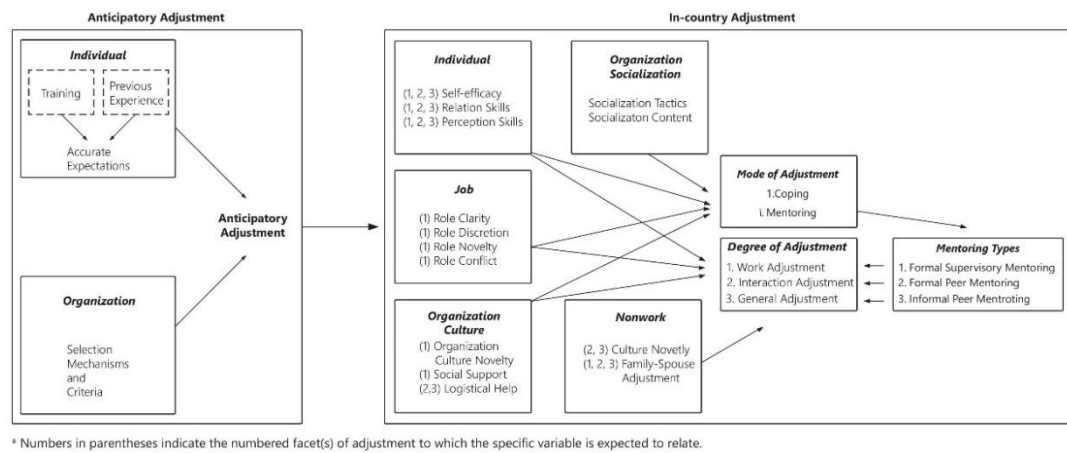

Figure 4. Combination of Conceptual Frameworks.

Method

Research Design

For the researcher to answer the main research question as well as the sub-questions developed in this study, a qualitative research approach was adopted. Qualitative research can be defined as "a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data" (Bryman, 2012, p. 36). The researcher, therefore, used the qualitative method to get a better understanding of the concepts through first experiences of people who have left their home country and are currently working in the host-country. Moreover, this study project was based on the inductive perspective, interpretative school of thought, and was an explorative one. This means that the general theory was developed based on specific observations, interpretivism occurred by studying the experiences and perceptions of other people, and an explorative research question was used as there was not enough previous data on the scientific area (Van Der Velde, Jansen, and Dikkers, 2019), in this case, on the concept of mentoring and especially the mentoring types that affect the cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs.

Data Collection

The research conducted was an e-research and the researcher used primary data. To collect qualitative primary data, there are several techniques such as focus groups, group interviews, narratives, field notes, etc. (Van Der Velde et al., 2019). For this study, the procedural categorization of interviews and the qualitative technique of semi-structured interviews were chosen. Semi-structured interviews require a list of questions tailored to specific topics that constitute an "interview guide", however, the respondent has a high degree of leeway in how he/ she will respond (Bryman and Bell, 2011b, p. 467). According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), this leads to more flexibility. This qualitative technique was chosen because the variable of cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon that differs amongst people and because not all people receive the same types of mentoring as this depends on the organization they work for, therefore, not all questions should have been prepared in advance, as there could be issues that the researcher was unable to anticipate.

The interviews were personal one-on-one interviews, the majority of them was conducted online via MicrosoftTeams and only one (1) by telephone. All were

performed in English. An email was sent to all potential participants including a research brief (see Appendix A), the guidelines of data privacy (see Appendix B), and an informed consent that participants had to sign (see Appendix C). The consent was then emailed back to the researcher and the participants kept a copy of the document. Due to an unprecedented situation – the pandemic of Covid-19 – face to face interviews were not an option for this dissertation. However, while online interviews are more prone to potential deficiencies like the respondent dropping out of the conversation, they can still be built on a trusting environment (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, to prevent bias in the data collection and the research project in general, all interviews were conducted anonymously, transcribed, and given to the participants to ensure transparency. The transcriptions of the interviews can be found in the YoDa storage, provided to students by Utrecht University to ensure confidentiality.

For the primary data to be collected, the researcher concluded in three (3) topics in order to formulate the topic list of the interview guide (see Appendix D). According to the inductive theory, the researcher, based on observations can develop a generic theory (Van Der Velde et al., 2019). Consequently, the literature review helped the researcher to formulate the topics as a result of the concepts studied. The interview topic guide reflects the main research question and sub-questions of the study (Bryman, 2012). The topics of the interview topic list were the following:

1. Background information
2. Cross-cultural adjustment
   a. Process of adjustment
   b. Factors of cross-cultural adjustment
3. Mentoring

The background information was not explicitly important in this study and was not central to the research question. However, gathering this kind of information often influences the question of the study (Van Der Velde et al., 2019), therefore, such information should have been collected. The cross-cultural adjustment and mentoring were the main variables. The researcher was interested in seeing if the sampling had gone through the process of adjustment and which factors affect people since the framework in the literature was academically old and was assumed that new factors will

have influenced the expatriates. In addition, since mentoring was the other main variable, information on the expatriates' experiences was needed.

Finally, the interview questions were the result of a pilot interview and the studying of effective techniques for doing a qualitative study. In detail, one (1) pilot interview was conducted in order to check whether the data received would be enough to answer the main research question and sub-questions. Moreover, Patton's (1990) as cited in Morris (2018) list of types of questions was taken into consideration. This list includes questions that were based on experiences/ behaviors, opinions/values, feelings, factual knowledge, sensory experience, and personal background (Ibid., p. 6). At the same time, Barone and Switzer's (1995) as cited in Morris (2018) list of thoughtful questions – probing, inquiring, suggesting, uncovering, drawing out, and guiding - was considered (p. 6).

Population and Sample Strategy

The population of this study was SIEs that currently work abroad. Initially, the researcher would collaborate solely with the European Commission in Brussels, Belgium to collect the data. However, due to this busy time of the pandemic, individuals were not available for interviewing, according to the intermediary. Therefore, the researcher proceeded with another plan. Particularly, he/ she reached out to his/ her network as well as his/ her supervisor's network through social media. A lot of platforms were used to spread the request for respondents – Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter. Ultimately, through the snowballing method, which means that the researcher contacted individuals, initially, and then used these people to get in contact with more people that could be interviewees as individuals relevant to the research topic (Bryman, 2012), 15 interviews were conducted.

Particularly, due to participants being spread across the world, in the end, multiple countries were examined. These people were SIEs and had been in their host-country for up to nine (9) years. Moreover, both females and males were interviewed; their nationality differed, providing a heterogeneous sample as well. These criteria had a lot of advantages. Initially, heterogeneity in terms of nationality and origin of home-country gave the researcher the advantage to examine individuals with various backgrounds. In this way, the difference of gender was another form of heterogeneity that was crucial for the study. A possible implication of qualitative research is that the

researcher would interpret the data "through the eyes of only some of the people who form part of a social scene but not others, such as only people of the same gender" (Bryman and Bell, 2011b, p. 408). Therefore, to avoid subjectivity, the researcher decided to include both genders in his/ her study. Finally, all participants had undergone a formal mentoring program. This was an important decision that was made upon the expectations of this study. As explained earlier, it was expected that two (2) out of three (3) degrees of adjustment would require a formal mentor, hence, an inclusion of both formal and informal mentoring strategies was needed.

A lot of other background information existed. However, because 'background information' was one of the topics of the interviews, a demographic table (Table 1) was created and presented in the results section to give readers a detailed overview. However, there were some differences amongst participants. These differences were not taken into consideration in the data analysis as it was very difficult to compare all different data. These are presented below:

- All participants received the formal mentoring upon their arrival except one (1)
- Some people had relocated in the host-country to study and then work
- Some people had worked in another organization before going to the one where they received the mentoring
- The duration of the mentoring differed
- One (1) person received distance mentoring
- One (1) participant received outsourced mentoring

Data Analysis

The first step after interviewing and transcribing the interviews (from verbal material to a written version), was data analysis (Van Der Velde et al., 2019). The interviews were analyzed through the process of thematic analysis, which is "a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon" (Daly, Kellehear, and Gliksman, 1997, as cited in, Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 3). This method of analysis incorporated the inductive approach, which means that the data were coded based on the research question and the literature review (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006), and was used to facilitate the coding process. Coding is a form of categorization (Van Der Velde et al., 2019) and it contributed in guiding and interpreting the data and finding the emerging themes (Bryman and bell, 2011b). To code the data and develop

the code-tree (see Appendix E), the NVivo application was primarily used. Office excel was also used to categorize and analyze data.

