

The expatriate trailing partner's experience: a sample from Honduras - an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

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There is an old African proverb which states “I am because we are.” This sums up my gratitude to everyone involved because I would not have been able to complete this research project without the help of many...

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Abstract

This dissertation project explores the experience of expatriate trailing partners during a particular stint abroad. The intent of this research is to examine the adjustment and lives of these individuals as they describe and reflect upon their experiences of accompanying their partners overseas and upon how they shape their identities and formulate a sense of meaning and purpose as they grapple with being thrown into a different culture away from the supports of home. Eight participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews focusing on their experiences of living overseas. The material was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Four superordinate themes were identified: the first detailed the impact on the expatriate trailing partners' sense of identity; the second highlighted the process of culture shock that the participants experienced; and the third pertained to the changes to the participants' relational world. The fourth theme examined how the expatriates' concept of time was altered. Existing literature on expatriate trailing partners and expatriates was employed to illuminate themes arising from the results. Existential philosophical concepts also elucidated the material. The results provide great insight into this group in the absence of published phenomenological studies in this subject area. The clinical significance of the study includes recommendations for increased awareness of the difficulties these expatriates face while living overseas, particularly in hardship postings, and the need for community-building; increased individual, couple, and family counselling; and career development support from professionals who understand the lifestyle and obstacles that this group faces. Further qualitative research on other expatriate trailing partner issues as well as studies that delve into more specific aspects of this phenomenon were called for.

Key Words

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, IPA, Expatriates, Trailing Partners/Spouses, Existential Migrants, Home, Isolation, Alienation, Identity, Culture Shock, Bad Faith, Globalisation, Thrownness, the Absurd, Relationships, Time, Unheimlich

Statement of Authorship

This dissertation is written by Rochelle Johnson Benning and has ethical clearance from the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctor by Professional Studies: validated pathway DProf Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling. The author reports no conflicts of interest, and is alone responsible for the content and writing of the dissertation.

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Anonymisation

The transcripts were edited for the purpose of preserving the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. When referring to a participant's nationality, they will be called 'North American' and references to the US or Canada will be called 'North America.' All locations except Honduras are omitted and references to organizations will be obscured with the title 'international organization.'

Abbreviations

IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ETP	Expatriate Trailing Partner
MNC	Multinational Corporation
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
TCK	Third Culture Kids (children of expatriates who grow up abroad)
NA	North America

Transcript Notations

...	significant pause
[]	material and/or name omitted
[laughing]	additional material or my summary

1 INTRODUCTION

With increasing globalisation comes the growing need to better understand the experiences and challenges an expatriate trailing partner or spouse encounters whilst adjusting to a life abroad. A commonly used term both in literature (Hughes, 1999; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Bryson and Hoge, 2005; Bikos et al, 2007b; Hindman, 2009) and by organizations, an expatriate ‘trailing’ partner is an individual who has moved from their home country because of their partner’s career and who often lives in a country that is very culturally different from their own. Although some use the less derogatory-sounding term ‘accompanying’ spouse, the moniker ‘trailing’ is more typical. Hindman (2009, p. 677) notes that this term is considered pejorative by many but is still used not only in scholarly literature but “either ironically by the women themselves or less so by those who structure the lives of the internationally deployed worker.” While trailing partners are expatriates, too, and to some degree, have the choice to move or not, they are not typically the impetus behind the relocation. It is usually their partner’s career or goals that drive the move overseas, not their own. Because they tend not to have the same institutional support that their partner and other expatriates possess, it has been noted in various mixed-methodological and quantitative studies (Hughes, 1999; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Mohr and Klein, 2004; Bikos et al., 2007a; Bikos et al. 2007b; Kupka et al., 2008; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008) that the expatriate trailing partners (ETPs) often face greater adjustment challenges, such as lack of career opportunities, life role changes, crisis of identity, and the task of settling their families and themselves into a culturally different landscape. However, this subject matter was picked because little qualitative research, especially phenomenological study, has been done on this group.

The 2011 Global Relocation Trends Survey (Brookfield Global Relocation Services, 2011) reports companies and organizations surveyed from a diverse group of industries said their management found that the top challenges for expatriate employees were “partner resistance (47%), family adjustment (32%), children’s education (29%), and location difficulties (25%).” This is a crucial topic for investigation by organizations and psychotherapists, particularly considering the economic and personal costs to expatriates and expatriate trailing partners that come with relocation. Recent quantitative and mixed-methodological studies have also found that those ETPs undergoing changes in life roles, such as the switch from a career person who placed great value on this identity to a stay-at-home parent,

reported psychological distress (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001, Bikos et al, 2007b). Bikos and Uruk (2005, p. 524) note that “even in an uncomplicated move, multiple stressors, including changes in housing, schooling, health insurance, and legal issues related to entering/leaving the country” have psychological ramifications on the personal and professional lives of expatriate families. These authors cite Becker (1991), a psychiatrist who worked with American expatriates in Saudi Arabia, who said that expatriates come to therapy with issues similar to those they would have in their home country but “when overseas, cultural factors and isolation compound their problems” (Bikos and Uruk, 2005, p. 524). Challenges to the expatriate population include increased stress, depression, and anxiety, and increased drug and alcohol abuse (Truman, Sharar and Pompe, 2011). A high rate of marital discord has been attributed to this group; there is even a claim that the rate of divorce is higher in expatriate families (Hughes, 1999; Truman, Sharar and Pompe, 2011).

However, there is little research addressing expatriate and ETP mental health issues, especially qualitative analytic explorations. I have not been able to identify statistics on the number of expatriates who have accessed professional mental health treatment.

The goal of this research project is to explore these adjustment challenges and to give trailing partners an opportunity to discuss their experiences and a platform from which to do so. In discussing ‘experience,’ it is important to note that it has two aspects. An experience can be a moment in time, but there is a more complex aspect of experience which Dilthey (1979) (further explained by Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009, p. 2) termed a ‘comprehensive unit.’ This notion of experience is when one event is interconnected with previous events which imbue that present experience with certain meaning (Dilthey, 1979). This study is concerned with this latter aspect of experience. It also seeks to understand how the deeper existential issues of loss of meaning and self, isolation, and a disconnection from all of the four dimensions affects our worldview and ability to adjust (Binswanger, 1963; van Deurzen, 1997):

1. Physical – Potential loss of security
2. Social – Loss of close, long-time relationships
3. Personal – Feelings of loneliness and isolation
4. Spiritual – Understanding what gives us purpose

Demystifying adjustment issues and talking openly about challenges and struggles that ETPs and their families face will provide greater knowledge for improved counselling and

supportive services, currently lacking, and help them better adapt and thrive whilst overseas. This study is also significant for a wider audience because it seeks to understand how one strives to create meaning and a purposeful life when faced with certain challenges.

1.1 Reflexive Preface

Etherington (2004, p. 19) states that “reflexivity is a skill that we develop as counsellors: an ability to notice our responses to the world around us, other people and events, and to use that knowledge to inform our actions, communications and understandings.” As an existential psychotherapist and researcher who has herself been an expatriate trailing partner for 16 years and who has worked with expatriates in a professional counselling capacity, the research emerged from personal and professional discussions with others and from my own past experiences. During this period, I have lived in my home country, the United States, and four other very diverse countries: Mexico, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, and Honduras.

In order to be a fully reflexive researcher, it is essential to be transparent about my own experiences, to provide a context to the reader so as to not only inform of possible biases but also “how my previous knowledge of the phenomenon under exploration would inform the study” (Etherington, 2004, p. 19). I have been a trailing partner for a large portion of my adult life; from a young, professional 20-something documentary television producer moving to Mexico City to a 40-something, mother of two, psychotherapy and counselling doctoral student making a profound mid-career change. It was my initial intent when doing my first degree over twenty years ago to be a diplomat or to pursue an international career but I also fell in love with journalism and filmmaking and pursued that path instead. When my partner chose an overseas career, I jumped at the chance to fulfil one of my long-term goals: living overseas. Our wedding served as our going away party and nine days after the wedding, I found myself somebody’s bride in a new country, with a new job, a decent but rusty command of the new country’s language, no support system, and a new identity as my husband’s trailing partner. Although it was a perk, our housing was chosen by my husband’s organization, all my mail and correspondence were sent through his office, and I was informed that I had to get ‘approval’ from his organization in order to work in that country. I found out that I was lucky. In some countries, there are no bilateral work permits for

expatriate partners and because of this they are not able to work for a wage at all. As a fairly independent and ambitious individual, this dependence on my new husband and his employer was unsettling and, at times, I experienced moments of groundlessness and an unmooring from what I thought my identity was before marriage.

With each posting, there were new challenges and triumphs, but starting over was never easy nor the same. This was true even in the US and the UK where I have lived before and have a British father. There was learning the lay of the land, the laws, a new job and creating a new support system. Furthermore, after having two children (one born in Prague and the other in London), I had to consider their ability to adapt to a new place and new rules and make new friends. I vacillated between worrying about the impact that these changes were having on them and grateful for all the rich experiences and opportunities they were getting before the age of ten, more than most people had in their lifetime.

I, too, have had many highlights in both my television and psychotherapy careers, which were luckily portable, and in my personal life, in which I have made a community for myself all over the world. I have both experienced and observed the life to be one of adventure, learning about new cultures, and mastering new languages. However, I have also suffered profound loneliness, experienced cultural shock, laboured with foreign languages, and have grown weary of the 'trailing' partner status. During some difficult times, I questioned the decision to go overseas, too, and had unhappy moments of being resentful of my partner.

After working for years on documentaries on mental health topics, I began the graduate psychotherapy program while I was living in London when my second child was a toddler. While it was essential to undergo personal therapy in my graduate program, it came at a crucial time of my life. After years of living in London again, my children and I felt at home, but it was time for my husband to be reassigned, so I felt my foundation slipping out from under me again. I still remember vividly the intense anxiety I was feeling and the irritability that I've come to recognize as a tell-tale sign of my sense of unbalance and uncertainty. I would have to again go through the process of what I call 're-belonging' in a new community, manage to continue my studies far away, and find clinical work in an unfamiliar country where I had no friends or contacts. While, in retrospect, there were many more good times than problematic ones over this 16-year period, therapy and self-reflection gave me the room to explore how both poles shaped my present identity and worldview.

I have also witnessed others' struggle with alienation and loss of identity. Besides being a timely subject, I was curious about how others dealt with this experience and adjustment process.

My interest in conducting this study, besides its intimate link with my own personal history, also arose out of bearing witness to other expatriate experiences overseas and my clinical placement work in Honduras. During my three-year stint in Tegucigalpa, I work with both native Honduran and expatriate clients who ranged from teenagers to middle aged adults and who presented with a wide variety of issues. The expatriate clients struggled with various psychological challenges but I observed that they, especially trailing partner clients, complained of lacking a positive social support network and not having purpose and meaning in their everyday life. They also seemed to have difficulties managing and comprehending culture shocks no matter how long they lived in the country. Besides my clinical experience, I have noticed during the years I have lived abroad that there are many existential implications which arise from how different people handle loss and alienation. I have seen some people rise to the challenge of adjusting to life overseas or locate the support they need, while others struggle with short-term or long-term crises and problems with living.

I have witnessed that some people are worried about the stigma of seeking mental health services and this troubled me as I found my own personal therapy crucial during a particularly difficult time of upheaval. I welcomed the new adventure but besides leaving strong, deep rooted friendships and a job that I loved, the stress of moving a family and home during this particular time was quite stressful for me and I benefited from additional support. Depending on their country of origin, seeking help can also affect health insurance coverage for expatriates. In many cases, there are not adequate mental health services available where they live overseas or such services are not provided in a language with which they feel comfortable (Bikos and Uruk, 2005).

While I was aware that there were quantitative studies that thoroughly listed what the challenges of living overseas were for expatriates and ETPS, I felt that how these participants made sense of this experience was missing from academic and professional literature. To me, the picture was often presented as grim and one-dimensional, and I wondered how I and other

mental health practitioners could effectively work with this client group if we could only see one side of the story. During my second-year class, Programme Planning, I was tasked with deciding which topic I would be choosing for my doctoral dissertation project. I had a few clinical interests at the time I was interested in exploring such as self-harm/cutting and bereavement issues, but I wanted to pursue a topic that was affecting the community that I was working and living in at the moment. I recognized that there was little understanding of this lifestyle to which I was both strongly professionally and personally connected. This gaping hole steered me in narrowing down my research interests to exploring what the experience of the expatriate trailing partner is and gleaned what information from the findings could be used by individuals, practitioners and organizations to best support this group in the future.

I chose to conduct the interviews for this study in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, which was my last overseas posting. I lived there for three years as an expatriate trailing partner and also did part of my clinical placement during my time there so I felt that I knew this setting well from a professional and personal standpoint. An in-depth explanation of the site selection can be found in the methodology chapter and a brief account of Honduras' current events is in Appendix 9.

1.2 A Guide to the Report

The report will begin with a review of the existing literature in the area and will include an examination of both qualitative and quantitative research as well as published biographical materials. I conducted an extensive literature search on ETPs and expatriates in general at the libraries of Middlesex University in London, UK, and Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA, using their ProQuest, PsychINFO, PsychArticles, Academic Search Premier, and Project Muse databases. A majority of the existing research on ETPs was quantitative, with large and geographically diverse participant pools. There was little exploration of the total experience, and the lack of individual voices and unique experiences was notable.