In detail, initially, open coding was applied to yield the concepts that were discussed in the interview, which would later be sub-categorized (Bryman, 2012). This first type of coding was done by keeping in mind the main research question and sub-questions. Afterwards, the researcher performed axial coding, which meant that "data were put together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Ibid., p. 569). With axial coding, the researcher linked the previous codes, patterns, etc., resulting in an expanded coding process (Ibid.). Finally, selective coding was applied to the codes that were developed from axial coding. Therefore, core categories were developed by revisiting the main question and sub-questions of this research as well as the literature review (Ibid.).

Following the data analysis, to present the data, the researcher used a mixed structure as he/ she used both a quantitative approach at times of the information as well as quotations since the experiences of the SIEs in the organization of the host-country were the core theme of this study. With the quotations, the research hoped to place the information (codes) into context in order for the reader to have a better understanding. The data followed the sequence of the literature and interview guide topic list. Therefore, background information, cross-cultural adjustment, and mentoring.

Data Quality Indicators

According to Schopper et al. (1993) as cited in O'Connor and Gibson (2003), validity refers to the "accuracy with which a method measures what it is intended to measure" (p. 10) and yields data that really represents "reality" (Goodwin et al, 1987, as cited in O'Connor and Gibson, 2003, p. 10). Specifically, the concept can be divided into internal and external validity.

Internal validity refers to "if there is a good match between researcher's observations and the theoretical ideas they develop" (Bryman and Bell, 2011b, p. 395). Here, internal validity was ensured by the semi-structured interviews. This happened as, according to LeCompte and Goetz (1982), as cited in Bryman and Bell (2011b), internal validity is positively associated with the qualitative method as this method gives more information to the researcher than quantitative research. Since semi-structured interviews give more flexibility, they positively influenced the internal

validity of this study. Moreover, the researcher took into consideration the "researcher effects" (Miles and Hubermanm 1994, as cited in O'Connor and Gibson, 2003, p. 10). These effects refer to the different things that can influence the discussion of the interviewer and the interviewee as both parties are individuals with different characteristics and personalities like gender, educational background, general background, and language used during the interview (Ibid.). The interviews were also recorded to ensure that no data are false. External validity, on the other hand, refers to "whether the results of a study can be generalized beyond the specific research context" (Bryman, 2012, p. 43). For the external validity to be ensured, the number of the sampling was very important (Ibid.). In the beginning, there should have been 20 interviews to achieve a comprehensive perspective of the question and sub-questions asked. However, as mentioned, the total number of interviews was 15. In this study, the external validity was not accomplished to the researcher's opinion. The interviews conducted did not reach to the point of data saturation. Moreover, a lot of things were not taken into consideration in the data analysis, which makes the results of this study difficult to generalize.

Reliability refers to the "consistency of the research findings" (Kvale, 1996, as cited in O'Connor and Gibson, 2003, p. 10). This consistency refers to the phases of interviewing, transcribing the interviews, and findings' analyzing (Ibid.). Reliability also refers to the "degree to which a measure of a concept is stable" (Bryman, 2012, p. 718). It is also considered a "precondition for validity" (Van Der Velde et al., 2019). For the interview data to be reliable, the pilot test interview helped in concluding to the most appropriate questionnaire for the research question and sub-questions, as this is proposed as a way of training by Uwe (2009). Moreover, the analysis of the methodology and research techniques in this thesis was extensive, in order to give to future researchers the explicit instruments to perform the same research. Recording the interviews also enhanced the reliability of the data as the researcher had the opportunity to revise the information provided at any moment during the duration of the research project.

Ethical Considerations

"Ethical issues arise at a variety of phases in business and management research" (Bryman and Bell, 2011b, p. 122). In principal, four areas are distinguished regarding ethical concerns: potential harm to participants, informed consent, invasion of privacy,

and deception (Ibid.). Regarding the informed consent and the invasion of privacy, the research was performed following the policy of Utrecht University. With regard to harming the participants and deceiving them, the researcher did his/ her best to, including but not limited to, not disrespect in any way the respondents and their answers, to be as much prepared for the interviews, to make clear agreements with the respondents prior to the interviews, to observe but to be neutral in his/ her reactions during the interviews, to not guide the responses, and to avoid conflicts at all costs.

Results

Background Information

As shown in Table 1, background information included the gender of participants, home country origin, native language, marital status, employing organization, job description, host-country, previous working experience in the host-country, and highest level of education.

In detail, 11 males and four (4) females were interviewed. The majority of the participants was Greeks and the most examined country was the Netherlands. The five (5) host-countries of examination were Belgium, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and United Kingdom in alphabetical order. Six (6) people were not married, five (5) were single, and four (4) were married. Moreover, the 15 participants were people of six (6) different nationalities. They accounted for eleven (11) different organizations within the five (5) countries, of which the organizational size and industry field differed. Besides the European Commission, six (6) organizations were multinationals, two (2) were medium-size, and two (2) were smaller companies. Moreover, all individuals possessed different job roles within the organizations they worked for. Out of 15, four (4) had a previous working experience within the host-country. Finally, the majority of participants held a MSc degree, two (2) of them a PhD, and only three (3) of them were BA holders.

Table 1

Participants' Demographics

Gender	Home Country Origin	Native Language	Marital Status	Organization	Job Description	Host-country	Previous Working Experience in the Host-country	Highest Education
M	Italy	Italian	Not married	European Commission	Consultant	Beligum	No	MSc
M	Italy	Italian	Married	European Commission	Employee in the European Fiscal board	Belgium	Yes	MSc
F	Italy	Italian	Married	European Commission	Support Portfolio Management	Luxemburg	No	MSc
M	Greece	Greek	Not married	Foodball Academy	Football Coach	Portugal	Yes	BA
F	Greece	Greek	Not married	Engineering & Design Company	Waste Management Consultant	United Kingdom	No	MSc
M	Greece	Greek	Not married	University	PhD Candidate in Physics	Netherlands	No	PhD
M	Greece	Greek	Not married	Automotive Manufacturer	Research & Development Engineer	Belgium	No	MSc
F	India	Indian	Married	Multinational conglomerate company	Project Manager	Netherlands	No	MSc
F	South Africa	Afrikaans	Single	Strategy Consulting Firm	Consultant	Netherlands	Yes	MSc
M	Greece	Greek	Single	Airline	Aircraft Engineer	United Kingdom	No	BA
M	Greece	Greek	Married	Semiconductor Industry Supplier Company	Released Trained Engineer	Netherlands	No	BA
M	Germany	German	Not married	University	Assistant Professor	Netherlands	No	PhD
M	United Kingdom	English	Single	Strategy Consulting Firm	Analyst	Netherlands	No	MSc
M	India	Hindi	Single	Strategy Consulting Firm	IT & Data Analytics Officer	Netherlands	No	MSc
M	Greece	Greek	Single	Technology Company	Data Engineer	United Kingdom	Yes	MSc

Cross-cultural Adjustment

Process of Adjustment

Initially, the researcher was interested in seeing if the sample of the study did go through different phases as part of finally adjusting, and if so, how long these phases lasted. The results indicate that almost all participants went through different phases throughout their adjustment process. However, not all people went through the same phases. Moreover, the phases that participants did go through differed in terms of duration. Due to responses being intertwined in terms of phases and duration, it was very difficult for the researcher to analyze the data and distinguish the responses.

For instance, some people had positive feelings upon their arrival but the reason behind this exciting feeling differed. As participants explained, the feeling of excitement was partly due to individuals being sure about their decision to relocate and work abroad, or due to meeting new people and discovering new things to do and new places to see, because there was the feeling of living on your own, or because they just liked traveling.

> *"Ahh, I would say excitement, mainly because I like to travel. So, it was like another big trip, I would say…Oh, yeah. It last for a long time because I was going out travelling around in the U.K. also trying to find to learn, find out London, because when I did my master's, I didn't travel a lot…So, it was exciting of meeting new people, seeing new places."*

Others had more negative feelings either because they were missing their family and they felt lonely or afraid in the new country, or because they immediately had to take care a lot of things such as bureaucratic stuff, finding accommodation, speaking in a foreign language, looking for the right school, or in general because of the cultural differences between the home country and host-country. Especially for a participant, the relocation and adjustment process was extremely hard. As explained,

> *"I think it was a terrifying process starting from how to persuade my relatives and to get their buy in from my spouse, how to reach to the Netherlands…So, the first the first six months were difficult because we have many cultural differences with Dutch people. We have a different approach on the educational system and different approach on the medical healthcare system. For us, it was everything alien, everything new…When I relocated to the Netherlands, there*

was no positive thing... It is quite hard to go to a new country. Of course, there is an excitement to explore a new place."