The report will then move on to methodology. I will provide a detailed rationale for my choice of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). First, I will describe the epistemology that informed my choice of the IPA methodology, which employs both interpretation and phenomenology. I interviewed eight participants and used IPA to analyse their qualitative data, to search for emerging and superordinate themes, and to form the results and discussion for the report. The methodology section includes details of how the research was conducted and participants were selected. The principal section of the study, the results chapter, contains an in-depth exploration of the participants' accounts and focuses on the four superordinate themes that arose from the data. The discussion chapter examines the findings from the results chapter as they relate to materials from the literature review section. Additionally, it incorporates other literature that appears to be relevant to these new findings. The conclusion sums up the clinical importance of these findings, the strengths and limitations of the study, the quality of the project, and recommendations for future research in this field.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

While the topic of expatriates in general has been well researched, ETPs have received little attention from researchers and academics. There have been several mixed methodology studies that have touched upon this topic, as well as numerous biographies, blogs, and websites geared towards ETPs. Vercruyse (2002) and Bryson and Hoge (2005) anecdotally write about their experiences working with this population in English-speaking mental health services in Belgium and Thailand, respectively, but I have identified very few peer-reviewed qualitative studies which focus solely on the ETP adjustment experience. Research focused on the expatriate has primarily attempted to understand how to help them better adjust and be able to fully perform in whatever function they moved overseas for, but the ETP's place in that research was presented as a tangential factor in the expatriate's adjustment (Richardson, 2004). With increasing globalization and a rise in international migration, the absence of qualitative studies on this group is not only an issue for academic researchers and the international expatriate community but also for those who work in the psychotherapy and counselling world who may be asked to support ETPs when they navigate these challenges of adjustment.

This chapter will introduce the literature concerning existing research findings, located in journal articles and books dedicated to exploring various issues regarding individuals who are living overseas. In this section, I have included literature about both expatriate trailing partners and expatriates in general. Some of the literature on the overall expatriate population, which covers themes such as culture shock and adjustment, will be germane to the ETP experience as they are expatriates, too, and share many of the same experiences as others who have moved overseas. In surveying the research landscape, it was more manageable to conceptualize categories in order to discuss and compare existing literature. The various studies appeared to fall naturally into groupings, and I was able to condense the broader literature into themes. I will begin with a look at key expatriate literature, then discuss the concept of existential migration, and finish with an exploration of literature pertaining to expatriate trailing partners. The objective is to define these key topics but also to fill in the gaps that past research has left, as well as to make a useful contribution to scholarly literature.

2.1 General Expatriate Literature

In my search to obtain literature regarding the experiences of ETPs, I found that the prevalent discussions revolved around general expatriate adjustment, referring to voluntary expatriates or “mobile professionals” (Fechter and Walsh, 2010, p. 1198) who are not economic migrants or refugees. However, the impetus to conduct studies was usually the desire to understand and aid business people or independent expatriates adjusting to life overseas. There are several definitions of adjustment that have been cited or developed by expatriate researchers. For example, Black and Gregersen (1991, p. 463) state that optimal adjustment occurs when an expatriate feels psychologically at ease in their new home abroad, while Mohr and Klein (2004, p. 1191) define adjustment as “the degree to which individuals on overseas assignments perceive their values, norms and behavioural patterns to be reconcilable with those common in the host country.” Although the presented literature predominantly revolves around the expatriate manager, the research and findings were germane to my understanding of the overall experience of the effects of expatriation on the ETP. I have divided up the themes of this section into the following subsections:

1. Expatriate adjustment and the psychological contract
2. Personality and its influence on expatriate adjustment
3. Effects of culture shock on expatriate adjustment

2.1.1 Expatriate Adjustment and the Psychological Contract

Companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governments spend a large amount of money on training, travel, and other repatriation costs. It is in a company’s or organization’s best interest that the employee remains in the country and completes the entire assignment. Several researchers (Black et al., 1991; Guzzo et al, 1994; Martinko and Douglas, 1999; Garonzik et al., 2000; Glanz, 2003; Siers, 2007; Richardson et al., 2008; Wang, 2008; Haslberger and Brewster, 2009) have attempted to understand the issues and challenges that have arisen for expatriates and subsequently their partners and families, in order to comprehend why some individuals are successful at living abroad, while others are unable to cope and terminate their stays early. For organizations and corporations, the bottom line is money lost: premature departure is expensive to them and may cost the expatriate their career (Shaffer and Harrison, 1998; Garonzik et al., 2000).

Essentially, these various studies found that participants stated they considered returning from abroad early when non-work factors were relatively unfavourable, including living

conditions, housing, and their partner's/family's well-being. The effect that the expatriate's partner and family's unhappiness can have on the expatriate ability to adjust, be successful and productive at work, or want to stay at their post abroad is called the 'spillover effect' (Takeuchi et al., 2002, p. 655). Because expatriates' and their families' lives both in and out of the office are greatly influenced by their employer, the company is seen to enter into a 'psychological contract' with the expatriate employee and his or her family (Guzzo et al., 1994).

Guzzo et al. (1994, p. 618) defined psychological contracts as "far more like relational than transactional contracts." Besides salary and other tangible perks, expatriate employees expect more support and employer concern for the expatriate's and family's security and well-being, as well as that the employee's family needs will be met (Guzzo et al., 1994). Studies by Garonzik et al. (2000) and Haslberger and Brewster (2009) sought to understand how employees perceive the organization's role in their adjustment. Garonzik et al. (2000) surveyed 58 American employees of a company that had many overseas offices and who were accompanied by a partner. The researchers found that participants and their families stayed abroad when they perceived their corporation to be fair in relation to advancement and working conditions, and that non-work outcomes, such as the adjustment of family members, were ensured. In other words, if the worker found the organization's procedures to be unfair to him and his family, the corporation would be deemed responsible for unfavourable non-work conditions and this would conceivably influence the expatriate to terminate early. However, as the study suggests, non-work outcomes such as partner or children's adjustment are hard to control or may be financially impossible, so capital should be prioritized by providing organizational fairness in the work setting in order to meet some of the requirements of the employee's psychological contract (Garonzik et al. 2000).

Haslberger and Brewster (2009) continued the research on the psychological contract's impact on expatriates and their families. Citing numerous studies, they concluded that adjustment is a process which depends on how the expatriates have adapted cognitively and emotionally, with both factors interacting strongly and depending on the psychological contract. Haslberger and Brewster (2009, p. 388) state that "unadjusted expatriates may focus on the wrong things because of cognitive predispositions such as attentional, interpretative, and memory biases." In other words, emotions can affect and interfere with learning and adjustment. The expatriates' cognitive distortions also negatively affect social

functions and relationships (Haslberger and Brewster, 2009). Besides the need for more longitudinal research in the future, the researchers noted that there is little research on expatriate family adjustment as a whole. While they remarked that quantitative research provides relevant statistical findings, Haslberger and Brewster noted the need for more qualitative research which would provide a deeper understanding of the participants' lives and the complex process of adjustment that a quantitative study cannot offer. I would add that it would be beneficial to carry out a complete qualitative study on ETPs to fully understand their perceptions and expectations and how these influence their adjustment.

It is important to include these research findings, because although they primarily focus on the expatriate, if we are to look at the findings from a systemic point of view, it is highly likely that partner/family adjustment would greatly influence an employee's attitude and commitment. However, most of this quantitative research relies heavily on self-reported data from the employees, and contains little insight into how much influence their families or partners have on their decisions and how much influence organizational procedures have on families. In order to have a well-balanced view of the experience of both the expatriate and the ETP, it is important to understand how much influence their partner's organization has on their daily lives.

2.1.2 Personality and its Influence on Expatriate Adjustment

While the external relationship between expatriates and their hiring organization is one significant aspect of understanding how expatriates adjust overseas, there is research that also explores how the expatriates' own internal influences, such as personality, may have a role in how they adjust to living overseas. Is it possible to adjust to change and other life disruptions if one has a certain temperament and coping skills? Several authors (Swagler and Jome, 2005; van Oudenhoven et al., 2003; and Wang and Takeuchi, 2007) conducted quantitative studies on how personality plays a part in expatriate adjustment. Again, although the studies included participants from a general expatriate population, the findings conceivably can be useful for understanding ETPs.

While diverse measures were used in the three studies, participants who had good coping skills tended to fare well in their overseas assignments. Van Oudenhoven et al. (2003, p.159) found that participants with "cultural empathy, open-mindedness, social initiative, emotional

stability, and flexibility” did well in adjusting to overseas assignments. In the same vein, Swagler and Jome (2005, p.527) found that expatriate American and Canadian participants with “less neuroticism, greater agreeableness, greater conscientiousness and being more acculturated to” the host country’s culture were more well-adjusted during their posting in Taiwan.

While these studies are useful in understanding predictors for how individuals adapt and adjust, there are limitations to this argument. Both studies were conducted on large heterogeneous samples and participants were taken from expatriate assignments in Taiwan, a developed host country. It is difficult to generalize these findings and apply them to expatriates who live in developing nations, and who may not have a solid infrastructure or established MNC culture in place. This topic will be discussed in more detail later in the literature review, but studies (Martinko and Douglas, 1999; Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005) have shown that adjustment and adaptation may be easier when an individual is moving to a culturally similar country. A majority of research studies located measured expatriates’ experiences in developed nations in North America, Asia, and Europe. This suggests that there is a need for more research to be conducted on expatriate experiences in developing countries, where there may be additional challenges to adjustment that may or may not supersede one’s temperament. Furthermore, experiences tend to be subjective and fluid and therefore hard to distinguish in quantitative findings. Still, these studies encourage longitudinal and qualitative research which would add to the understanding of internal and external influences on adjustment.

2.1.3 Effects of Culture Shock on Expatriate Adjustment - Quantitative Research

Besides personality traits and the organization’s influence on expatriate adjustment, researchers have long recognized how culture shock affects the well-being and adaptation of this group. Merriam-Webster.com (2011) defines culture shock as “a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation.” Undoubtedly, all expatriates experience this at some point in their sojourn, so it is critical to evaluate literature regarding this topic. This section will be divided into reviews of quantitative and qualitative literature on culture shock’s impact on expatriate adjustment.

In understanding how culture shock impacts expatriate adjustment, researchers have tried to understand the role that cultural distance plays in this process. Cultural distance (Martinko and Douglas, 1999; Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005; Swagler and Jome, 2005; Selmer, 2007) refers to the degree of difference between two cultures: collectivist vs. individualistic, differences in time orientation, religion, languages, etc. In an extensive review of theory and research of international business literature and cross-cultural studies, Martinko and Douglas (1999) aimed to analyse existing literature through the lens of attribution and cross-cultural theories in order to explore why expatriate managers fail overseas. Attribution theory explores how individuals comprehend the causes of events and the outcomes of those perceptions (Martinko, 1995, cited by Martinko and Douglas, 1999, p. 269). This, in turn, will affect one's expectations. The authors (1999, p. 281) noted that much of the problem is the "incongruencies" between expatriates and the locals, especially when the expatriates are from a highly individualistic and low-context culture (such as North America and Western Europe) and are living and interacting with locals from a highly collectivistic and high-context culture (many countries in Latin America and Asia). They suggested that organizations should increase cross-cultural training to lessen psychological distance to cultural differences and have employees address their biases and preconceived expectations to gain a better understanding of the culture in which they will be living. Martinko and Douglas (1999) also called for more studies in this area in order to ascertain how biases are formed and carried out in detail. It is also critical to measure how ETPs encounter cultural differences to formulate more effective cross-cultural training, since they are interacting more with the local population.

However, further research on this subject has not been conclusive, with different studies reaching conflicting conclusions. In a mixed methodology study, Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) investigated the role of cultural distance, position level, and time in country in expatriate coping strategies. In a review of literature, Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) noted that well-adjusted expatriates tended to be more flexible and have better coping strategies for adapting to new cultures. They remain open to a new culture but continue to maintain their own worldviews, traditions, and norms from their home culture. Conversely, expatriates who reported difficulties with adjustment tended to reject their host country's worldview and

values, make invidious comparisons between the host culture and their own, and only socialize with other expatriates from their home country.

They interviewed and surveyed 116 German managers who were evenly split between assignments in the U.S., which is considered culturally similar to Germany, and Japan, which is deemed to have more cultural distance. Stahl and Caligiuri (2005) also found that cultural distance played a big role in how the participants coped with living abroad. The German expatriates living in the U.S. had an easier time coping than their counterparts in Japan and tended to use problem-focused coping skills, such as asking for assistance on where to shop or actively seeking friendships with locals, as opposed to the emotion-focused coping strategies of withdrawal or avoidance of local culture. The authors noted, however, that some emotion-focused coping skills such as empathizing and seeking emotional support can be helpful (Stahl and Caligiuri 2005, p. 605). They also discussed in their review of previous literature that expatriates in developing countries were more prone to poor coping strategies because they may not have the same coping skills and supports due to cultural distance. As Martinko and Douglas (1999) found in their review of expatriate literature, Stahl and Caligiuri (2005, p. 605) noted that ~~maladjusted~~ expatriates' inability to cope with the cultural differences of their host country may have an unfavourable impact on their adaptation, resulting in ~~maladaptive~~ maladaptive behaviour, such as problem drinking or sequestering themselves off in the expatriate community. So conceivably, a North American can appear quite well-adjusted in Berlin but have coping challenges in Abuja. The study did not mention what on-the-ground support these expatriates had, but suggested that individual expatriates who work in a culturally distant country should try to utilize problem-focused skills in order to better adjust to their life abroad (Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005, p. 612). I would add that it would be prudent to study whether pre-move counselling, training, or coaching, in addition to cross-cultural training, could assist employees going overseas to foster constructive problem and emotion-focused coping skills that would aid their adjustment. Because ETPs tend not to have the structure of an office in place which helps develop these skills, further studies on ETPs' behaviour and coping skills are vital in order to understand how best to help this group adapt and find support.

In a 2007 quantitative study, Selmer conducted a survey of 42 American businessmen in Canada and Germany, with Canada being used as the culturally similar measure vs. Germany as the culturally dissimilar country, to test the assumption of expatriate researchers that the

more different the host culture is from the expatriate's own culture, the more difficult the process of adjustment will be. The author sent surveys containing various psychological, adjustment, and cross-cultural questionnaires and the researcher found that there was essentially no significant adjustment difference between the participants in both countries. Citing previous studies by Forster (1994), Hung (1994) Selmer and Shiu (1999), Selmer (2007) further argued that expatriates living in a culture similar to their own with the same language, such as an American living in the UK, may experience more culture shock because they are not prepared for small and nuanced cultural differences. This is where misunderstandings arise. Selmer (2007, p. 197) states that while all expatriates could benefit from cross-cultural training, "special considerations" may not be necessary for those who are placed in postings that are just classified as culturally different. The author noted, however, that more research is needed on this front, especially longitudinal research since adjustment is a process that needs to be measured over time. The study was very small and it is possible that a study comparing expatriate adjustment in Canada to expatriates in a developing country or comparing rates in adjustment of expatriates in different capacities, such as trailing partners and NGO employees, may bring vastly different results.