Few also commented on the absence of emotions; In one case, the respondent had not many emotions to his/ her opinion because he/ she was used to living abroad, while another participant explained that the absence of emotions was due to the functioning of the organization that he/ she was working for.

"You did not have time to care much to emotions. But basically, I remember as a period of starvation in terms of emotions, because the work environment in the -name of the organization- is by staff regulation, a place where people need to keep distance."

Few respondents also commented on how they felt after the first months of their journey. In the first case, there was a feeling of proudness, as the individual liked the fact that he/ she was working abroad and to him/ her that was important, whereas another participant felt that things got repetitive as time went by.

Nonetheless, besides the different phases that individuals went through, it was indicated that at the time of the interview, more or less, all participants had adjusted. Particularly, the researcher divided the three degrees of adjustment and asked participants if they felt adjusted to some or all of them. The majority was completely adjusted, meaning that they had adjusted to all degrees – work, interaction, and general, less had adjusted to interaction and general adjustment but not to work, and only few had adjusted to work and general adjustment but not to interaction. For the people who were completely adjusted, they responded in the affirmative when asked separately if they had adjusted to each degree. For the people, who had not adjusted to some degree, some example answers are given. Firstly, for not adjusting to the interaction degree, it was mentioned that,

"Ummm, maybe not so adjusted yet… Umm, because there are so many languages and I don't know them all. That's why. You have Dutch. You have French. You have the German speaking people at some point on the country. So, it's it's a bit hard to to make this to, to make this generalization. Yes."

And, secondly, for not adjusting to the work degree, another individual mentioned,

"Mm. Better. Partially. Not completely…But it's not a problem, for me at least. And for not even for the organization, because we are all different."

In addition to this, participants were asked to recall how long it took them to adjust. As in the case of the different phases, almost all participants gave different responses regarding the period it took them to adjust completely. The results cover a wide range of time with a minimum of adjusting immediately in the new organization/ host-country to a maximum of three years. Some example responses are demonstrated below:

"Oh, I think I adjusted pretty quickly because, I mean, it's it's pretty easy how you say like the society to live in. Nothing. Nothing too complicated…I would say within a month."

"Mhm I I think, yeah, maybe two years, I would say in total we need to. And then then it was pretty clear that there was, would be staying here for a a long long time, which is just the thing. Right. If you want to, if you're just saying, OK, this is one step. And then you don't make an effort and if you say, OK, so this is the place I would like to stay. Then this is different. So, yeah. But I think two years and one and a half years, then you also get language issues resolved. So, it's not one and half, two years.

Factors of Adjustment

All expatriates were questioned about factors that affected their adjustment positively, either their adjustment was positive or not. All respondents mentioned at least one (1) positive factor when they were asked this question. At the same time, all respondents were asked if they faced barriers, but a few mentioned that they did. In detail:

The most frequent term that respondents mentioned as a positive factor to their cross-cultural adjustment was their previous experience. In detail, their previous experience was either due to working abroad in the past or studying in a host-country. The participants explained that because of them having lived abroad again either in the same host-country or not, they were more familiar with the difficulties they would have to face and knew how to act on it. As explained by a respondent,

"The second time, you know, when, when we moved in 2016 here in Belgium, it was much easier because we, we, we were already here. We had already friends.

I was already working for -information relevant to the organization-organization for four years. It was much easier. Very actually very smooth."

Following the previous experience, the socialization tactics, meaning the formal help provided to the newcomers by the organization upon their arrival – coded as organization socialization – was helpful in introducing people to the office and their work role. At the same time, self-efficacy helped the expatriates as individuals pinpointed that it was their personal characteristics that helped them to adjust more easily or the fact that they substituted activities in the host-country that were already doing in their home country. For example, a respondent indicated,

"First, it's a volunteering association, which is an international one and of which I was already a member in Milan. I didn't know anyone here, but I knew that this association had the main sitting. The main sitting close to my home, my previous home. And so, I joined it. And that was partly helpful in order to, what to adapt myself to the city."

In addition, there were other factors that were less frequently mentioned. Initially, some people mentioned culture novelty as a factor to their cross-cultural adjustment. Having a different culture than the one in the host-country meant that expatriates had to deal with cultural differences and the fact that it was not easy for them to understand the customs or behavior of the host-nationals. Therefore, culture novelty was negatively associated with the cross-cultural adjustment as perceived by the participants. According to a respondent,

"And developing friendships is part of integrating and adjusting because you see what other people are doing and learn from them… And if you feel like there's like this kind of stepwise approach towards friendship, it's not so motivating. So, for me, that was a huge barrier and that made it very difficult to make, I didn't find it difficult to make friends. But I found it difficult to feel comfortable. Because we do it differently. Right. But that's just a cultural thing with the Netherlands. I think is one of the countries that's very particular and making friends, you know."

Moreover, the language was another factor that came up either as a positive factor or as a barrier. That meant that for those who did not know the native language of the host-country, it was more difficult to communicate, whereas, for those who did,

they felt more integrated. Also, the preference of people played a role in their adjustment. People had specific preferences as to what they liked or not and this impacted how they felt. The focus was given on the weather or climate of the host-country or, according to a respondent, to the fact that he/ she would live on his/ her own, something that he/ she did not do in his/ her home country.

Furthermore, role similarity meant that the work role in the host-country was similar to the one in the home country, thus, it was easier for people to adapt to something they already knew. Participant's relation skills and the type of organization were also brought up. Relation skills meant that individuals would take part in several activities or professional associations outside of the organization in order to fulfill their time, develop a social circle, and expand their network or just because it was their hobby. In this way, they gradually learned the customs and culture or language of the host-country. Finally, in the case of the type of the organization, this meant that the functioning of the organization would be based on specific rules that were difficult to break away from, that due to the functioning of the organization, there was a considerable amount of turnover and, thus, people could not easily develop relationships, or that the functioning of the organization was similar in different organizations across the world due to its specific environment. According to a respondent,

> *"…although the culture within the -name of the organization- is not much difference because it's a science organization, their way of thinking is very much European, in my opinion…I'm saying that the mentality behind this organization seems to be relatively in line, in comparison to England, of course, because I haven't lived around Europe. But it feels like the work ethics, the work ethics and the approach…seems to be relatively similar."*

Furthermore, culture similarity, family-spouse adjustment, timing, age, and family closeness were mentioned. The fact that the culture of the home country resembled with the culture of the host-country was a positive thing as it facilitated the adjustment of expatriates. The spouses of expatriates who were supportive and felt adjusted themselves as well also influenced the expatriates as these people could lean on their family to discuss their issues and confide in them.

"…and maybe if it's if I if I is, you know, I have a doubt that is cultural, then I can ask my wife…my wife has been for me, also a big support for us."

Timing referred to the time of relocation in the host-country; For instance, the respondent who indicated the timing of relocation as a factor had expatriated in the host-country after a terror attack had taken place and it was also summer, hence, he/ she was afraid and at the same time, it was difficult for him/ her to meet new people as most of them were on vacation. Also, family closeness meant the relationship between the expatriate and his family in the home country. The fact that relatives could often visit made participants feel less alone. Finally, age meant maturity and consciousness, according to a respondent, as he/ she felt much more certain as opposed to another expatriation of his/ hers, when he/ she was younger, and it was more difficult for him/ her to grasp the difficulties of living abroad. Another respondent referred to age as a factor that is quite influential when interacting with people as the difference of age can be a communication barrier.

In the end, the least mentioned factors were luck and technology. Luck was mentioned by a participant who believed that because he/ she had found an affordable place to stay very quickly, in a nice neighborhood, that was all luck. Another respondent mentioned technology as a factor as he/ she would search online and read blogs in order to find the solution to his/ her problems.

To give a complete overview, the researcher listed the factors of adjustment based on their frequency of mention by the number of participants in Table 2.

Table 2

Overview of Factors of Adjustment

Factors	Frequency (No of Participants)
Previous Experience	12
Organization Socialization	7
Self-efficacy	7
Culture Novelty	5
Language Proficiency	5
Language Barrier	5
Preference	5
Role Similarity	4
Relation Skills	3
Organization Type	3
Culture Similarity	2
Family-Spouse Adjustment	2
Timing	2
Age	2
Family Closeness	2
Luck	1
Technology	1

Mentoring

Mentoring Received

Throughout the interview, SIEs were asked if they experienced any type of support when they entered into the organization in the host-country and their responses differed. The main categories of the mentoring received were formal and informal and the sub-categories were supervisory and peer mentoring.