2.1.4 Effects of Culture Shock on Expatriate Adjustment - Qualitative Research

While these quantitative and mixed methodological studies shed light on the role that cultural differences play in the expatriate's adjustment to life overseas, there have also been a few notable recent qualitative studies (Feldman and Thomas, 1991; Walsh, 2006; Robertson et al., 2007; Smiley, 2010; McKenna, 2010) that are especially germane for this research, because they interviewed participants who were living in areas that were extremely culturally different from their own. These studies give pertinent insight into the expatriate experience and how expatriates make sense of adapting to a new culture and forming a life in a new home. Additionally, a majority of the participants were not employees of MNCs, on which most of expatriate literature has focused, so they endeavour to give readers other pictures of the diverse expatriate landscape.

Walsh (2006, p. 268) conducted ethnographic grounded theory research on a British expatriate woman named 'Jane' living in Dubai to analyse how she undertook "practices of belonging." The researcher noted that most expat literature focused on well-paid corporate

professionals but she pointed out that in this case, British individuals are living all over the world and are working in capacities outside of MNCs. Walsh (2006, p. 268) explored three themes that arose out of her case study:

1. domesticity - using food and other domestic practices to keep a sense of their home country with them;
2. intimacy - maintaining close contact with friends and family at home and making new friends and family;
3. foreignness - the way someone feels different or vulnerable in a setting different from their home culture.

This study shed light on topics that have not been covered by traditional expatriate literature, such as the negotiation of simultaneously holding on to one's past identity by continuing culinary practices and maintaining relationships with home while creating a new identity and life in one's new home overseas. I found that Walsh's study of how one maintains this fine balance between old and new identities and cultures was essential to my understanding of expatriate adjustment for this research project and intend to use it to help me understand how participants conceptualize home and form new relationships in their new location. An additional qualitative study with multiple participants will further broaden this area of expatriate research.

Adding to the rich qualitative research of expatriate belonging and adaptation, McKenna (2010) analysed three e-mails sent by his friend 'Doug,' a Zimbabwean-British academic who went to India for a temporary teaching assignment at a university. The author's goal was to understand "the processes of 'adjustment' that the expatriate experiences and its relationship to their life as a 'work in progress'" (McKenna, 2010, p. 280). The study followed Doug as he tried to make sense of all the chaos and changes that had happened in his personal and professional life during this time abroad. McKenna (2010) employed Antonovsky's (1987) sense of coherence theory, which points to elements needed to help manage demanding environments or situations, and emphasized three factors which enable an individual to cope with demanding and chaotic situations and settings:

1. comprehensibility; that what happens is structured, ordered, and predictable.
2. manageability; that resources are available for the individual to get matters under control.
3. meaningfulness; that there is worth in what an individual is experiencing. (McKenna, 2010, p. 285)

As a reader, we get a full picture of what expatriate life is and witness Doug negotiating the ups and downs that encompass this expatriate lifestyle. Doug coped with broken psychological contracts with his employer and worked to make sense of cultural differences such as driving, sanitation, and lack of electricity. McKenna (2010, p. 285) noted that “this sense of coherence is not a state or a trait, it is some level of comfort and confidence in the uncertain environment developed through life as it is experienced.” Adjustment is a process that may not fully be actualized, but it is something which one can work towards (McKenna, 2010). McKenna’s research and findings are particularly essential in understanding that not only is adjustment an on-going process, it does not always follow a linear progression. Additionally, preparing future expatriates to encounter surprises and emphasizing the need for continued social supports are important outcomes of this research. It will be helpful to utilize these principles in making sense of my participants’ on-going negotiation with adjustment, not only in their present post, but also as they make sense of their continuous adjustment during their various overseas experiences.

Robertson et al. (2007) also set out to understand the impact of culture shocks and surprises on expatriates and how this affected their ability to adjust. In a mixed methodology study, the researchers interviewed 12 expatriate faculty members employed by a research institute in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Robertson et al. explored how participants reacted to cultural differences when they first arrived in this Central Asian country and then studied their adjustments to these particular shocks. As with Martinko and Douglas’s (1999) research discussed earlier in this review, Robertson et al.,(2007, p. 212) found that as a phenomenon, culture shock and subsequent disappointment is usually the disparity between expectations influenced by the individual’s own culture and the facets of the culture of their home overseas. Robertson et al. (2007, p. 217) found that expatriates not only describe these shocks as cultural but also as “a service shock” and are more likely to describe difficulties “in terms of “‘services,’ ‘bureaucracy,’ ‘space safety’ and ‘loss of time.’” Exploring these differences and the importance expatriates place in them is critical for understanding how this group copes and adjusts in culturally distant landscapes. Because Honduras is culturally distant from North America, I intend to use Robertson et al.’s findings about culture shocks as part of my framework for interpreting my results.

In understanding how expatriates adjust to cultural differences, it might be helpful to understand how expatriates perceive the space around them. Is it safe and can they eventually feel comfortable in their new home overseas? How do these expatriates live and relate with local residents? Smiley's (2010) research on expatriates living in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was especially valuable in furthering my understanding of how expatriates negotiate living in a culture completely different from their own and also in a locale that they consider unsafe. The researcher conducted a mixed methodological study surveying 50 expatriates and then followed up by interviewing a small number of the respondents. Additionally, she surveyed a number of non-expatriate residents of Dar es Salaam. Because participants cited fear of crime as to why they stayed in expatriate enclaves, Smiley (2010, p. 25) found that her participants created "spaces of exclusion using a discourse based on comfort, safety, and familiarity." She reported that they would stay in a small section of town and rarely ventured to areas that were perceived to be frequented by the local population. The researcher referred to this type of fear as 'expatriate fear,' further defined as "fear of the unfamiliar", especially in language, culture, and ambience (Smiley, 2010, p. 35). Additionally, it appears that this type of fear is compounded by other expatriates because tales of crime usually become more exaggerated over time. Smiley (2010, p. 31) stated that most respondents were women, and because they were trailing partners, they were more willing to participate because they had more free time than their working partner. Although she listed this as a limitation, I would argue that these would be the individuals who would be most affected by 'expatriate fear.' It is the ETP who tends to be out more in the expatriate community performing tasks such as shopping and taking care of errands and are more exposed to real and imagined threats than their partners who usually commute only between office and home. This study has added to my understanding of how expatriates make sense of changes to safety and to the unfamiliar. Because Honduras and Central America are widely recognized as a high-crime country and region, Smiley's research will be helpful in illuminating the participants' experience in this type of setting.

However, what happens if a true crisis strikes and one's new home isn't truly safe? How does one adjust and cope? Feldman and Thomas (1991) surveyed 60 expatriates who were living in Saudi Arabia during the first Gulf War (1990-1991). They (1991, p. 37) noted that "even under the best circumstances, expatriate employees face difficulties in adjusting to the norms of other cultures; and when political crisis strikes, confusion, fear, and alienation intensify." Many of the respondents adopted a "wait and see" attitude during the crisis but

were worried about the “thin line between ‘wait and see’ and ‘too late’” (Feldman and Thomas, 1991, p. 44). They also commented that they could not settle into a routine because of the tension and psychological stress of living near a combat zone. However, the researchers found that most of the expatriates surveyed were optimistic and felt that they gained professionally and personally from this period of time. Interestingly enough, Feldman and Thomas (1991) shared that most of their respondents believed that expatriates would have issues anywhere in the world and most were resolute in carrying on in their assignments despite the difficulties. This study was especially useful for my work in understanding how people adapt and live through times of crisis or other stressful living conditions.

2.2 Existential Migration Literature – Qualitative Research

The research that has had the greatest impact on my study is Madison’s (2006, 2010) recent and seminal work on existential migration. He (2010, p. 7) created the term “existential migrant” to describe those who “choose to leave his or her homeland, pushed out by deep questions that can’t be answered at home, pulled into the wide world in order to discover what life is.” His work gives rich details of those who feel most at home in a foreign land and provides what he considers preliminary therapeutic considerations of working with this population. In semi-structured interviews, Madison, a Canadian existential therapist and psychologist residing in the UK and an ‘existential migrant’ himself, interviewed an international group of expatriates based in London, UK, who voluntarily left their home countries. Madison’s (2010) study explored existential themes that encompassed what it is like to leave the familiar, belonging, and encountering change. He also examined paradoxical poles that most of the participants encountered: the desire to live abroad and independence, but also the longing for home. While they missed home, there was a sense that the study’s participants felt that they did not belong there and had to move abroad for self-discovery and freedom. Madison (2010) adds that for existential migrants, the unknown signified a place for growth while staying home would bring stagnation.

Madison (2006, p. 238) found that existential migrants’ concept of home could be defined as “‘home as interaction’ rather than the usual ‘home as place’”. Many of his participants confided that they never felt at home or felt understood in their country of origin. In other words, home is not a location or something tangible but where one feels he or she belongs.

However, it is important to note that for some of Madison's participants, belonging meant being understood but when expectations were tacked on by others, belonging could turn restrictive and claustrophobic (Madison, 2010, p. 48). This appeared to be the sentiment that his participants expressed about expatriate enclaves. Madison (2010, p. 64) notes that "an expat community that tries to maintain the homogenous home culture abroad exemplified this restrictive environment, recreating the original painful experiences of not fitting in but under the assumed cloak of being one of them." The negative aspects of these communities such as conformity were the antithesis of what the existential migrant was seeking by leaving home. Freedom far outweighed the beneficial attributes such as security and the familiar.

While he primarily addresses expatriates, my hope is that this study on ETPs will contribute to the relatively new field of existential migration literature. Madison (2010, p.123) makes note of this group's existence within the context of the field and adds that "'trailing partners' may be forced to confront aspects of existence that otherwise would have not arisen for them." I would add that ETPs would raise issues such as challenges to their identity and sense of purpose that would have been decidedly different than if the research were based on expatriates in general. Also generally, the impetus for ETPs to move was not a feeling of not belonging or needing to leave home for self-discovery, but once they were abroad, the process of adjustment may call on them to be more introspective and seek out what they value than if they stayed home. I intend to use his study as a framework in understanding how my participants conceive what home and belonging is to them as they experience adjusting to life in an unfamiliar place.

In semi-structured interviews of voluntary female migrants in London, Hayes (2007) also focuses on the significance of what it is like to leave home and also how her participants have created and defined home. I've included Hayes' study because it utilizes existential concepts from philosophers such as Sartre and Heidegger, who have also influenced my philosophical leanings, to elucidate her findings. She (2007, p.4) notes that staying at home to avoid change or being fixed and unyielding to change once overseas is a form of Sartre's (1956) concept of 'bad faith.' Bad faith is a form of self-deception that people create in order to perpetuate an image or perception of themselves (Van Deurzen-Smith, 1997, p. 46). This will be extremely useful for my study in understanding what causes the trailing spouse to fix their identity in a certain way and therefore may not be able to adjust to their new setting, or

in a similar vein, allow others to define them. They are never able to move on from that fixed identity even if time and place have changed.

Also introduced in Hayes' work is Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' which Heidegger (1962/2008, p. 174) defines as "that it is and has to be." As individuals, we find ourselves constantly thrown into situations that we did not choose from the day we are born and we become aware that we at times have limited control over our daily existence (Cohn, 1997; Cooper, 2003; Spinelli, 2005). However, although we are faced with certain constraints, Heidegger argues that we can choose how we react to these limits. Escaping them by entrenching oneself in the expatriate community because it appears familiar or fighting the change that comes with living abroad will come at a cost to one's adjustment, well-being, and mental health. This research may be helpful in understanding my participant's reaction to culture shock and what stances they take to meet this challenge.

2.3 Research on Expatriate Trailing Partners

While expatriate research tends to focus on expatriate workers, researchers have understood the need to further examine the specific role of ETPs in expatriate literature. Most of the initial research on this group (Black and Stephens, 1989; Black and Gregersen, 1991; Shaffer and Harrison, 1998) came out of the need to better comprehend how ETPs affect the expatriate workers' success. However, a number of significant quantitative and mixed-methodology studies have examined the experiences and challenges of ETPs. Researchers (Hughes, 1999; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Wiese, 2006; Bikos et al., 2007a, Bikos et al., 2007b; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008) agree that these individuals face unique challenges and that there has been limited research about this group. Several of the writers who have already conducted research on ETPs suggest that further studies need to be conducted on this group, because with increasing globalization, more expatriate workers and their families will be transferred abroad. As noted in the general expatriate literature in the previous section, the partners' and families' adjustment will have a great impact on the success of the move and work assignment and will greatly affect the psychological well-being of the entire family. After conducting my review of existing literature on this group, I have divided up the material on ETPs into the following:

- 1) The Process of Adaptation and Adjustment for ETPs
- 2) Adjustment Impact on Identity and Well Being
- 3) The Adjustment of Expatriate Families

These researchers have done commendable work on this group and it is my hope to bring their insights together and further add to the literature on ETPs.

2.3.1 The Process of Adaptation and Adjustment for ETPs

Several mixed qualitative and quantitative studies over the last decade have aimed at understanding the challenges of partner/spousal adjustment to living overseas. The review of studies in this section will be chronological as each piece of research builds off one another. Shaffer and Harrison (2001) conducted a mixed quantitative/qualitative study on ETPs. The authors agreed with earlier studies on expatriates who stated that the partner's adjustment greatly affects employee performance and early departure, but noted that little attention was given to these findings. In the qualitative portion of the study, the researchers interviewed 10 women who were spread over various regions (South America, Europe, Asia, North America, and the Middle East) but were evenly divided into two groups: those who had positive experiences abroad and those who did not. Shaffer and Harrison (2001, p. 238) first modified Black et al.'s (1991) three dimensions of expatriate adjustment to just two, interaction adjustment and general living adjustment, because they deemed work adjustment irrelevant. They then analysed the participants' transcripts to see if their experiences fell under positive or negative categories. Difficulties in adjustment arise for this group, Shaffer and Harrison (2001) argued, because ETPs do not have organizational support, may lack fluency in host country's language, have difficulty accessing social supports such as new friendships, interact more with the local economy, and take on domestic, personal, and professional roles that are different than those to which they were accustomed to at home. Those participants who experienced a significant change, such as going from having a career to staying home, reported that their sense of identity was negatively impacted, while those who did not change their employment status were able to maintain their sense of identity in their new home (Shaffer and Harrison, 2011, p. 241). The study called for more research into the role of organizational support and the accessibility of emotional support such as counselling for ETPs and their children. In my research, I hope to build upon these authors findings to better identify how organizational support affects ETPs' adjustment.

Mohr and Klein (2004) added to the research on expatriate trailing partners' adjustment and reconceptualised Black et al's (1991) three areas of adjustment for this group to be: interaction, cultural, and role adjustment. In their mixed methodology study exploring the adjustment of American ETPs in Germany, they found that their participants were trying to make sense of and adjust to the new roles that they often assume overseas. Typically, the trailing partners went from having careers and working full-time jobs to being stay-at-home wives/husbands. Mohr and Klein (2004) tested multiple variables such as length of stay, language proficiency, pre-departure cultural training, personal openness, degree of participation in the company's decision-making process, and perceived cultural distance, and then compared them to the participant's three levels of adjustment. Besides identifying role adjustment as one factor in overall adjustment, the authors found that language proficiency, age of the participant, and prior overseas experience were more important to adjustment than pre-departure briefings (Mohr and Klein, 2004, p. 1203). Younger female partners may be used to the idea that they are expected to have careers while older woman may not, and this could certainly negatively affect the younger participants' ability to adjust to a new role. This research is of interest to me because my participants were professionals between the ages of 35-49 who came from a generation in which it was not unusual for one to expect a career outside the home. As with Shaffer and Harrison's work, I am anticipating that a qualitative study can add more to this area of research.

Building on these previous studies, Bikos et al. conducted a two-tiered mixed methodology study, which was written up into two studies. The researchers' goal was to provide data to companies and organizations to better prepare ETPs for moving abroad by ascertaining how they adjusted to living overseas during their first year of assignment and if time in country affected their global functioning. One quantitative report measured the first-year adaptation experiences of these ETPs (Bikos et al. 2007a) and the second conducted a qualitative longitudinal study of adaptation experiences over a two-year period (Bikos et al., 2007b). Bikos et al. (2007a, 2007b) surveyed and interviewed 32 U.S. women in Ankara, Turkey, whose partners were employed by the U.S. government, corporations, and religious/humanitarian organizations. In the quantitative portion of the study, the researchers tested participants on life-roles salience, alcohol consumption, marital satisfaction, and psychological well-being, and interviewed the participants in three-month intervals over a

period of their first year of living in Turkey to see how they adapted over the first year. (Bikos et al, 2007a).

Bikos et al., 2007 notes that the culture shock paradigm was first developed by Oberg (1954) and Lysgaard (1955) and which essentially says that upon arrival in a foreign locale, the individual begins a 'honeymoon stage' where everything is new and exciting. However, after a certain period of time, the expatriate or traveler may become disillusioned, feel anger and annoyance with their new home, and may report feeling isolated and alienated. Finally, after working through the difficult stages, the individual feels settled in her new home and has adjusted (Bikos et al., 2007).

Bikos et al. (2007a, p. 21) found that their "study did not support the hypotheses that the importance of life roles, alcohol use, marital satisfaction, or mental health functioning would change as a function of time-in-country," thus arguing against traditional expatriate theory, which states that adjustment follows a linear, predictable U-curve model of culture shock. It is possible that individual expatriates can leap-frog certain stages or stay in a stage for longer than in others; this cannot be predicted by a set theory. However, a sizeable amount of literature geared towards expatriates still uses this model. This is in line with McKenna's (2010) findings that negotiating culture shock and striving for adjustment is an on-going, non-linear process.

In the qualitative study, Bikos et al. (2007b) found that ETP participants faced numerous stressors during their first year, such as searching and moving into adequate housing, contending with their children's adjustment, the changing of their professional and personal roles, leaving old social supports and setting up new ones, interacting with locals, living in a culture with a different language, and coping with everyday stressors. Both studies have illuminated for me the issues that could impact how the ETP first adjusts when they arrive to a new overseas post.

Noting that the failure of the partner to adapt to an overseas assignment may cause up to 40 per cent of failures for MNCs, Kupka et al. (2008, p. 1788) asked, "why do many MNC's seem incapable of making IAs (international assignments) desirable and worth-while for expatriates and their partners?" in a quantitative study directed to German ETP's whose partners worked for MNCs all over the globe. Two-thirds of this study's participants stated

that they had little cross-cultural preparation, were not prepared for the realities of living overseas, and had poor anticipatory adjustment (Kupka et al., 2008). Kupka et al. (2008) recommended that in order to aid the trailing partner's adjustment overseas, organizations may need to increase pre-departure training for ETPs as well as provide expatriate mentors and pre-departure visits. The cost of these trips for those organizations who are coping with cutbacks due to the current worldwide recession or NGOs or governmental organizations who have lower operational budgets will, unfortunately, most likely be prohibitive. While Kupka et al.'s study raises some helpful suggestions on how best to help ETPs prepare for cross-cultural differences, it would be useful to learn from ETPs in a qualitative study how they experienced and negotiated differences in order to build more effective, cost-constructive programmes from these findings.

2.3.2 Adjustment Impact on Identity and Well-Being

As discussed in the previous section, adjustment is a continuous process that is on-going during the ETP's lifespan abroad, but how does it impact one's identity and well-being? Hughes (1999), a sociologist and daughter of a diplomat, conducted an exhaustive study in which she interviewed 40 past and present partners of U.S. diplomats and provided readers with noteworthy historical changes in the U.S. Foreign Service which influenced trailing partners in that organization. Hughes (1999, p. 7) stated that ETP "choices reflected instead an interaction between socially structured opportunities and constraints and active attempts to make sense of and respond to these structures." Essentially these choices are conceived from a compromise on their part in order to adjust. In her study, a large percentage of participants were dual career couples and when the expatriation happens, the trailing partner finds themselves staying at home or working in unpaid volunteer or in a non-professional type of position.

Essentially, the study found that the participants had three issues with adjustment, all centred on their change in identity:

- 1) loss of usual and accustomed roles;
- 2) feelings of invisibility and insignificance in the new location; and
- 3) her working partner's lack of attention to the trailing partner because of his preoccupation with the new workplace. (Hughes, 1999, p. 91)

While Hughes primarily devoted time to interviewing female trailing spouses, she acknowledged that male trailing spouses are growing in number. She notes that there was a perception from her interviewees that men may feel less the need to work hard at supporting their wives' careers in the Foreign Service, however male trailing spouse have complained that they have been considered abnormal and had a difficult time fitting in socially in the expatriate community (Hughes, 1999, p. 136). Hughes has undoubtedly contributed to the understanding of some of the obstacles that trailing partners have faced, but more updated research is needed on this group due to the massive advances in technology that allow for trailing partners to have new opportunities and create meaningful projects despite distance. While the diverse interviews provided insightful glimpses into the lives of these individuals, an in-depth phenomenological study would provide the reader with better access into a deeper understanding of the expatriate partner.

Adding to the research on how adjustment affects identity and well-being of ETPs, Wiese (2006) surveyed expatriate partners living in Hong Kong and measured them on personality, social engagement, social support, and psychological well-being. She noted that earlier studies about international relocation have failed to focus on expatriate psychological health, looking more at issues primarily related to how to bolster MNCs overseas. Additionally, she argued that the predominant literature has been focused on expatriate workers and not their partners, which she stated is an oversight, because the employee's partner greatly affects the employee's success at their job and determines the length of assignment. Weise (2006, p.2) found that while cultural novelty and the ETP's initial volunteering for the move positively influenced the intention to remain at post, these were not factors that had an impact on the participants' psychological well-being. However, she noted that social support, even more than personality, was the key ingredient for most ETPs' psychological well-being and therefore called on more resources being directed to ensuring that ETPs have support and assistance from their partner's organization. Additionally, Weise (2006, p.3) found that involvement in the school community appears to play a significant role in the participant's social engagement with both expatriate and local communities. In order to highlight this important finding, qualitative research will provide more detailed insight into how ETPs need and utilize social support when adjusting overseas.

Authors Bryson and Hoge (2005) have also looked extensively at the problems faced by trailing spouses and their quest to build an identity and attend to their well-being while they

adapt overseas. Both the authors met in Bangkok, Thailand, where their husbands were posted and worked as therapists at a community clinic where they also ran workshops on expatriate adjustment. Written from their own personal account of how they struggled with maintaining their well-being, career issues, marital difficulties, and negotiating culture differences, Bryson and Hoge used examples of their own lives to create a manual for other ETPs who were coping with identity and adjustment challenges overseas. They saw identity as containing four main components:

1. your internal view or the way you view yourself;
2. the effect of external factors on your identity, such as the ways others view you and how your identity is affected by those things around you;
3. the roles you occupy; and
4. the significant relationships that you have with others. (Bryson and Hoge, p. 12)

Although not a phenomenological study, I found their work helpful in understanding the trailing spouse's condition from the view of a mental health professional (both authors are Master's-level clinical social workers) and as expatriate partners themselves. It is written more as a self-help guide based on their experiences as trailing spouses but it is undoubtedly useful for those considering living abroad and contending with multiple changes to their life.

2.3.3 The Adjustment of Expatriate Families

Besides exploring expatriates and ETPs as separate groups, several researchers (Caligiuri et al., 1998; Vercruysse, 2002; Richardson, 2004; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008; Richardson et al., 2008) have turned their attention to the expatriate family as a unit and examined how the family as a whole adjusts to living overseas. Because I am focusing on ETPs in this review, I will not go into detail on the various studies conducted on expatriate children or families as a whole because it is a vast subject which lends itself to future research. However, I will touch upon key studies, since the ETP is in fact part of the family system. Additionally, since all my participants were parents of school age children, I found it essential to take a brief look at these studies as the ETP typically takes on primary responsibility for getting the family adjusted while their partner is at work.

Caligiuri et al. (1998, p. 598) found that “family support, communication, and adaptability” are related to adjusting to a host country and the success of the expatriate in his/her career. In other words, if the family can adjust and find adequate social supports in their new home, it will have a positive effect on the expatriate’s work adjustment. Van der Zee, Ali, and Haaksma (2007) and Rosenbusch and Cseh (2012) noted similar findings about the systemic nature of the expatriate family. Family cohesion, flexibility and support aids in adjustment.

J. Richardson (2004, p. 481) suggested that “rather than problematizing the family as an encumbrance to be managed, they could be potential allies who stand to gain as much from expatriation as the individual to whom the position is being offered.” This is in line with what a majority of expatriate researchers have found over the last decade. In order to achieve this, K. Richardson (2010, p. 323) suggests that companies need to provide professionals and their families a laundry list of benefits or a psychological contract if they want the expatriate and his/her family to stay at a post, such as sending the families for trial visits, providing partners with professional opportunities, educational benefits for children and access to suitable schooling, access to leisure activities, and an overall sense of security. While they argue a strong case for why expatriate families succeed or fail, significant research needs to be done in this regard, especially on how these individuals can succeed when optimal conditions are not in place and on strategies for creating and maintaining solid practical and emotional support systems for the entire family.

Even if these are provided, how do we predict who will work best abroad? Parks are luxuries; what if outdoor and other leisure activities are limited? What other supports can be provided? In a brief report describing her English-speaking mental health services for the international community in Brussels, Vercruysse (2002) argues that individuals who are well adjusted before a move are usually well adjusted after. However, she notes that expatriates and their families who are having difficulties adapting benefit greatly from having counselling and support systems on the ground and in their first language, for preventative measures. However, these supports, if available at all, cost a great deal of money, and companies and organizations will demand more in-depth quantitative and qualitative research before considering funding such programs.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

In this section's review, I have highlighted some key findings from expatriate researchers. There are numerous quantitative studies on expatriates and expatriate trailing partners, but a majority of them have been from a human resources or an organizational psychology standpoint. More research is needed from the psychological and counselling academic field to better understand how these individuals adjust, cope with culture shock, and manage extraordinary changes to their identity and personal relationships. Many of the reports have been written with the focus on how to best support the expatriate manager or worker. Understanding the experience of the trailing partner aims to ensure that the expatriate is successful in their time overseas. While numerous researchers have emphasized the need to focus on ETPs as equal partners who need adequate preparation, emotional support, and career search and development assistance, the lived experience and adjustment process are difficult to explore in quantitative and mixed methodology studies. I have included reviews of the qualitative studies on expatriates, research which encourages more non-positivist, phenomenological explorations of ETPs. I have also highlighted some viewpoints that have been developed and shared by researchers on what factors influence both expatriate and ETP adjustment and their recommendations to individuals and hiring organizations to help in the adjustment process.

Furthermore, this existing literature has provided me with a foundation on which to build my research and further add to the understanding of ETPs. While it is difficult to capture experiences and nuances of the expatriate experience from quantitative literature, these studies added to my knowledge of the roles of the psychological contract, personality, and culture shock on adjustment and this will benefit me during the analysis of emerging themes.

The qualitative research on expatriate culture shock and existential migration will be beneficial during the analysis stage. Walsh's (2006) research on belonging in one's new home while trying to keep ties to one's native land will be of particular interest to my research. Additionally, McKenna (2010), Robertson et al. (2007), and Smiley's (2010) research addresses themes of cultural distance and the frustrations of living in another culture and their effect on one's adjustment and experience. Smiley's notion of 'expatriate fear' and security issues will also be of notable interest to my research because of the similar restrictions that this study's participants may face. Madison's (2006, 2010) research

illuminates the roles of community and belonging as well as the existential conditions of the expatriate.

In reviewing the existing research on ETP literature, I have observed that each has enhanced or refined findings from previous studies. I intend to add new findings to this area of research. A majority of the pre-existing literature that I reviewed was mixed methodological and did not have an in-depth exploration of their participants' experiences, but there were themes arising out of that literature that will be relevant as I write up my findings. Another chief element that arose out of past ETP literature that is essential for my present research is how ETPs negotiated role changes within the family, leaving careers and grappling with identity change whilst living abroad. These changes may have great impact on ETPs' sense of identity and their relationship with their partner and family and this calls for further research and exploration into these issues.