Formal Mentoring

All participants had undergone a formal mentoring scheme upon their arrival in the new organization. Only one (1) participant received the mentoring after five (5) years of him/ her being in the organization. Particularly, he/ she received the mentoring three (3) months prior to the interview.

Supervisory Mentoring

All respondents had undergone a formal supervisory mentoring scheme. However, the details of each mentoring scheme differed. Initially, in some cases, the organization matched the mentee with the mentor, in some others, the mentee chose the mentor on his/ her own. That meant that when a newcomer entered the organization, the latter would automatically assign to the new employee a supervisor mentor.

> *"You definitely begin with a person that is formally assigned to you in the form of a mentoring process with which you, again, it's a voluntary program, but you are able to establish. Yeah. A mentor, a mentoree relationship where you can*

approach also some personal issues, but also some work issues in a formal and then slightly more informal way than you would with your supervisor, for example."

On the other hand, some participants learned that there is a mentoring program in the organization, and through their own initiative, they asked to be matched with someone.

"I mean, it's still very unknown to me. The various mechanism that the let's say the...the overall functioning of the -name of the organization, not the written rules, the unwritten rules are still quite obscure. That's why I asked for a mentor. That actually helped me to, you know, to adjust…"

In another organization, the formal mentoring program differed even from participant to participant as the mentees had received the mentoring at different times and, thus, some procedural things had changed. In detail, in one case, there was a list of mentors, of which mentees could check the resumes of the mentors and choose with whom they wanted to be matched, and, in the other case, the list did not exist. Moreover, a participant received distance formal supervisory mentoring. His/ her formal supervisor mentor was located in another country as the organization had different subsidiaries and they communicated either digitally or by telephone. They had only met twice. In another case, the mentor was externally hired by the company as opposed to the rest of the organizations that had-in house mentors. Also, the duration of the mentoring scheme differed; For instance, in some organizations, the employees had specific meetings with the mentor, while in other organizations, it was an ongoing relationship that was mostly dependent on the needs of the mentee. Some examples are given,

"Yeah, so like I mentioned at the beginning, they assigned a coach to me. And generally, we are eligible for six coaching sessions in this kind of an employment and totally nine, but six coaching session and three other trainings."

"So, there was one mentor that in the beginning you could ask him either by weekly or even weekly. Sometimes you could ask him the things that you wanted to ask from general information for the country or for the city or for their

systems and how they operate ahh to other advice. And they could give you some
guidance, which was really helpful in the beginning."

Peer Mentoring

Besides a formal supervisor mentor, very few participants had received formal peer mentoring from the organization. The formal peer mentors were suggested in an organization by the manager of the employee and in another by the HR department of the organization. What also differed within these cases is that in one case the formal peer mentors were introduced to the expatriate prior arriving in the organization, in another case upon arrival in the organization, and, in the third case, after the newcomer had already been working for a while in the organization. These peer mentors were responsible for several matters such as helping the newcomer settling in or with work. As indicated by a respondent,

> *"The buddy is basically that someone who you can unofficially, just quickly*
> *send a message saying, I'm struggling with this. Can you. Can you help me find*
> *this document? You know, just helps you negotiate and makes you feel*
> *comfortable when settling in, basically."*

Informal Mentoring

Besides a formal type of support, interviewees were also asked to recall if they had received any other type of support. Results indicate that all participants had been informally mentored whether by a supervisor or a peer.

Supervisory

A lot of people were informally mentored by a supervisor. The relationship was mostly developed with their immediate manager/ supervisor rather with a supervisor employee in general within the organization. The participants explained that they would often go for help to senior employees as they had more experience in general and/ or more experience within the organization or that their managers/ supervisors would on their own try to help the newcomers. The employees would also discuss with them about personal issues.

> *"Also, my manager was very supporting in the company and he helped me also*
> *with some other issues that I had with all of these housing problems and housing*
> *craziness. So, he helped me figure out how to behave and how to solve specific*
> *things."*

Peer

All of the participants had been informally peer mentored. However, when interviewees were asked if they had been subject to an informal type of support, informal peer mentoring outside of the organization was a response that came up a lot. According to the results, the majority of participants received informal peer mentoring outside of the organization. Individuals had their social circle and friends outside of the organization that was of great help in facilitating their adjustment. Also, the fact that people had the same age, experience, or been in the same situation helped expatriates as they felt that there were people at the same phase as they were and that made them feel less lonely. As explained by a respondent,

> *"I live in a neighborhood that is filled with a lot of expats…So, and we are all in the same phase of our lives. We all have kids who are around the same age. We are going through similar things in our lives. And a lot of us are also international. So, what I go through is somewhat similar to what that person is going through. So, that's not, not really a problem."*

Almost the same number of people received also informal peer mentoring within the organization. This meant that individuals would confide in their immediate colleagues or to people who had joined the company when they had. These people were able to discuss their issues and figure things out. Only a small fraction of individuals mentioned that they only received informal peer mentoring outside of the organization and not from within. According to them, their colleagues within the department were people that they discussed with, but only for work-related purposes. Instead, they sought help from others outside of the company.

> *"Um. I haven't tried it, so I'm not sure, that would be my friends outside work. But I guess, you know, if I would say something to someone from work here, he or she would listen to me and probably give me answers, support me like that. I haven't tried to be honest."*

Mentoring Perceived

Keeping in mind the sub-question "what is the role of mentoring", the researcher asked participants exactly that. The results indicate that almost all participants had a positive experience with regard to the mentoring received. However, most of the participants perceived the influence in a different way. Mentors played an important role in the

mentee's adjustment and integration into the organization either by providing information, guiding, consulting, or just listening to the employees' problems. For instance, a respondent indicated that the mentoring helped to ease his/ her mind,

> *"Umm...they definitely put your mind at ease to begin with. I am a person not used to it. So, when I first arrived in the Netherlands, I found it a bit out of the ordinary, if you want, because in England they don't have this system per se. And I find it curious at the beginning, but it was extremely helpful. Gave a lot of information that it would have taken a lot of time to sort out. And I think the most important thing is that you put your mind at ease, the first thing they tell you is that you're not expected to immediately integrate into everything and it gives you this kind of like life raft work, they tell you if you feel like you're drowning is fine. Like, we'll help you through it. I think that's the big impact."*

Other people explained that mentoring made them feel that they had someone instead of being alone in a country and in a new organization and that this resulted in them adjusting faster. For another respondent, it was the confirmation that he/ she got from the mentor that influenced him/ her positively as the mentee sought out to the mentor for career development advice. Another respondent pinpointed the fact that the accessibility of the mentor was important as there were times that he/ she wanted advice from his/ her colleagues, but they were rather busy. On the contrary, only a few participants had a less positive experience with their mentor. According to a respondent, this was due to the very structured and typical way of communication with the mentor as opposed to the communication amongst colleagues. This was also supported by another respondent, who indicated that,

> *"I think that, uh, when, uh, when you speak with, uh, with your supervisor, you have to be more more careful to to to pay more attention to, because as the word says, it's more formal. But with the peers, it's in a friendly environment that you can, you can speak more freely. You don't have these kinds of problems. Uh, I, I am happy with both types of mentoring."*

Impact of Mentoring

Through different types of questions, the respondents were asked basically to distinguish which type of mentoring influenced them the most on each degree of adjustment. Although it was difficult in some cases to distinguish the degrees, both the

participants and the researcher tried to do so and categorize the results, which are presented based on each aspect of adjustment.

General Adjustment

When considering the general adjustment, the majority of people preferred the informal peer mentoring either from within the organization or outside of the organization. In either case, informal relationships were the most influential as there was a *"common language"* amongst the parties involved. People got the information they needed from their peers either because they had asked for information or because the information was given to them simultaneously. In this way, mentees had understood *"what is there and who should I approach".* Finally, another respondent mentioned that he/ she preferred the mentoring from his/ her formal supervisor. As explained,

> *"Yes, I thought she was open enough to hear those things, yes… Umm...My own adjustments and my own struggles to some extent. So, she did hear me out. There was no solutions given. But there was somebody who heard it all out."*

Interaction adjustment

The majority of participants seemed to be most influenced by their formal supervisor mentor with regards to their interaction adjustment. According to the individuals, the formal supervisor mentors helped them by networking them with people in the organization with whom the newcomers could communicate. These mentors were experienced employees, who had the knowledge needed to operate correctly in the organizational environment. The mentors were also helpful in introducing them to the culture and the functioning of the respective organizations as employees would enter the organization. According to a respondent,

> *"So, in the very beginning, as I said, by being very welcome in the company, that was a very, very first big step because you have to feel welcome in the company, especially if it's a bigger company. And so you see like hundreds of faces every day and got no idea who is this person. So, it's very important to understand who you have to refer to and who you're speaking with. So, that was very positive for me."*

Some other people felt more confident discussing matters of their communication and interaction with their peer colleagues. According to a participant, he/ she developed a trusting relationship with his/ her colleagues and was able to discuss

with them his/ her issues and that relationship helped him/ her to gradually expand his/ her network. Finally, according to another respondent, the support provided by his/ her immediate supervisor was the most influential, as this person was able to guide the newcomer from the beginning and introduce him/ her to people within the organization as the mentor thought that this was an important step. As pinpointed by the respondent, "*she helped me get things done*".