Given the demands created by increased globalization, the various degrees of failure rates in this population, and the lack of perspectives from this group, employing qualitative research that is "inductive and exploratory rather than deductive" (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p. 5) will allow the reader to witness participants' unique experiences. I am interested in how the participants experienced it, how they made sense of it, and what they did. This study did not set out to prove a set hypothesis but to explore the phenomenon of how the eight participants experienced being expatriate trailing partners and how they made sense of those experiences. It is my goal to provide to the audience of expatriates and ETPs and to those professionals such as psychotherapists, international organizations, and companies who work with them, further understanding by posing the following research question: what is the experience of the expatriate trailing partner? I intend to explore how these individuals adjust as well as create meaning and new identities when they move to another country because of their partner's career and their new 'home' is culturally different from their own.

In the following chapter, I will turn to a detailed discussion of the methodology that I employed for the project, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). I will first provide the reader with my basis for selecting this particular methodological choice and then move on to describing how the research was carried out and the data was analysed.

3 METHODOLOGY & METHOD

3.1 Introduction to Methodology Section

In the following section, I will briefly present my epistemological stance, explore the phenomenological approaches that I considered utilizing for this qualitative research study, and then provide the rationale for my methodological choice, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Lastly, I will examine my role as a reflexive researcher and the setting and timeframe of study and its implicit role in the research, before concluding with a detailed outline of how the research was carried out in the method section.

3.2 Epistemology

Crotty (1998) states that in designing a research project, it is helpful for the researcher to first define their epistemological stance which will then influence one's theoretical perspective and from there, the chosen methodology. Epistemology is our philosophical base, which determines what type of knowledge is needed for the research goal (Willig, 2008). While there are several epistemological positions, I will briefly discuss two broad categories, the positivist and constructionist-interpretivist paradigm, to explain the position that I chose. Positivists state "that there is a relatively straightforward relationship between the world (objects/events) and our perceptions and understanding of it" (Finlay and Evans, 2009, p. 18). This type of researcher's goal is to be a neutral observer whose aim is to produce objective knowledge and results (Finlay and Evans, 2009). For this type of stance, quantitative research which is based on facts generated from data would be an ideal methodological choice. Conversely, constructionist-interpretivists are interested in how meaning comes into existence and believe there is no absolute truth (Crotty, 1998). Finlay and Evans (2009) state that interpretivists believe that experiences are not absolute facts because they are shaped by historical, cultural, and linguistic influences. Researchers who take this stance do not see themselves as objective observers and recognize how their identity and worldview shape the research process by interpretation (Finlay and Evans, 2009). Because of my unique relationship as a researcher and an ETP as well as my philosophical leaning of not believing in an absolute truth, I recognized that my epistemological position fell under the interpretivist stance and this would best be served by carrying out a qualitative research project.

After determining my epistemological position, I next went on to decide what type of qualitative research I would undertake. Willig (2008) suggests the researcher can ask herself three epistemological questions to determine what would be the appropriate methodology:

1. What kind of knowledge does this methodology aim to produce?
 2. What kinds of assumptions does the methodology make about the world?
 3. How does the methodology conceptualize the role of the researcher?
- (Willig, 2008, p. 12-13)

The first step was to contemplate various methodologies and think about what type of knowledge they produced and then analyse if they were in line with my philosophical and epistemological leanings. As discussed earlier, because my epistemological stance was interpretivist and non-positivist, I decided that I would conduct a qualitative research study. I was also drawn to qualitative research not only because of my epistemological stance's compatibility with this type of approach but because of my curiosity about other's worldviews and desire to give voice to them. I believe it was this aspect which led me first to a career in filmmaking and then to psychotherapy. Both fields are not seeking the absolute truth and similarly understand that we all view and experience the world through different lenses.

Willig (2008, p. 12) states that qualitative research outcomes are either descriptions or explanations and these aims can also be determined by the researcher's epistemological position. These positions can range from realist to relativist, with many positions in-between these two poles (Finlay and Evans, 2009). Realists are interested in true and accurate accounts, while relativists contend "that there is no such thing as pure experience" (Willig, 2008, p. 12). In examining and comparing my epistemological stance with the various methodologies that I was interested in, I began to formulate where in the realist-relativist spectrum the knowledge outcome I was seeking for my research lay. Because of my interpretivist epistemological stance, I believe that one views experience of others through interpretation and this type knowledge is shifting instead of set and unchanging (Willig, 2008). However, I recognized that the individual who is having this experience may deem it as real and I respect their viewpoint. Willig (2008, p. 13) defines this stance as 'phenomenological' and describes it as falling in-between the realist and relativist poles of knowledge.

Next, I turned to exploring what type of assumptions the methodologies make about the world or what the methodologies' ontological position might be. Crotty (1998, p. 10) states that "ontology is the study of being." The researcher at this point of assessing a methodology may ask "What is there to know?" (Willig, 2008, p. 13). Is a methodology relativist and therefore it perceives that interpretations can be varied, or is it a realist ontological position which sees the world's order being determined by 'cause and effect' actions (Willig, 2008; Finlay and Evans, 2009)? I was drawn more to the relativist ontological position than to the realist one because I tend the view the world as chaotic and paradoxical and not determined by rules or a prescribed order. Willig (2008, p. 13) notes that relativist ontology "emphasizes the diversity of interpretations that can be applied to" the world. While there is a need for positivist or quantitative studies to produce generalizable findings, I also believe that there is a need for qualitative research which provides multiple perceptions that create richer, detailed results.

Lastly, how did I envision my role as the researcher? I saw my position as central to the process and was drawn to a methodology that allowed me to be directly engaged in the material (Willig, 2008; Finlay and Evans, 2009). This, in turn, encouraged me consider some approaches over others. Because of this realization and my epistemological and ontological leanings, the choice to travel a qualitative phenomenological methodological path seemed a sound one.

3.3 Phenomenological Approach - Theoretical Underpinnings

As discussed in the previous section, because I was curious about 'how' the study's participants experienced being ETPs abroad, it was necessary for me to undertake a qualitative approach that provided a framework to explore their experience. Finlay (2009) states that all phenomenological approaches "concur about the need for researchers to engage a 'phenomenological attitude.' In this attitude, the researcher strives to be open to the Other and to attempt to see the world freshly, in a different way" (Finlay, 2009, p. 6). She adds that phenomenology's aim is to inquire, "What is this kind of experience like?"; "What does the experience mean?"; "How does the lived world present itself to me or to my participant?" (Finlay, 2008a, p. 2) In order to understand this philosophical approach, this section will examine how it was first developed and then how it was conceptualized into two streams:

one following Husserl's philosophy and the other adhering to the philosophical works of his former student, Heidegger.

The father of phenomenology was Husserl (1889/1970), who developed this form of philosophy at the turn of the 20th century because he was interested in a 'return to the things themselves.' Husserl moved away from the positivist stance of studying phenomena as mere objects and expanded his interest into how the phenomena or world seemed to people (Langdrige, 2007). In phenomenology, we cannot separate our experiences from these subjects and objects (Willig, 2008).

Husserl maintained that in order to investigate a phenomenon, we as phenomenological researchers need to be open and withhold our presuppositions or preordained thoughts about an object in order to understand the meaning of it (Finlay, 2008b). This process was known as epoché or bracketing. Finlay states that Husserl (1913) categorized three aspects of bracketing, including:

1. The epoché of natural science; placing aside established theories and explanations.
2. The phenomenological psychological reduction; attention is on subjective appearances and meanings.
3. Transcendental phenomenological reduction; taking a "God's-eye view" towards the phenomena. (Finlay, 2008a, p. 3)

Phenomenologist researchers have diverse reactions to epoché or bracketing and different schools or approaches have developed different processes in carrying out research. Some phenomenologist approaches, such as Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which I will discuss later in this chapter, state that it is impossible to put aside one's own assumptions (Langdrige, 2007; Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). However, Finlay (2008b) maintains that bracketing is not asking researchers to be impartial and detached, but encourages them to be open and to focus on how the participants experience a particular phenomenon. Some phenomenological researchers, though, argue that rather than solely bracketing, researchers can be introspective and critical of their own way of understanding the phenomena (Willig, 2008). This process is called 'reflexivity' and I will explore it later in this chapter.

IPA's theoretical underpinnings were developed from the philosophies of a few existential phenomenological academics and philosophers, such as de Beauvoir, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, but mainly from Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenological philosophy, which is concerned with understanding the human experience (Lavery 2003). Unlike his former teacher Husserl, Heidegger (1962/2008) did not believe that the researcher could bracket off their feelings or prior experiences to understand the essence of the phenomenon they were investigating (Langdridge, 2007). In effect, our perceptions, thoughts, and meanings cannot be separated from the context in which we evolve (Langdridge, 2007; Lavery, 2003). According to Heidegger (1962/2008), human beings are 'Daseins' and they are thrown into the world and cannot be detached from culture or others because they are intertwined with other people (further explained by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). This is what Heidegger refers to as 'being-in-the-world' (Cohn, 1997). We are essentially united with the rest of the world and we create our meaning from this. Our idea of the world is in turn created from our life experiences and worldview (Lavery, 2003). In essence, we use this worldview to interpret what we see or experience. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009, p.21) state that the theory of interpretation is called 'hermeneutics' and it is a key theoretical underpinning of IPA, along with phenomenology. Influenced by both Husserl and Heidegger, Gadamer (1975/2006) expanded hermeneutic phenomenology and described the 'subjectivity of truth.' He believed that our perception of an object or event is intertwined with our interpretation of it and because we as human beings are not fixed entities, our interpretations cannot be static, either (Lavery, 2003). Willig (2008, p. 69) states "that the knowledge produced by it is, therefore, also reflexive in so far as it acknowledges its dependence on the researcher's standpoint."

3.4 Possible Alternative Research Methods

As discussed in the previous section, there are several methods of phenomenological research that have evolved from Husserl's initial positing. When contemplating possible research methods for this study, there were a few different phenomenological methods that I considered. After reviewing the various methods, I chose Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the approach that I would utilize for my research. In the following section, I will discuss the other approaches that I considered and then follow with the rationale behind choosing IPA.

One approach that I considered was Descriptive Phenomenology, which was developed by Giorgi and is also known as the Duquesne School, and which remains closely in line with Husserl's (1913/1931) initial method (Langdrige, 2007). Finlay (2008a, p. 4) states that a descriptive phenomenological research study would ask, "What is the lived experience of being a trailing expat partner?" In other words, descriptive phenomenological researchers endeavour to describe the phenomena and how they appear but do not aim to interpret the phenomena. They believe that we can get the essence of the experience from the primary source, the depiction of participant's experience, without the analysis from the researcher (Moustakas, 1994, p. 19). Choosing not to use this method was primarily led by my desire to explore my own engagement with the material. I felt that I could not bracket my experience as an expatriate partner and believed that being reflexive in the study would make it a more textured piece of research. Having only a description of the experience, without interpretation, would not allow for an in-depth comprehension of the personal world of the participant (Willig, 2008).

As I was interested in other's stories from my documentary filmmaking days, I also considered Critical Narrative Analysis (CNA) as a research method. Finlay (2008a, p. 4) notes that a CNA researcher would ask, "what story or stories does a person tell of their experience of being an expatriate trailing partner?" This approach, developed by Langdrige (2007), which focuses on participants' stories and how they employ narrative to convey their experiences, grew out the philosophical writings of Ricoeur (1991). Langdrige (2007) noted that Ricoeur initially devised a framework for reading narrative and text and built it on the fundamentals of phenomenology, interpretation and also included the hermeneutics of suspicion which is the "digging beneath the surface for what is hidden" (p. 129). Langdrige (2007) adds that while this approach can be used with multiple participants or with a group, he states that it would work best within a case study framework, exploring and analysing the narrative of one participant through six stages. The goal of CNA is to open narratives to "other possible ways of telling the story" (Langdrige, 2009, p. 217) or offering a new perspective of the narrative. While understanding the life narrative of my participants held attraction for me, my interest in how they themselves experienced being a trailing partner at this period of time did not appear to be an appropriate match for a method that focused on the deconstruction of participant narratives. While I wanted the reader to be engaged with the participants, it was not my aim to focus on or deconstruct the stories that the participants told but to focus on themes that arose out of the data from their time overseas.

Lastly, another phenomenological analytic approach that I contemplated using was Template Analysis (TA) developed by King (2012). Akin to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, TA may use 'preselected codes' that are conceived from theory or themes chosen from previous studies and formed into a template in which to analyse the data, while in IPA, themes arise from the data (Langdrige, 2007, p. 125). King (2012) states that while open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews are also used in TA, this approach also can employ other sources such as journals, questionnaires, and e-mails in order to determine the themes that would be discussed. I was intrigued by this method as well, but I wanted research method such as IPA that was inductive and original, and to have an element of surprise in what themes arose from the materials.

3.5 Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis Methodology Design

Past research on expatriate trailing partners gave readers a glimpse of various issues that these individuals were facing. However, by utilizing IPA and using semi-structured interviews, I gave participants the time and luxury of discussing their life experiences and telling their stories at length. I chose this approach primarily because of my interpretivist epistemological stance. I wanted to combine both a phenomenological and an interpretative analysis of what it is like to be an expatriate trailing spouse and what their experience was like at that particular moment. I wanted to remain open to the experience of the participants so I did not have a set hypothesis that I wanted to prove or a preselected set of codes or themes, like in Template Analysis, which would likely lead to some biases (Langdrige, 2007).

I also selected IPA because I believed that interpretation was needed in order for me to make sense of what the participants experienced while they were analysing their strategies for dealing with this lifestyle. Smith (2011, p. 9) states that "IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of personal lived experience, the meaning of experience to participants and how participants make sense of that experience." In addition, I was interested in learning about the unique experience of each of the participants, because each individual will have a different way of viewing the expatriate lifestyle. With this type of research, it is understood that the researcher's worldview and the relationship between the participant and researcher

will influence the interpretation and it was important to maintain reflexivity through the entire research project (Willig, 2008, p. 70). I will discuss this role further in the next section.