Work adjustment

Almost all participants indicated that the formal supervisory mentoring received by the organization helped most in adjusting to the working environment. These formal supervisor mentors were experienced individuals with years within the organization that helped newcomers understand their work role, help them plan their career steps, and guide them on how to actually implement their goals. Formal supervisor mentors would "*navigate the skills*" or focus on "*professional development*". For instance, a respondent explained that because he/ she was new to the organization and the country, he/ she had a lot of questions, while at the same time working for a lot of hours. Having the formal supervisor mentor gave him/ her the chance to have all the information he/ she needed more easily.

> *"Of course, it it's obvious that it helped me more in my in my working environment. Because it was if you if you think that I entered in in I went in and another country, that I knew no one, the most time that I was spending, at least in the beginning, was in my area that I was in the place that I was working, because in the beginning, I had no friends, no no people to get in touch with. So, the, all my all my energy and all my, all my, all the things that I was doing in the beginning, at least, they had to do with my job. So, they helped me a lot. And entering in the place of in the area of working."*

Discussion

Answer to the main RQ

The cross-cultural adjustment, as explained in the literature review, is rather a complicated concept since it has many facets. The first sub-question of this study was how do SIEs experience their process of adjustment in terms of going through the phases of the adjustment process. This process, according to the U-Curve Theory, occurs through time and consists of different phases (Lysgaard, 1995, as cited in Black and Mendenhall, 1991). According to the findings, almost all participants went through different phases, at different times, and for different periods of times. In detail, other participants were filled with positive feelings about relocating to their host-country and exploring new places. For some, this lasted a short period, for others, longer. On the other hand, for some people, relocating was a negative experience due to several reasons. Individuals would also had no emotions during their first months in the host-country or feel proudness or repetitiveness as time went by. However, at the time of the interviews, more or less, all individuals felt adjusted, either this was immediately achieved upon their arrival or a gradual process that took some time. Only very few people had not adjusted to all degrees of adjustment but rather to some.

Moreover, according to the findings, it was evident that a lot of factors affect the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates and that these factors vary from individual to individual. Initially, the previous experience of participants either it was for work or studies was the most frequent factor of adjustment. People who had again lived abroad could more easily adapt to the host-country because they were somewhat familiar with the difficulties they may face and how to approach such barriers. Two other factors that were frequently mentioned were the organization socialization and self-efficacy. Firstly, the organization's collective tactics differed amongst some participants, but the general idea was that the organization tried to help newcomers from day one in teaching them and assisting them on matters of the organization. On the other hand, self-efficacy focused on the positive mentality of people in trusting their self to adjusting and in taking part in activities to develop relationships with their close circle.

Furthermore, the culture novelty, language proficiency, language barrier, and preferences were factors that were mentioned by several people. These factors were either positive such as the language proficiency and/ or preference and negative such

as the culture novelty, language barrier and/ or preference again. Other factors were the similarity of their role to the one in their host-country, the relation skills of individuals, and the type of the organization they worked for. For example, people would at some point start taking place in all sorts of activities to get to know more people and feel integrated. Finally, the culture similarity, family-spouse adjustment, timing of relocation, age, family closeness, luck, and technology were the factors that were least mentioned. For instance, receiving support from family or the maturity that comes with age played a role in the adjustment process.

The third sub-question referred to what type of mentoring SIEs receive. According to the results, there were a lot of different experiences of people apart from the fact that all individuals had been formally supervisory mentored within the organization they worked for. This formal supervisory mentoring differed amongst participants in many things such as the time of duration, the type of matching of the mentor with the mentee, distance versus one-on-one mentoring, etc. Moreover, very few people were formally peer mentored. The formal peer mentoring was mostly initiated by the organization as a strategy, only in once case was the formal peer mentor assigned to the mentee by the immediate manager of the mentee and not by the HR department. Also, a lot of people were informally supervisory mentored, and all people were informally peer mentored, but this took place either within the organization or not.

Finally, the fourth sub-question was what the role of mentoring received is. This sub-question was formulated to describe the perception of mentoring by the participants on how mentoring helps them and what kind of impact it creates. According to the results, the perception of mentoring by the participants was very positive. Mentors seemed to have various functions when helping participants and everyone perceived it in a different way. For instance, mentors seemed to help participants in terms of broadening their network, providing advisory services, friendship, consultation, etc. A couple of people only provided a less positive feedback on the mentoring received, thinking that it was more difficult for them to discuss several matters as the mentors were senior employees, and, thus, it was more difficult for them to open up. Instead, they preferred their informal mentors because the relationship was developed impromptu.

In addition, the impact of mentoring was coded as to what degree of adjustment it influenced the most. According to the results, the majority of people regarding their general adjustment had been influenced informally by their peer colleagues within the organization, whereas fewer had been also informally peer mentored but outside of the organization. Only one (1) person mentioned the formal supervisory mentoring as the most influential. Moreover, with regard to the interaction adjustment, the results varied. In detail, the majority of people was influenced by their formal supervisor, who introduced the newcomers to the office-culture, less were influenced by their colleagues, even less by their formal peer mentors, and only one (1) individual was mostly influenced by his/ her informal supervisor. Finally, the formal supervisory mentoring unanimously influenced the most the degree of work adjustment as the mentors were senior employees with greater experience and years in the organization and could more easily guide the newcomers.

Link to Theory

Taking the results into consideration, a lot of things should be acknowledged. As previously mentioned, the findings indicate that almost all participants go more or less through different phases, at different times, and for different periods of times. All these observations come in line with the expectations of this research and the literature review. For example, some people went through the "honeymoon stage" as they seemed fascinated and excited about exploring the new host-country. However, this stage did not necessarily last for up to three months as indicated by the U-Curve model. Moreover, people went through the "culture shock phase" as it was shown that SIEs had also negative experiences due to several things in the host-country. Also, this stage lasted either less or longer compared to the U-Curve model. Furthermore, the absence of emotions and the feeling of proudness or repetitiveness are not shown in the U-Curve model. However, it could be the case that these feelings are part of the "adjustment" or "mastery phase", as it is assumed that feeling positively means that no barriers are presented in one's way. Finally, all people had adjusted to the host-country, but this stage also was not always in line with the U-Curve. People happened to adjust immediately, or it had taken them some time. However, the adjustment did not take more than three years, which specifically can be shown in the U-Curve. What is not shown in this model is that people can adjust immediately, but the researcher believes

that this cannot be generalized as this depends each time on the experience of the SIE and, therefore, cannot be predicted.

Moreover, as previously mentioned, a lot of factors seemed to be influential in one's cross-cultural adjustment when moving abroad. Those were presented based on their frequency, however, not all factors were in line with the literature review and the framework examined in this study. Particularly, the factors that are aligned with theory are the previous experience, organization socialization collective tactics, self-efficacy, culture novelty, relation skills, and family-spouse adjustment. These factors were identified in the interviews and were categorized in coding as were initially in the framework. The new factors were the language proficiency and language barrier, preferences, role similarity, organization type, culture similarity, timing, age, family closeness, luck, and technology. In this case, the factors were included into the existing categories of the framework as shown in the code-tree (see Appendix E).

In both cases, though, the results are in line with the expectations of the study. As predicted, a lot of factors influence SIEs and these factors vary from person to person. Also, besides of the factors of the existing framework, a lot of other factors were identified, which also aligns with the expectations. In detail, the researcher had anticipated that language and technology could be potential additional factors and the findings supported this expectation. What was not anticipated was the rest of the factors, but this is understandable as not all factors could not have been identified in advance. Role similarity and culture similarity are factors that depict the opposite of role novelty and culture novelty and, thus, it is very much understood as to how they can be helpful in one's adjustment. Organization type and family closeness were also factors that affected the participants as people were affected by the function or size of the organization and, in the other case, they missed their families or liked the fact that they had relatives in the host-country. Individuals' preferences is a category that can encompass many things, so, on one hand, it is logical that preferences arose, but, on the other hand, which preferences arose could not have been predicted. Timing and luck as factors could also have not been expected to the researcher's opinion.