IPA is one of the methods that Langdrige (2007, p. 109) describes as focusing on findings that “may contribute to genuinely real and useful social change.” The goal is to gather information and trends from the research that can be used to help those presently living that lifestyle, and those who may do so in the future, to better identify how to cope with the challenges of not only living in another culture but possibly giving up one’s stability, culture, career, and goals to follow another person.

3.5.1 Possible Limitations of Proposed Method

I chose IPA as the research method to explore the trailing spouse’s experience, but as a researcher, it was necessary to consider possible limitations. I agree with Langdrige (2007) that all methodologies have their strengths and weaknesses and there is not one that can claim to be the perfect research tool. Giorgi (2010) is critical of this research method and questions IPA researchers’ claims that it is not prescriptive and there is the possibility for researchers to alter this method to fit their style of work. I summarize one of his chief arguments as: how can IPA researchers’ claims sound empirical knowledge if there are no rules or strict protocols? However, in a response to this critique, Smith (2010, p. 191) counters that this method is not lax and that “IPA is a dynamic and iterative process where prior analytic comments are revisited in the light of the unfolding account.” There are stages through which the researcher moves – from emergent and detailed to more psychological and abstracted (Smith, 2010). I will detail these steps in the methods section.

Willig (2008) notes that a key limitation of IPA concerns language and the researcher’s ability to articulate what the participants said. For instance, the data gathered from interviews is more about how they choose to describe an event than the experience of the event itself. She also notes that IPA depends on the participants’ ability to discuss and explore their experiences and be introspective about these events and meanings (Willig, 2008). Additionally, the quality of the research is dependent on the open-ended nature of the questions. Over-empathetic, manipulative, and leading or closed questions hamper the

richness of the participants' responses and do not allow them the scope to express what their life is actually like (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).

Lastly, Smith (2011) noted that while IPA is growing in popularity in the health and psychological fields, increasing numbers do not mean higher quality. He finds that some recent research has not been consistent with the theoretical principles of IPA, transparency which would allow the reader to see how the research was carried out is lacking, topics have little interest for an audience and are poorly evidenced (e.g. not enough interpretation, no explanation of how the themes were developed), and analysis is poorly executed.

However, he spells out that a good IPA paper should:

1. Have a clear focus
2. Have strong data
3. Be rigorous
4. Each theme should have enough space to be elaborated on
5. The analysis should be interpretative not just descriptive
6. Analysis should comprise both converging and diverging patterns and themes
7. Be carefully written and engage the reader (Smith, 2011, p. 24)

In the following sections, I will outline how I devised the research and provide a clear and transparent plan for how the research was designed and carried out.

3.6 Researcher's Reflexivity

Ashworth (1997) states that interpretation is based on our thoughts and these views are always coloured by our already-formed assumptions and beliefs. In IPA, the influence of culture, history, and the experience of the researcher cannot be taken away and this factors into the interaction between the researcher and the research (Willig, 2008; Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009). This particular interaction can be defined as the 'double hermeneutic': "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (Smith and Osborn, 2008, p. 53). If, as a researcher and an ETP, I am not aware of or reflexive about my position, there is the potential to mix up my own needs and personal thoughts/issues with this experience with those of the research participants, which could lead to biased rather than meaningful results. Shaw (2010)

states that it is crucial to be transparent and reflexive with our experiences and biases before we begin gathering data, so we will be able to employ them throughout the research process. All of the participants were aware that I was an ETP, a researcher, a psychotherapist and a doctoral student during the recruitment period. However, I did not present myself as an expert or an authority figure on this topic nor do I consider myself one; my main goal was to have co-constructed discussion with my participants and whose experiences were different from mine (Etherington, 2004).

Throughout the project, I took a three-tiered approach to maintaining reflexivity. First, I reflected on questions that Langdridge (2007, p. 59) constructed to assist researchers in undertaking reflexivity throughout the early stages of the project and before the writing-up stage. As recommended by Etherington (2004), Langdridge (2007), Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), I also kept a reflexive journal of my processes and thoughts which I used throughout my project to show transparency and be attentive to reflexive issues that arose, but also to reflect on the interviews and to record my impressions during the period of analysis. I remained curious about what captured my attention and what did not; I was conscious of this disparity, because I was aware that I may not weigh material equally if I did not feel engaged by something. Lastly, exploring reflexive issues during academic supervision was extremely beneficial for me. Finlay and Evans (2009, p. 84) note the importance of the supervisor in reflexivity. My two academic supervisors provided me with guidance throughout the process as well as another perspective. I also was able to discuss issues that arose for me during this process with my primary supervisor, who was both challenging and supportive, which also allowed me to contemplate them more in depth. Also helpful to me was informal peer supervision that I undertook with NSPC doctoral classmates and a doctoral candidate colleague from Regent's College. My research was independent and solely authored by me, but they provided me with support and helped me keep to a schedule, reflect, and focus on my research goals.

3.7 Location Selection

When I initially wrote the proposal to explore the experience of what it was like to be an ETP, I did not have a specific country or region in mind. I was thinking that individuals would, in general, have the same existential experiences and issues no matter where they

lived. In retrospect, my thinking was naïve, because being an expatriate can be a fundamentally different experience if one lives in a developed capital city such as Rome as opposed to, for example, a developing city such as Santo Domingo. As discussed in the previous chapter, cultural distance, lack of security, and absence of expected services to which one is accustomed has been empirically shown to have a negative impact on expatriate adjustment. Even the disparity in levels of crime and isolation can be notable between two developing countries. For example, most countries in Latin America have exceedingly high crime rates while developing countries in Asia have low violent crime rates.

After my initial viva presentation, it was recommended that I focus my research on what it was like to be an ETP in Central America. This change was certainly more practical because of the logistical considerations. Central America is a small region that was easy to travel around and I would not have to depend on Skype as the primary mode of interview. Also, all of the countries had cultural, historical, political, and linguistic similarities so I would not have diverse cultural influences affecting my results (Seligson and Booth, 2010).

However, after I resubmitted my viva and the initial forms to the ethic committee, I decided to take my research participant pool only from Honduras, the country in which I was living at the time of the initial research. During the period I was conducting my ethics submissions and formulating a research plan, the country experienced a coup d'état and subsequent political crisis in the summer of 2009 that affected all residents and lasted until the winter of 2010 when an accord was signed. For more about this period and Honduras's recent social and political issues, please see Appendix 9. Although my pilot interview took place quite a while after this event, I felt that the experience of living in Honduras would be quite different than that of an expatriate living in, for example, Costa Rica, where residents rate their satisfaction with governance fairly high and did not recently go through a turbulent period (Seligson and Booth, 2010). Although the political world declared Honduras 'stable' by the time of the interviews, there were still feelings of insecurity and anxiety during this time and travel in the region was difficult. I felt restricting the interviews to participants in Honduras would make the most sense in light of the recent events and provide the most homogenous sample possible. Also, logistically and cost-wise, it was better for me to narrow my participant pool to just this country.

It is important to stress to readers that this is not a study exploring what it is like to be an expatriate or ETP in Honduras, Central America, or a developing country; rather, the purpose of providing this background information is to give the reader a context of where the participants were living at the time. Settings will, undoubtedly, have an impact on one's experiences. I hope to be able to conduct similar studies with a larger pool of participants in different regions using both qualitative and quantitative methods in the future.

3.8 Ethical Matters

In conducting qualitative research, the professional integrity, knowledge, transparency of the researcher is essential for conducting sound ethical research (Finlay and Evans, 2009). For researchers adhering to the BPS and UKCP codes of conduct, it is imperative to know the key issues of their guidelines to ensure best practices. Talking about sensitive issues can cause distress for which the researcher must be prepared (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In order to effectively handle all ethical, moral, and legal issues before the initial phases of the research, it is essential for the project to be reviewed and approved by an ethics committee. It is here where the project can be fine-tuned to avoid any ethical issues, such as the handling of sensitive topics or working with participants who are fragile (Langdridge, 2007). This research study was granted ethical approval by the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling's and Middlesex Psychology Department's Ethic Committee. (Appendix 1 – Ethical Clearance and Appendix 2 – Risk Assessment).

In accordance with the BPS and UKCP codes of conduct and ethical principles for conducting research with human participants, I secured consent from all participants, informing them of the research project's scope and goals. There was no deception involved in the research. The participants were told that they or other people or organizations they referred to would not be identifiable in any reports or publications and all recognizable attributes would be concealed. The informed consent also fully disclosed what was expected of the participants, such as being recorded, and what their rights were, such as being able to withdraw from the study at any time, being interviewed in a secure location, and having their information safeguarded under the Data Protection Act. The participants were informed of all this information and that the digital audio recordings would be kept in a locked office and

would be encrypted. The recordings would be erased once they were transcribed and the study was finished, unless the participant directed them to be deleted beforehand. At the start of the interview, I read the copy of the consent form, to which they verbally agreed. They then signed the written version which I stored in a locked office (Appendix 3– Consent Form).

As with all interviews, there exists the possibility that participants may experience distress. Guidelines such as those from BPS, UKCP and the ACA state that the researcher's chief responsibility is to protect participants from both physical and psychological harm during the research study (Langdridge, 2007). The interview location was safe and I provided the participants with an interview schedule beforehand so they were aware of the topics to be discussed, with no surprises. The interview did not examine areas that were considered sensitive or traumatic. Conducting a debriefing after the interview is also a good ethical practise. With this in mind, after the main interview I discussed with the participants their understanding of the research and interviews to make sure that they were not leaving with any negative feelings or misconceptions. The debriefing provided space to process and closure for the participants so that they left the interview feeling that they made a valued contribution to the research. At the end of the debriefing portion of the session, the participants were offered a list of therapeutic or supportive services if they required additional support.

3.9 Method

3.9.1 Research Design

In keeping with interpretative phenomenological analysis design, the study was carried out by using a purposive sampling which consisted of a homogeneous group, which “share the experience of a particular condition, event or situation” (Willig, 2008, p. 61). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all eight of the participants and the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. Subsequently, all the transcripts were explored and interpreted and emergent and superordinate themes arose from that analysis using guidelines from Smith, Larkin, and Flowers (2009).

3.9.2 Recruitment

Because IPA is an idiographic research method which strives to provide a detailed focus on a perspective or on experiences of a phenomenon, small sample sizes are utilized in this methodological approach (Langdrige, 2007, p. 58; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009, p.48-51). As IPA analyses the similarities and details of each case in depth and at length, IPA experts such as Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p. 52) recommend that professional doctoral students strive to include four to ten interviews in research studies. In my research project, I selected eight individuals to allow for possible participant withdrawal. I recruited participants from organizations geared towards expatriates, word of mouth, and from referrals which is known as ‘snowballing’ (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009, p. 49). In this study, the participants were ETPs who were living in Honduras and their partner’s career was the reason they left their home country. They were not forced to do so by economic, social, or political pressures.

All of the prospective participants were given an information sheet which detailed the purpose of the study. This document also contained information about confidentiality, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, the location of the interview, and the estimated time required from them to partake in the study (Appendix 4-Sample information sheet). Once selected, the participants were asked to take part in interviews that were planned to last 60 minutes with an additional 30 minutes allotted for a debriefing period.

3.9.3 Instrument - Demographic questionnaire

Along with the information sheet, the participants were provided with a demographic questionnaire that was developed by me and reviewed by my primary supervisor to verify the homogeneity of the sample. Typical demographic information such as age, educational level, number of children, and nationality was included in the questionnaire. Other questions included were specific to the expatriate experience, such as length of time in present post and length of planned stay; years that the ETP and their partner were in a relationship; career training; what career, job, or activity they were currently doing; partner’s career/job position; level of Spanish language proficiency; and with what frequency the participant travelled back to their own country (Appendix 5 -Sample questionnaire).

3.9.4 Participant Sample

In order to have a fairly homogeneous sample recommended for IPA research, participants met the following criteria:

- The participants were partners of non-governmental organization (NGO), international development and foreign office employees. All of these career paths have comparable salaries, perks, and organizational supports such as covered moving and travel expenses and subsidized or provided housing. I excluded participants whose partners were missionaries or businessmen/businesswomen because their salaries and/or living conditions and organizational support would vary widely. In selecting participants, I chose individuals who lived away from home or their native country for over one year and had been in their relationship with their partner for over two years, so the participants would be settled into both their home abroad as well as in their relationships. I did not choose newlyweds or recent arrivals because the honeymoon period in both cases would colour responses. I felt that there would not be adequate time for reflection, and the novelty of the new partnership and excitement of a new location would bring issues different from those for someone who has been living abroad for some time.
- Participants in this study could not be living in a host country that has the same national language as their own. Therefore, participants could not be native Spanish speakers. I initially sought university-educated participants from both North America and Europe, but my eight final participants hailed from North America only (the United States and Canada). Although the European and North American populations were small in Honduras and have formed a tight-knit expatriate community, I felt that cultural differences and contexts were too great between the Europeans and North Americans to have a homogenous sample. Ones and Viswesvaran (1997, cited by Swagler and Jome, 2005, p. 528), state that “North Americans tend to have greater cross-cultural failure rates than do their European counterparts, which is likely the result of their lack of international contact prior to their sojourn.” Notably, because European countries are small and easy to travel between, prospective European participants tended to speak more languages and have more experience travelling and living abroad than the North Americans whose large countries are extremely diverse and difficult to travel around. Furthermore, because of the proximity and shared national interests with Central America, there was a much larger pool of participants from North America to choose from than their European counterparts. Also, after the coup d'état in the summer of 2009,

it appeared that the expatriate population dropped off considerably due the instability of the host government. However, I found that although the overall expatriate population was smaller, there was still an ample participant pool from North America from which to select.