Regarding the mentoring received, there are a lot of different experiences apart from the fact that all participants were formally supervisory mentored in the host-country organization. Although it was anticipated that all people would have been

formally mentored, as this was a prerequisite of their participation in the study, it was not known in advance if the mentor would be a supervisor or a peer. As a result, few people were formally peer mentored. Also, all people were informally peer mentored. The latter is aligned to the expectations as the informal relationship amongst people comes naturally. However, what was not expected was that people would not have been part of an informal peer mentoring within the organization and that they would only mention a support like this from outside the organization. Finally, people were also informally supervisory mentored, which is also logical, since the informal relationship comes naturally, hence, the focus is on the informality and not on the hierarchical level of the mentor.

In the end, the role of the mentoring encompasses the perception of mentoring received by participants and its type of impact. Initially, the experiences of mentoring were mostly positive perceived by SIEs. All participants welcomed their mentor and had meaningful discussions with him/ her not only workwise but also for personal issues. Mentors could have been perceived differently by respondents, but the overall response was that mentors helped expatriates. Specifically, they took on a lot of different roles such as consultants, guides, friends, promoters, etc. In this way, they assisted not only in work-related issues but also on personal issues. Mentors could have more than one (1) role to the mentee and they made individuals feel supported. By providing information to the newcomers, they let them focus on other stuff and eased their mind. Although the mentoring schemes differed amongst organizations, still the effect was mostly the same.

Secondly, for the type of impact, some expectations are aligned with the findings. In detail, for the degree of general adjustment, informal peer mentoring seemed to be almost a unanimous answer. Individuals were getting the simpler information informally either from their peer colleagues or from people outside of the organization. The information received was not work-related and, thus, a formal mentor was not required. Instead, people would develop relationships or just ask for information from their peers. Moreover, the second expectation of the study, which required a formal peer mentor to be the best fit for the interaction adjustment was not aligned with the literature, as there were several different responses with the majority of people saying that formal supervisory mentoring was their biggest influence. However, it needs to be mentioned that out of 15 participants, only three (3)

experienced a formal peer mentoring program, as organizations only focused on the formal supervisory mentoring. It may be that the results were different, should the participants had undergone another formal mentoring scheme that focused on peers. Finally, formal supervisory mentoring proved to be the best fit for the degree of work adjustment as individuals liked the fact that their mentors were people with more years of experience than them, which, therefore made them more suitable for their integration in the working environment. Formal supervisors provided vocational support, and this was supported by all individuals interviewed.

Reflection on the Findings

Taking an even broader perspective on this study, some comments need to be acknowledged. Initially, this study was based on the literature of AEs. Although differentiating criteria exist between AEs and SIEs, it was shown that these two separate groups have many things in common after all. Moreover, mentoring seemed to be a very big part of the expatriates' experience in the organization of the host-country and the host-country. Although it was difficult at times to distinguish the specific type of mentors, all individuals were positive about their overall experience and they acknowledged that the mentoring played a big role in their adjustment. Formal supervisory and informal peer mentoring seemed to be the most referred to types of mentoring, either because in the first case this was a formal strategy by the organization either because in the second case informal mentoring came naturally amongst people. However, what needs to be mentioned is that it was very difficult to distinguish between the social support that participants received and the informal mentoring. As both relationships are supportive to the expatriate, the researcher found no differences between these two terms as there were no explicit differentiating criteria. In addition, as explained, it was very difficult to distinguish at times which type of mentoring is the best fit for each degree of adjustment. These three degrees seemed to be so closely related, especially the interaction and general adjustment, as people would seek or receive information that is not solely related on their work role.

Moreover, in the beginning, a higher education criterion was not considered for the participants of this study. Nonetheless, 13 out of 15 participants were highly educated, 11 of them with a MSc and two (2) of them with a PhD. Two (2) more people had a BA. This was an interesting observation as these people were mostly working in big organizations, therefore, it was seen that mostly organizations with high-skilled

workers implemented formal mentoring programs. Also, it was seen that organizations, by implementing a formal supervisory mentoring, and because again, the degrees of adjustment are very closely related, could influence with only one (1) mentor two degrees of adjustment.

Relevance

This dissertation project contributed in several ways. First of all, in a societal level, SIEs were further examined, which gives nations and organizations an advantage as these people are international workers that tend to be on the move. Creating labor shortages is a common phenomenon nowadays, and since these workers either create these shortages or they fill them, it was important to learn from their experiences in relocating and working abroad. Moreover, in the organizational context, this study project was quite important. Helping organizations develop a mentoring plan was one of the focuses of this study, as the human resource department of organizations is responsible for acquiring and most importantly retaining this specific workforce. With this study, it was shown that the cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon perceived differently by individuals, different types of degrees of adjustment require different types of mentors, different types of mentors influence different people, and that mentoring in general is of high importance to expatriates. Therefore, organizations, and specifically, the HR department need to implement mentoring programs and tailor them into the specific needs of their international workers to reduce the turnover and increase their performance. Finally, scientifically, to the best of our knowledge, this study was the first to empirically test the conceptual framework, developed by Mezias and Scandura in 2005. In the most part, it was seen that the empirical evidence supports the conceptual framework, with the small exception of the type of mentoring needed for the interaction adjustment. Overall, though, more details about the lives and experiences of SIEs were acquired through this project, which was also the case, as not a lot of focus has been given on SIEs and more empirical research was needed.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite this study contributing on a societal, organizational, and scientific level, there are a lot of limitations that need to be addressed – as this is the case with most studies – in order to give readers a clear understanding of this project and to increase the results' validity and reliability. First of all, the number of interviews was small. While it was proposed in the beginning that approximately 20 interviews should be conducted, due

to difficulties in finding respondents, the researcher only conducted 15 interviews. Therefore, it is proposed that the same study be done again with more interviews, as the number of the sampling is very important in determining the external validity of the results (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, as previously mentioned, not all participants had undergone a formal mentoring peer scheme. This implies that the results could be different if participants had also undergone a different type of formal mentoring and therefore the results cannot be generalized. Future researchers should try to involve a more heterogeneous sample in terms of mentoring received as this can have a major impact on the data.

Furthermore, another limitation was that the researcher had to change a lot of things in the population and sample strategy due to the difficulty in finding the right participants. As a result, a lot of things were not taken into consideration in the data analysis – as explained in the method section, as a focus was given in which type of mentoring is the best fit for each degree of adjustment, since most participants had various characteristics that differed. Having said that, future researchers should take into consideration all these characteristics and perform the respective studies. For example, a comparison between distance and one-on-one mentoring has already been proposed by Crocitto et al. (2005). Moreover, selecting to outsource or not HR activities has been getting different views by many scholars (Shih and Chiang, 2011, as cited in Chaudhuri and Bartlett, 2014), so, this could be an interesting comparative study. Also, although Belgium was meant to be the only host-country to be examined, later, it became clear that this was not an option, and, in the end a lot of different countries were included in the study. Doing a cross-cultural empirical study can affect the data as there are several methodological difficulties (Nasif, Al-Daeaj, Ebrahimi, and Tibodeaux, 1991). It could be the case that the culture of the host-country is a moderating variable, therefore future researchers should consider that.

Moreover, another limitation was the inexperience of the researcher and his/ her lack of knowledge in conducting qualitative research, as it might be the case that the interviewer did not ask the right questions. In the researcher's opinion, it is believed that this took part in distinguishing the different degrees of adjustment and what type of mentoring impacted which the most, still, the researcher tried to do so in an effort to showcase the information received. Moreover, when participants were asked what the role of mentoring was, it is believed by the interviewer that individuals responded

having only in mind the formal mentoring that they received and not all types of mentoring. Therefore, more research that clearly distinguishes the different types of mentoring is needed. Finally, it should be mentioned that the analysis of the data can be seen as biased at times, as the researcher had always in mind answering the main research question and sub-questions. Therefore, some connections were based on the analytical interpretation of the data received and not on the perceptions of the participants. Due to this bias, it is possible that recurring/ important themes were not included in the results section of this project (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005) and, thus, similar studies are needed.

Practical Implications

This study found that various mentors and various types of mentors are beneficial to one's cross-cultural adjustment in the host-country. Therefore, this research suggests that organizations should develop mentoring strategies that are based on the specific needs approach of the expatriates. However, since the cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon that depends on a lot of things and because each individual is unique and grasp his/ her experience in a different way, it is possible that the results of this study do not apply to all workers. This means that organizations and especially the HR department need to tailor their mentoring scheme strategies on the needs of each individual rather than executing the one size fits all practice. It is acknowledged that this is very time and resources consuming, however, custom strategies should have the most impressive results.

Moreover, it was seen that different types of mentors influence the degrees of adjustment. This implies that the mentoring strategy should also be based on the different characteristics of mentors. For example, for the general and interaction adjustment, the mentor should have knowledge of the sociocultural context of the host-country in order to best help the newcomer. Therefore, it is proposed that besides the formality or not of the mentor that he/ she should also be a host-national. On the other hand, for the work adjustment, it was shown that what mattered was the years of experience and seniority of the mentor within the organization. Therefore, it is proposed that the formal supervisor mentor is not necessarily a local person.

Finally, a potential implication could be the size of the organization. In detail, in organizations that are small sized, it is of great importance that the formal supervisory

or peer mentors are not immediate managers/ supervisors or peer colleagues of the mentee. This is proposed as in formal mentoring, the relationship is not developed naturally as in informal mentoring. Hence, because it is needed that individuals are able to speak in a free manner about their issues, the formal mentors should work in other departments. This is easier for bigger organizations, of course, where there is the option of having multiple mentors.

Conclusion

This study highlighted that the phenomenon of cross-cultural adjustment is rather a complicated one and that mentoring is of great importance to SIEs. People who relocate abroad have mostly different experiences either to what they have to face or to how they will decide to act. Their perception differs based on a lot of things. Moreover, the cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon that occurs through different phases in time and is dependent on a lot of factors. Mentoring, on the other hand, is something that all people experience in its informal form. Formally, it is in the organizations' discretion to develop a mentoring strategy. However, people who have undergone some type of mentoring have very positive experiences as mentors have multiple functions and help expatriates in several ways. Nonetheless, specific types of mentors showed to best influence specific degrees of adjustment due to providing information and guidance differently; informal peer mentors influenced the general adjustment and formal supervisor mentors the interaction and work adjustment. By contributing on a societal, organizational, and scientific level, this research gives a better understanding of this specific group of international employees. However, this dissertation is not without limitations and practical implications and thus future research recommendations are made.

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Appendix A

Research Brief

Research Aim & Data Collection Brief

by Maria-Eleni Kalampoka

Utrecht University

MSc: Strategic Human Resource Management

Email: m.kalampoka@students.uu.nl

Mobile Number: (+30) 6986091168

Executive Summary

Nowadays, the globalization of the world has made it easier for people to move across borders in hopes of searching for better opportunities and quality of life. In particular, there is an increase in the expatriation of people in foreign countries. These expatriates can be either assigned ones, meaning that they are sent abroad by the organization they work for, or self-initiated ones (SIEs), meaning that they decide to relocate to a foreign country on their own. However, this increase, also, means that more people who tend to follow a global career throughout different organizations, they encounter various cultures that they need to adjust to. In the expatriate context, this adjustment has been consistently referred to as cross-cultural adjustment. There are three types of cross-cultural adjustment: general adjustment refers to the living conditions or culture of the new setting in the host-country, interaction adjustment refers to the interaction of the expatriate with the natives of the host-country, and work adjustment refers to the work-related responsibilities of the expatriate in the host-country.

Several previous studies indicate that strategies that support the human capital of organizations are strong predictors for the perceived organizational support of employees, which, in turn, is positively associated with high job satisfaction, performance, affective commitment, and, most importantly, negatively associated to turnover. Mentoring has been repeatedly proposed by scholars as an HR intervention for expatriates to overcome the difficulties they face for several reasons. For example, international mentoring has been found to assist in the junior expatriate's socialization, development, and retention.

Recent studies indicate that a large percentage of 50-70% of expatriates can be categorized as SIEs. For organizations to gain an advantage on the expatriation of SIEs, they need to facilitate the transfer from one country to another. Moreover, in today's competitive environment, organizations need to adopt more inclusive ways of mentoring and offer diverse opportunities, since an advantage that comes from mentoring is the human resource development. Therefore, this study will contribute to the scientific literature by focusing on the international employee group of SIEs and by identifying the types of mentoring they were offered by the organization in the host-country regarding their cross-cultural adjustment. In this way, organizations will be able to develop a mentoring strategy based on the needs-driven approach of employees.

Research Question & Sub-questions

The research question and sub-questions are formulated as follows:

What type of mentoring do SIEs experience in the organization of the host-country, and how does this have an impact, and what kind of impact on their cross-cultural adjustment?

- How do they experience their cross-cultural adjustment in terms of going through the stages of the adjustment process?
- Which (other) factors influence their cross-cultural adjustment?
- What type of mentoring do they receive?

Research Methodology

For the researcher to answer the main research question as well as the sub-questions developed in this study, a qualitative research approach will be adopted. The researcher will use the qualitative method to get a better understanding through first experiences of people who have left their home country and are currently working in the host-country. The research conducted will be an e-research and the researcher will use primary data. To collect qualitative primary data, the researcher chose the procedural categorization of interviews and the qualitative technique of semi structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews require a list of questions tailored to specific topics that constitute an "interview guide", however, the respondent has a high degree of leeway in how he/ she will respond. The researcher chooses this qualitative technique because the variable of cross-cultural adjustment is a phenomenon that differs amongst people and because not all people receive the same types of mentoring as this depends on the organization they work for, therefore, it is preferable that not all questions are prepared in advance, as there might be issues that the researcher is unable to anticipate.

These interviews are going to be personal one-on-one interviews, conducted online either via Skype, MicrosoftTeams, or by telephone, and will be performed in English. Each interview will last approximately 45 minutes as too short interviews may not provide the data necessary, while too long interviews may cause boredom and fatigue of the respondent. However, the length of the interviews will also be dependent on the potential saturation of information provided to the researcher.

The topics of the interview topic list are the following:

1. Background information

2. Process of adjustment

3. Factors of cross-cultural adjustment

4. Mentoring

The population of this study is going to be SIEs that currently abroad. Ideally, the researcher will try to conduct 20 interviews.

Validity & Reliability

The researcher will ask for feedback from the participants as he/ she intends to go back to the study participants and ask them about the findings. The researcher will also take into consideration the researcher effects. These effects refer to the different things that can influence the discussion of the interviewer and the interviewee as both parties are individuals with different characteristics and personalities like gender, educational background, general background, and language used during the interview. The interviews will also be recorded – should participants agree - to ensure that no data are false. Recording the interviews will also enhance the reliability of the data as the researcher will have the opportunity to revise the information provided at any moment during the duration of the research project.

Moreover, to prevent bias in the data collection and the research project in general, all interviews will be conducted anonymously, will be recorded by the researcher, as previously mentioned, transcribed, and given to the participants. All respondents will have to sign an informed consent prior to the interview through Adobe PDF since no face-to-face interaction will take place. This consent will be then emailed back to the researcher and the participants will keep a copy of the document. The recording of the interview will not be made without the explicit consent of the participants. The researcher will listen to the recordings only to analyze the data for this study and the recordings will be destroyed after the study is completed and submitted to the supervisor. This information will be given to the participants prior to the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues arise at a variety of stages in business and management research. In principal, there are four areas that are distinguished regarding ethical concerns: potential harm to participants, informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. Regarding the informed consent and the invasion of privacy, the researcher will perform his/ her research project following the policy of Utrecht University. With regard to harming the participants and deceiving them, the researcher will do his/ her best to, including but not limited to, not disrespect in any way the respondents and their answers, to be as much prepared for the interviews, to make clear agreements with the respondents prior to the interviews, to observe but to be neutral in his/ her reactions during the interviews, to not guide the responses, and to avoid conflicts at all costs.

Appendix B

Policy of Utrecht University

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has been in force since 25 May 2018. Its aim is to protect the privacy of people whose data is collected. This legislation has consequences for the way in which we handle identifiable data of people and organizations in our research. Of course, it is also still important to treat research respondents in an ethical way and to pay attention to this in the research process.

The basic principles of the GDPR are in many ways similar to the guiding principles of careful and ethically responsible research that we apply in our PAOS education and research. The guidelines below have been formulated to apply generally. As a student, you will always need to make your own decisions on applying these guidelines for your specific research scenario/process. You should therefore discuss any questions and your choices carefully with your thesis supervisor.