- The majority of the participants in this study were either unemployed or working in a job that was different from the career they were pursuing before the move at the time of recruitment. Historically, trailing spouses/partners have had difficulty obtaining employment in their chosen career because of legal, language, economic, and cultural restraints.
- Another common attribute that was required as a selection criterion was that the participants would have dependent school age children under the age of 18 with them in Honduras. Raising a family and being responsible for others while away from home and living in another culture will undoubtedly raise other issues and different experiences than being a couple with no children. Because of this particular criterion, the participants were to be between 30-50 years of age. Because most organizations and embassies will not give clearance for an employee or family members to travel abroad if they have serious health issues (mental and physical), it was safe to assume that the participants were in overall good health.
- While historically the greater percentage of ETPs are women, I chose to include male participants in my study to match the expatriate societal make-up. I felt if I chose only female or male participants, gender issues would factor more into the discussion than my initial focus of the ETPs although, I hope to explore these issues further in future research.

3.9.5 Participant Demographics

The participants recruited for this study were eight people, two men and six women, who all held a first degree or higher and were between the ages of 35-49. Pseudonyms were used in the study to safeguard confidentiality and the name of the partner's organization was not mentioned, while other recognizable traits were obscured. All of the participants were citizens of either Canada or the United States. For the purpose of this study, all participants

will be referred to as ‘North American.’ Seven participants self-identified as European-American/Canadian and one self-identified as Mixed-race American/Canadian. All of the participants had school age children and all of the participants had been with their partners for over 10 years. Seven of the eight participants stated that living abroad was a shared decision with their partners. All of the participants except one were native English speakers. None were native Spanish speakers but they all spoke Spanish with varying degrees of proficiency (beginning level to fluency).

3.9.6 Data Collection

I first conducted a pilot study after being approved by the ethics committee. The interview went well. I discussed the process with my primary supervisor and we agreed that I could proceed with the subsequent research. The data was collected in two stages. In the first stage, potential participants were requested to fill out a brief questionnaire that asked them to provide general demographic information. If the potential participants met the criteria for the research project and consented to be interviewed and taped, the second stage proceeded. This stage consisted of a semi-structured interview based around three open-ended questions with help from interview prompts from the researcher which asked the participants about how they understand their experience (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). I created an interview schedule that covered these questions and allowed the participants to answer freely, reflect on their thoughts and comments, and expand on ideas that they would like to discuss further (Appendix 6-Interview schedule). This type of questioning allows the participants to lead the discussion, express their perspective and both the researcher and the participants to mutually explore the phenomenon of the participant’s experience (Eatough, 2009, p.189). In order to prepare for the analysis, I immediately recorded my thoughts and insights after each interview in my reflexive journal.

The pilot interview was used in my Research Project I essay which was accepted by both my primary and secondary supervisors.

3.9.7 Data Analysis

After completing the interviews, each digital recording was stored onto an encrypted hard drive using the TrueCrypt program. I then transcribed the recordings verbatim into a line-numbered transcript (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). Not only was it important for me to record what each participant said, I also noted laughing, pauses, verbal tics and emphasis on certain words. I agree with Langdrige (2007) and Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), who both state that the researcher should as much as possible utilize the actual speech of the participant. It was more important to me to have verbatim that captured the essence of the meaning of what the participant was trying to say rather than a grammatically correct passage.

After the transcription of the interviews, I proceeded with the analysis of the data. IPA requires an iterative process in which the researcher goes back and forth through the material and engages in various ways of thinking about the data emerging through the interviews (Smith, Flowers, Larkin, 2009, p. 28). Shinebourne (2011, p. 21) says that “the process of interpretation is dynamic and iterative, engaging the concept of the hermeneutic circle in an interplay between parts and whole and between the interpreter and the object of interpretation.”

Following the multi-step process described in Smith, Larkin, and Flowers (2009, p. 82-91), I did a close reading of the text three times during the initial level of analysis and made exploratory notes/comments in the right hand margins with three focuses (see Appendix 7). I commenced with descriptive comments which described the content of what was being said at face value. In the second reading, I made a linguistic examination of the text and made notes on the language used by the participants, hence why it was important to stay true to the text and include each pause and hesitation in speech. In this reading, I included notes on how I felt something was said, including the use of metaphors, tone of voice changes, laughter, and contradictions. On the third round of reading, I engaged with the text on a more interpretative level and included conceptual comments in the margins (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009). In this stage, notes on my reflection, questions that were raised, and understandings of the participants’ world and experience were included.

Using the verbatim, comments, and notes that I took during the interviews and initial stage of analysis, I set out to create a list of emergent themes from each of the participants' transcripts. The emergent themes were notated on the left hand margin of each of the verbatims. There were approximately 494 emergent themes in total. My next step was to identify the connections across emergent themes. I began by creating lists first by the chronological order in which they appeared in the transcript. I analysed each case separately as an attempt to ensure that I captured the uniqueness of each participant's account and to guarantee that themes could arise from each individual transcript (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009).

In accordance with Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p. 96-97), I examined the themes through the abstraction process, during which I grouped similar thoughts together according to conceptual similarities and then through a polarization process which explores and groups themes together that had polar differences with one another. I kept note of the frequency with which some themes arose. Some of the themes that did not appear frequently or were not deemed important to the participant's narrative were eventually dropped and some others were included into stronger, but similar, themes. The next step was looking at patterns across the eight cases. This was a long process of grouping, cataloguing, and relabeling themes. Because eight participants was a considerable size for the ideographic nature of IPA, I measured the recurrence of themes across each of the participants' cases to start to formulate what my superordinate themes would be. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p. 107) consider themes recurrent when they are located in one-third to a half of the interviews. They also add that examining the themes by recurrence can perhaps demonstrate the quality of the findings.

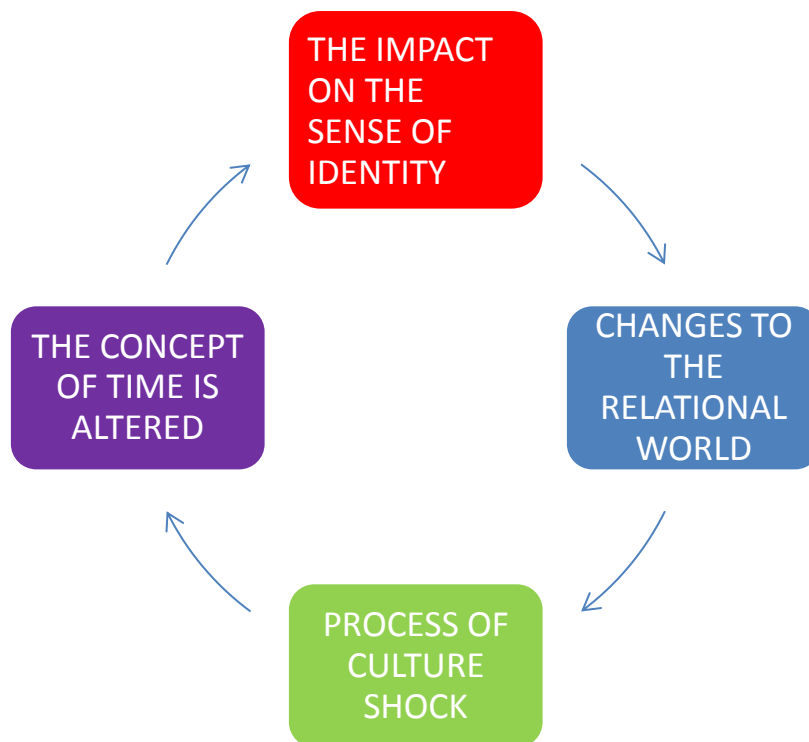
In merging and grouping the themes together, I completed the analysis process with four superordinate themes, each having various subthemes grouped under them. Each of the four themes is distinct but they are also interrelated. In the following section, I discuss the results from this process, and present to the reader each of the superordinate themes and how I as the researcher made sense of the participants' attempts to themselves make sense of their experience as an ETP (Willig, 2008).

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the previous chapter, four superordinate themes were identified in the data analysis:

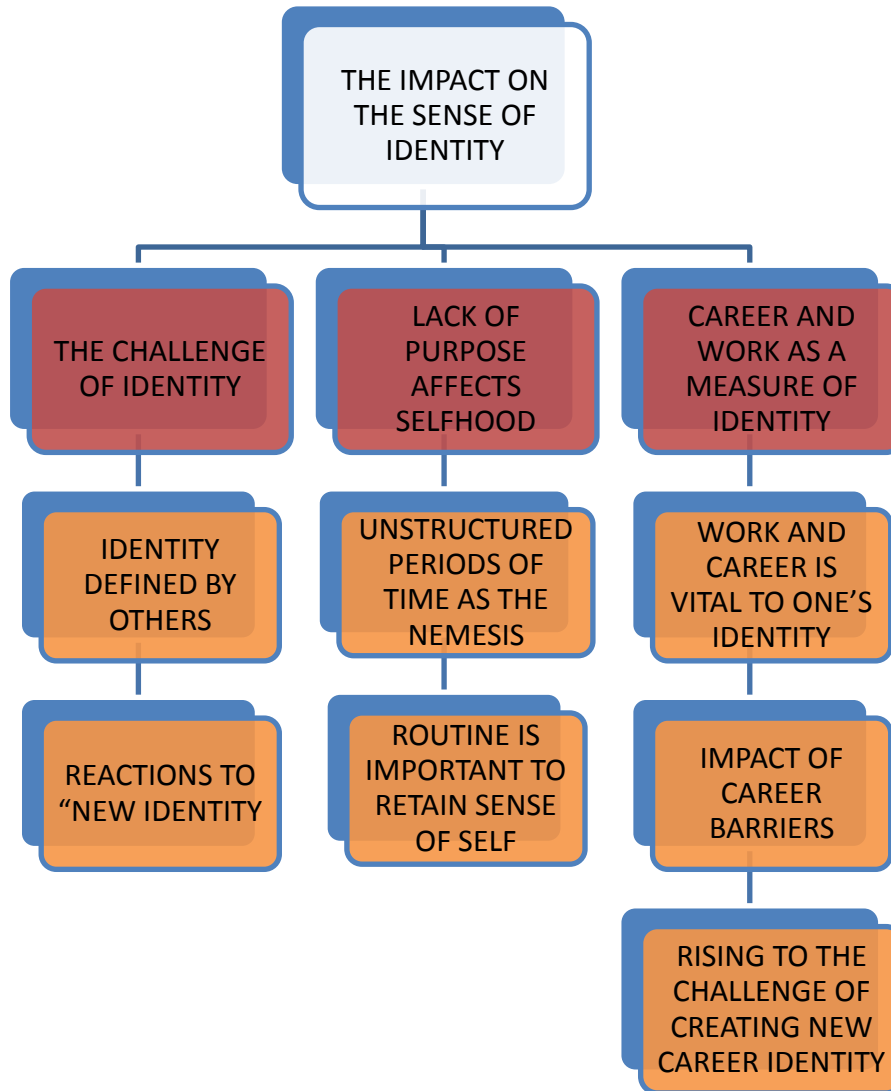
1. The Impact on the Sense of Identity
2. Changes to the Relational World
3. The Process of Culture Shock
4. The Concept of Time is Altered



I will begin this chapter with an in-depth exploration of the first superordinate theme, the study participants' descriptions of being an ETP and how this status affected their identity and sense of meaning. The second superordinate theme will explore the participants' description of how their experiences abroad have affected their relational and social world with regard to the new community they encountered and with their family. Next, I will present the third superordinate theme of how the participants reacted to the process of culture shock. Lastly, I will turn to the fourth superordinate theme, which will examine how the concept of time factored into the participants' lifestyle. These superordinate themes are interconnected, but are presented in distinct chapters to highlight the various experiences and concepts that the participants shared about their adjustment and life overseas.

4.2 Superordinate Theme I: The Impact on the Sense of Identity

Figure 1: Superordinate Theme I: The Impact on the Sense of Identity



The ETP experience was seen by all participants as distinct and unique from those of other expatriates. It was the focal point of their descriptions of their time abroad and greatly influenced every aspect of their lives. I will explore this phenomenon below, starting with how the participants viewed the definition of the trailing partner and how it challenged their sense of identity. I will then turn to the theme of contending with a lack of purpose and how this affects the participants' concept of their selfhood. Finally, I will explore the theme of both the negative and positive aspects of the participants' experiences of maintaining a career overseas and how it had an impact on their identity.

4.2.1 Theme I-1: The Challenge of Identity

As mentioned in the prior section, with the exception of Suzanne, seven of the eight participants stated that living abroad was a shared decision with their partners. All of the participants admitted that they did not know what to expect from expatriate life and subsequently did not know what an ETP was until they began their first post. While most of the participants willingly and enthusiastically chose to move abroad for their partner's careers, a few of them encountered the 'trailing partner' label with disbelief and disappointment when first moving overseas. One participant, Camille, laughs when recounting "*the huge learning curve*" (Camille: 8) of adjusting to the ETP label. As evidenced by her hesitant speech, she still appears bewildered by this change to her identity and initial perceptions of living overseas years later:

I had no idea of what living, working with the [partner's organization] and being an expat was 'cuz... until I came across the term trailing spouse which is, you know, we consider ourselves expats so we..., I had no idea of what it was and all the... life changes that you go through... Camille: 8

Some of the participants noted that when they first went overseas, they were surprised that they were saddled with a new label, 'trailing partner,' by others, whether by their partner's organization or other expatriates in their new community. It was not one they picked for themselves. There was almost a sense that others treated them as less than whole, an appendage to their partner. In the following excerpt, Fiona, sounding amused, describes her first encounter with this identity at her first post and an outdated moniker which was also American slang for 'testicles.' "*We got married there and I, yeah, it was interesting...It was*

my first experience as a spouse. It was kind of a shock. Being a spouse...A newly acquired dependent spouse ... And that's NADS! [She emphasizes the word NADS. Both laugh at the implied double meaning] I had an acronym" (Fiona: 11). Like Camille, Fiona was surprised and equally frustrated by the concept of the trailing partner and their place in the expatriate community while she was adjusting to life in this role: "You really are kind of in the system like a sort of second class citizen [laughing]. So, yeah, it was different from what I expected" (Fiona: 50).