1. *Carefully consider the ethical issues*. Research ethics involve confidentiality and care in collecting and processing research data, treating respondents with respect and what is known as 'informed consent'. Discuss these issues with your thesis supervisor and, if necessary, address them explicitly in the research proposal and the thesis itself.

2. *Work with informed consent*. Make sure you explicitly inform your respondents about the purpose of the research and what will be done with the data and ask for their consent for this. You can ask for consent orally or in writing, depending on what is appropriate in the research situation. You will find an example of a statement of informed consent on the page after these guidelines.

3. Collecting research data.
If you are recording interviews or observing situations, make sure you use a secure device for recordings, such as an audio or video recorder. A smartphone is not sufficiently secure. If you do not have a separate device available, one potential solution is to use a secure folder or storage on your phone. This makes it possible to encrypt your data and you can only gain access using a password or PIN (e.g. 'Veilige map' or 'secure storage' in Samsung/Android).

Transfer your recordings to a secure environment as soon as possible. This could be a secure folder on your own PC or laptop. Make sure that you delete the data from your phone or other recording equipment. For survey data, it is preferable to use Qualtrics because this is a secure environment to which you have free access via a Utrecht University subscription. You can apply for access from USG lecturer Wouter Vandenabeele (W.V.Vandenabeele@uu.nl).

4. Personal information in your data.

Personal information refers to the following: any information that can be traced to a specific individual, for example by linking data to names, ID number, location, IP address, physical, economic and cultural characteristics, etc.

You should only collect personal information if it is or could be necessary or relevant for answering the research questions. If you do, make sure that you have obtained explicit consent to use personal information in the form of a statement of informed consent (see also under 2). In other cases, it is important to anonymise or pseudonymise personal information.

Anonymisation means omitting the name of the respondents in the interview transcript as well as any other information that makes it possible to recognise or identify the respondent, e.g. region, specific role (such as director). Anonymised data can no longer be identified and is therefore beyond the scope of the GDPR. Pseudonymisation means allocating a different name or code to your respondent (respondent A and B).

5. *Encrypting personal details.* If you require personal details for your research, make sure that this information can be stored in a way that is encrypted. VeraCrypt is an example of a tool for storing data in encrypted form: https://www.veracrypt.fr/en/Home.html. This website also includes a guide to encrypting data. If it is important to maintain personal information in your data, you can use the Utrecht University data storage system, YoDa. This should be done in consultation with your thesis supervisor.

6. *Store all data on European servers.* The GDPR requires all research data that involves personal information to be stored in Europe. This means that it is not permitted to use Google Drive, Dropbox or ICloud, for example. Suggestions for secure storage offered by Utrecht University include SurfDrive and OneDrive. N.B: use

OneDrive/Office365 via Utrecht University; only then can you be sure that your data will be stored within the EU.

7. *Store and delete data after a year*. It is permitted to store personal information for a maximum period of one year. As a researcher, you are personally responsible for destroying the data after this year. If the data is used to write an academic publication, it is important to store it for a longer period, in order to allow reviewers to gain access.

Appendix C

Informed Consent

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

for participation in Public Administration and Organization Science graduation research

"Mentoring on the cross-cultural adjustment of SIEs"

I have been informed about the research. I have read the written information. I have been able to ask questions about the research. I have had an opportunity to think about my participation in the research and it is completely voluntary. I am entitled to withdraw the consent I am granting at any time and to stop participating in the research without providing reasons.

I hereby consent to participating in the research:

Name:

Signature: Date:

The undersigned, responsible for the research, hereby declares that the person named above has been informed orally and in writing about the aforementioned research.

Name:

Position:

Signature: Date:

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Hello, "whoever"! Nice to meet you. I want to start by saying thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I really appreciate it. I would like to discuss with you some practical matters before we get started, is that OK with you?

First of all, as I have already mentioned in our email correspondence, this study is a result of my thesis project. In detail, my purpose is to examine the experiences of self-initiated expatriates (SIEs), meaning people who have expatriated on their own to a foreign country to start/ continue their career, with regard to their cross-cultural adjustment and how the mentoring received by them has affected their adjustment. In this way, I can examine what the HR department can do to facilitate the process of welcoming newcomers into the organization. It is going to be a qualitative study, conducted with semi-structured interviews. This means that I have prepared an interview guide and have some questions in mind, however, depending on your answers, I can further expand my questions.

Secondly, I would like to formally ask for your consent to video-record our conversation. I would like to state that the recording will only be used to analyze the data and will be destroyed after I submit my thesis to my supervisor. The data received will be anonymized and, in the report, your personal details will not be traceable to you. Moreover, I would also like to say that I may be taking some notes during the interview, as my observations are going to work as potential, additional data for my thesis.

Finally, I would like to say that I do not want to pressure you in any way. You can absolutely not answer in questions that you do not want to. You can also ask me anytime for further information/ clarification you may need.

OK, that was it. Thank you again for your cooperation. Shall we get started?

Interview Topic List

Background Information

1. What is your nationality and country of birth?

2. How long have you been working for the EC?

    a. What do you do there?

    b. Do you know how long you will be staying there?

3. Had you found the job before arriving in Brussels or afterwards?

4. Have you expatriated before in another country?

    a. If so, for how long?

    b. Why did you repatriate to your home country/ expatriate in another country?

5. What is your marital status?

Process of Adjustment

6. How did you experience the process of adjusting in the new country?

    a. Would you characterize it as an easy and/ or difficult process?

7. Do you feel adjusted currently? (why (not)?

8. How long would you say that it took you to adjust?

9. Do you feel more adjusted to certain things?

10. Did it take you longer to adjust to certain things?

    a. Why?

Factors of Cross-cultural adjustment

11. Do you feel you have adjusted to the culture of the organization?

12. Do you feel that you have adjusted to communicating with the people in the host-country?

13. Do you feel that you have adjusted to the life in the host-country?

14. What things have affected your adjustment "to this" positively?

    a. From these things, what influenced you the most?

    b. What things influenced what exactly?

    c. Were these things that affected you positively different regarding your life outside the organization and within the organization?

15. What are the main barriers that prevent you from adjusting?

    a. What did you do when you faced – if faced – such barriers?

Mentoring

16. Have you experienced any kind of support in the organization of the host-country?

a. What kind of support?

b. Offered by whom?

c. Who initiated/ was involved this support?

17. How do you experience each type of support?

a. Do you prefer certain types of support?

b. Do you think that experiencing different types of support would have a different outcome on your adjustment?

18. You have received mentoring. What role do you think this had for you?

a. What type of impact did this support have on you? / What aspects of the abovementioned adjustment did it impact? And how?

b. What type of support influenced you or your cross-cultural adjustment the most? Why?

Closing

We are at the end of the interview? Have you said everything you wanted to say, or do you have some things that you want to mention?

Thank you again for taking the time to discuss with me. I really appreciate it. When I have transcribed your interview, I will email it back to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any more questions.

Appendix E

Code-tree

Name	Description	Files	References
Cross-cultural Adjustment		0	0
Process of Adjustment		0	0
Phases		16	33
Period of Time		13	18
Degree of Adjustment		0	0
General Adjustment		15	15
Interaction Adjustment		15	15
Work Adjustment		15	15
Factors of Cross-cultural Adjustment		1	6
Anticipatory Adjustment		0	0
Previous Experience		12	15
In-Country Adjustment		0	0
Individual-related Factors		0	0
Relation Skills		3	9
Self-efficacy		7	11

Appendix E

Name	Description	Files	References
Job-related Factors		0	0
Role Similarity		4	4
Non work-related Factors		0	0
Age		2	2
Culture		0	0
Culture Novelty		5	7
Culture Similarity		2	2
Family Closeness		3	3
Family-Spouse Adjustment		2	3
Language		0	0
Language Barrier		6	6
Language Proficiency		5	5
Luck		1	1
Organization Type		3	3

Name	Description	Files	References
Preference		5	6
Technology		1	1
Timing		2	2
Organization Socialization			
Collective		7	17
Mentoring		0	0
Mentoring Received		0	0
Within the Organization		0	0
Formal Mentoring		2	2
Supervisory Mentoring		15	21
Peer Mentoring		3	4
Informal Mentoring		1	1
Supervisory Mentoring		7	9
Peer Mentoring		10	16
Outside of the Organization		0	0
Informal Mentoring		0	0

Name	Description	Files	References
Peer Mentoring		11	18
Mentoring Perceived		16	43
Impact of Mentoring		0	0
General Adjustment		15	15
Interaction Adjustment		15	15
Work Adjustment		15	15