Although the term for partners has changed since those early days, there is still the sense that partners are not highly respected and making their acquaintance is not the highest priority. Some of the participants had strong negative reactions to how they were perceived by others. They resented the label and seemed to feel their identity discounted as a result. Recounting others' perceived reactions to him, Phillip was bothered that new people he encountered placed him in a category without fully trying to know him as an individual: "Well people just look at me and don't know where I'm coming from or that... only the people who interviewed me or talked to me know, like you, that I actually have credentials.... Oh it's like 'He's just riding along, or she's riding along because their spouses are here'" (Phillip: 148).

However, there were partners such as Gail, Joan, and Cathy who were neutral or didn't raise the issue of their identity and even some participants that did not find the label or identity of trailing partner as problematic. "...There was a guy doing interviews on trailing spouses. And I felt kind of ridiculous, there he was trying to do a story on the kind of hardships of trailing spouses and I had nothing but positive things to say about him. Because I don't think my situation is as difficult as it is for others" (James: 168). Another participant accepted the role and felt it worked for her family's dynamic. "I don't want to be the leader. I'm fine with being the follower" (Suzanne: 113).

The experience of being a trailing partner brought diverse reactions from the two male participants. They both presented two different perspectives which highlight the fact that the researcher and audience cannot presume or generalize the experiences of the participants. Phillip experienced this identity and people's reactions to it as negative and there was a sense that he felt not respected by other expats because of his status and being a man. He and his

partner were a dual-career couple and the lack of respect he received from others was upsetting. *“Oh they judge! They totally judge. They judge me on my attitude, they judge me on that my wife is the breadwinner which is fine because she is now but it hasn’t been when I supported her in college”* (Phillip: 154). This view is in contrast with James’ view, as he did not feel that he was marginalized because he is both male and a trailing partner. *“I think maybe that there are more men out there like me. I mean, men who are quite happy to drift along and let their spouse sort of lead the direction”* (James: 119).

4.2.2 Theme I-2: Lack of Purpose Affects Concept of Selfhood

Many of the participants described struggling with periods of aimlessness at points during their entire tours. Most of the participants struggled to make sense of their new home and felt lost without routines that they established in their previous settings. This disorientation affected their sense of self and adjustment, particularly for participants who were in dual careers or who left behind rich, busy lives.

Some of the participants felt that they were wasting time and suffered from a lack of purpose in their lives whilst abroad. The groundlessness and uncertainty seemed to greatly affect their perception of themselves. When asked to describe how she felt that she was not living purposefully, Cathy at first was sheepish to discuss her day:

I’m embarrassed to say that...Not getting up in the morning, early. Letting the maids pack the lunch and just saying goodbye to the kids. My husband goes to work and takes Chris and I lay back down until 10 o’clock. [] I spend an hour on the internet and then I go exercise and come back, hang out and then go get Chris. At noon... And then I take a nap from 2 to 3 and then wait for the kids to come home. Just to me, it’s a lot of waste of time. Cathy: 94

Unstructured periods of time were difficult to manage and they had a sense that they were in a perpetual state of limbo. Not having structure or a routine was seen as both problematic and dispiriting. *“What I feel, each day, not each day, because sometimes each week has a different pattern and that to me is very stressful”* (Camille: 126). James acknowledged that this was a problem for him, too, and called it a “holding pattern.” *“So I think the problem is...is mine. I sort of settle into a position where I’m just kind of marking time and I have a hard time getting myself out of that pattern...mental state...”* (James: 43). It seemed as if this empty time was actually a perpetual holding pattern where one never takes off or lands.

After being a trailing spouse for several years, Camille was able to recognize this static state in herself and in others and the bewilderment they felt at their current predicament, going from a busy, full life to the state of limbo. She empathetically describes her assessment of the ETP 'lost look' in the following excerpt:

“Well, it’s funny. We have some friends []with little kids and I see all of them, the people that came just figuring out something for them to do and others that just that I recognize that ... just have the lost eyes look? [I ask her to describe this look and she begins to act out in a mock hysterical voice] ‘What am I supposed to do now? I have my kids and I want to take care of my kids but I really don’t like this life, stay at home mom and ah, and no salary...’ ‘Do I really have to stay at home to provide a better education for... for my kids, you know.’ [voice returns to normal] That’s the ‘lost look’ that I see. Like, ‘what the hell just happened?’ Camille: 137-139

Much of what the participants described sounded like situations that are often expressed by stay-at-home parents in North America and Europe such as the lack of routine, giving up meaningful work, and the desire for a set schedule. However, unlike being a stay-at-home parent in their home country, sometimes the choice to stay home was made for the ETPs, not by them. The same opportunities to work outside the house were not there for the participants overseas due to lack of demand in their chosen field or a myriad of other reasons, such as language deficiencies and the inability to obtain work visas. Generally, finding work or activities that provide one with a sense of routine is much harder than it would be for someone who stayed in their home country. Despite the difficulties, finding a routine was extremely important to the participants, especially when they lived in a place in which they don't feel completely grounded. Once Cathy took a job, she felt sense of purpose and motivation return: *“And I liked that I was forced to keep moving and... You know, I was tired [emphasis on ‘tired’], I was busy and I had to juggle a lot of things with the kids... but I think that it was a good thing”* (Cathy: 100). Not only was routine important for the participants but it was also beneficial to the participant's family by giving them a sense of structure and feeling of normalcy away from home. There was a sense that structure was comforting and supportive.

It’s all coming together. You know we found a really cool church to go to. I know that sounds goofy but it’s like we have our routine. And I think that’s one of the most important things for us. Anyway, my kids are very routine-oriented. We take naps on the weekends, read every night together so to a certain degree you wouldn’t even know we are living outside [North America]. Joan: 77

4.2.3 Theme I-3: Career as a Measure of Identity

In the previous section, the desire to have purpose during one's time abroad was of major concern to all participants. Maintaining one's career was a theme that appeared to affect all the trailing partners. Besides positively affecting one's need for a routine, it was seen as an important part of one's identity. However, it was also seen as a problematic area, since keeping or having a career was not always easy for the participants. I will commence this section with a general discussion of the importance of career and work to the participants and the impact it had on their experience abroad so far. Then I will examine the negative experiences of pursuing a career abroad and also how some of the participants overcame those challenges and created careers and activities that gave them meaning and a sense of vitality.

For Cathy, having work grounded her and gave her a sense of purpose. *"I really liked that because I felt like that was a community for me to go to, people that I could relate to, that I had fun with and I enjoyed that time"* (Cathy: 84). Although he could not work in his former career or at his previous status, Phillip found work shortly after arriving to Honduras. Like Cathy, the act of working was central to Phillip's identity and sense of self. *"That's a big thing! Because some people have been here a year and they haven't got a job. ...I like to work! I like to work, I like to do stuff. [] The first five weeks, I was not miserable and hating the place but it was hard"* (Phillip: 121). Besides meaning and purpose, having a career abroad meant personal freedom and a sense of autonomy. Camille describes this feeling when she obtained employment in a previous post. Like Phillip, there was a sense that getting a job overseas as an ETP was a triumph for Camille and she described her first job abroad with pride: *"...It was very wonderful to go out and work. I loved it and they paid very well so and all of a sudden I felt I was, you know, independent again and working"* (Camille: 48). The participants felt lucky to find work or meaningful activities but acknowledged that it was very problematic for many to have a career or personal fulfilment when trailing overseas. *"I think my situation is different than a lot of other trailing spouses because I'm able to find fulfilment here because of my hobbies, because of my current career....I think it would be very frustrating for somebody who gave a career up to go to a post like this"* (James: 158).

Most of the participants cited having problems with employment at some point of their time abroad, whether it was in the present or in past posts and this had profound effects on their emotional well-being and adjustment. Although all the participants had some form of positive career experience during their ETP experience, the general mood towards working overseas for this group was pessimistic and sceptical. *“This whole idea of spouse employment is uh a huge problem”* (Fiona: 52). One of the reasons cited was that their former career was not portable, either because they could not get a work permit or the demand for that type of vocation was low. Even for people who seemingly had careers which could transfer internationally, such as Fiona, finding suitable and rewarding employment was difficult at times. *“I figured it would be easy to find work, it would be great, you know. I wouldn’t have any problem with my career. [laughing] But it isn’t that easy, usually...”* (Fiona: 30). Gail also had a thriving career but she could not work in her specific position overseas. One option for staying employed was switching into another career track in her field but it would require a significant salary decrease. She lowered her voice and added regretfully that *“it could have been another job but not a career”* (Gail: 44).

The dread of continuous career reinvention was almost sisyphian in nature and often killed the motivation of several of the participants. Starting over again and again was experienced by Camille as onerous. *“Well maybe we, the next country that we go to, we’re not going to have to start all over again. I hate that feeling of, which is sort of the feeling of moving to another place isn’t it, you know. It’s getting to a place and starting from scratch”* (Camille: 111). In the excerpt below, Camille discusses the difficulty of staying in her former profession:

The market [for that profession] is more complicated because you need access. [] There’s not a lot available to me this whole uh starting again, telling people what I do, going around with my CV, you know, what I feel like; I don’t want to be doing that anymore. I want to have a job that people know what I do and I just get, you know, do the work. Not working on getting the job all the time.
Camille: 117

Like some of the other participants, Joan had mixed feelings about leaving her very successful, but non-portable career behind. However, she felt that going overseas was worth making the choice.

I wouldn’t have traded it [moving overseas] for anything. I enjoyed my job back in [North America] ...It was difficult to leave my job and it was a good job and for me it was the pinnacle, ...so it was hard to walk away from that. It

felt...I... You know, partly sad. But I knew it was right. And if I don't get another position like that, OK. Joan: 66-68

A few of the participants at certain points of their time overseas were employed by their partner's organization, usually at a low-level, low-paying position. The participants appeared to receive little or no assistance in career placement at their overseas posts or career development for a professional career. The lack of professional career options for trailing partners was viewed as problematic and a few of the participants noted difficulties with pursuing their career during their time overseas. One of the more vocal participants on this issue was Fiona. Having had extensive experience overseas, she had an institutional memory of partner employment at her husband's organization and appeared to not be impressed with some of the small measures or initiatives that her partner's organization gave to the ETP's career development, locating work on the local economy, or providing employment in the organization. *"It seemed so obvious. You have plenty of highly qualified spouses who could do jobs at the [international organization]; you know they could be getting preferences for professional jobs if such things open up and wherever"* (Fiona: 56).

Fiona conceded that this was situational: some posts such as Honduras and international organizations were more open to hiring spouses in professional positions. She had mixed success in finding professional-level work in her field during some of her time abroad. However, for those places or organizations that were not open to hiring trailing partners or helping them find meaningful work on the outside economy, it takes its toll on morale. Also, for many families, having only one salary can be a financial burden. Although she was talking about a past post, the extreme frustration in Fiona's voice was apparent as she described the difficulties at previous posts which soured morale and community building:

It's hard to find work; it's hard to find decent work. And if you can't afford things, you get kind of desperate. And that's where it really becomes an issue and in [Former post] people were really...spouse employment was a huge issue. And then you had a language barrier there too because a lot of jobs even in [partner's organization] had a language requirement and people don't speak [language of country], you know. [laughing] So it was a big contentious issue. Fiona: 96

Having a portable, flexible career was considered to be a crucial factor in creating meaning and having some independence for a majority of the participants. Although all of the participants discussed the importance of having work or a career while overseas, having a job just for the sake of a job did not create the same sense of satisfaction. *"You know it, I was*

offered a part time job with [name of organization] and I was 'No, I'd kind of like my freedom.' It wasn't enough to give up my freedom" (Gail: 114).

Taking responsibility for one's fulfilment and well-being was noted by most participants. Thanks to the internet and other technological advances, portable careers have become more feasible especially over the last decade. Because he knew well in advance that his partner was considering a career overseas, James prepared for a portable career long before they left home by attending school and receiving training in his current profession. He was still able to work remotely with clients from home wherever he lives. *"... So I guess I still have a sense of fulfilment and able to earn an income...Not significant, certainly not significant as Julie"* (James: 120). Recently returning to her portable career after taking some time off gave Cathy a sense of purpose and she was able to fight the inertia that she complained about. The energetic tone in her voice when describing a temporary job was in sharp contrast to the embarrassed, resigned mood she exhibited when discussing her unstructured day earlier in the interview. *"I was very nervous about doing it but it was a good thing. It kind of brought back that I can (pause) you know, that I can do something, you know that I can do work and luckily my job that I can work easier than most people"* (Cathy: 86-88).

Camille struggled with her career that was not portable during several overseas assignments. She recently decided that she did not have to be just defined by that former career. She could pursue other interests, learn new skills, and perhaps have a multiple careers. She made sense of her recent revelation and there was a sense that realization freed her to open herself up to more possibilities that would meet her life's expectations:

I finally took a step. []If that would lead me to sort of like a very part-time job that I could take with me somewhere than that would be that would ... make me very happy. I would have more of a sense of purpose of doing all of this... You know, I have my expectations of life. So I feel that I am not a cliché, what I ... should just follow him, being a stay at home mom, you know, I don't feel complete that way. Camille: 115

Flexibility and freedom were also cited as benefits to having a portable career and this appeared to have a positive impact on the participants' attitude. Having a meaningful project that also provided a salary was desirable but some of the participants also cherished their freedom. There was a sense that having a purpose did not have to be a fixed activity or career. Gail and James viewed the positive aspects of being an ETP because one could create a fluid career that meets the demands of their lives right there and then. There was a strong

sense of independence and inventiveness from these two. *“I don’t want to have my own business and be married to it for the rest of my life. But you know, you can just invent something that is... that works for you for now”* (Gail: 236). Flexibility was also valuable to James. *“My father was a career jumper...I called him a professional hobbyist. He did many things very well....And to me that was kind of an example...I don’t have anything that I need to do for the rest of my life. I’m happy to cruise along and do different things”* (James: 118).

Having this flexibility or ability to have multiple careers over a lifespan (or even at the same) permitted the participants to have the luxury of trying new experiences or exploring fields they otherwise wouldn’t have. Gail had small school-aged children and she wanted to have a flexible schedule to meet their needs, but also wanted to work.

...I was talking to my friend in NY about this, you know, her mom had some saying “the only bored people are the ones that are boring.” I think that I happen to have certain interests that lend themselves to reinventing wherever you are. [] There are outlets; you just have to be open to them. Gail: 208

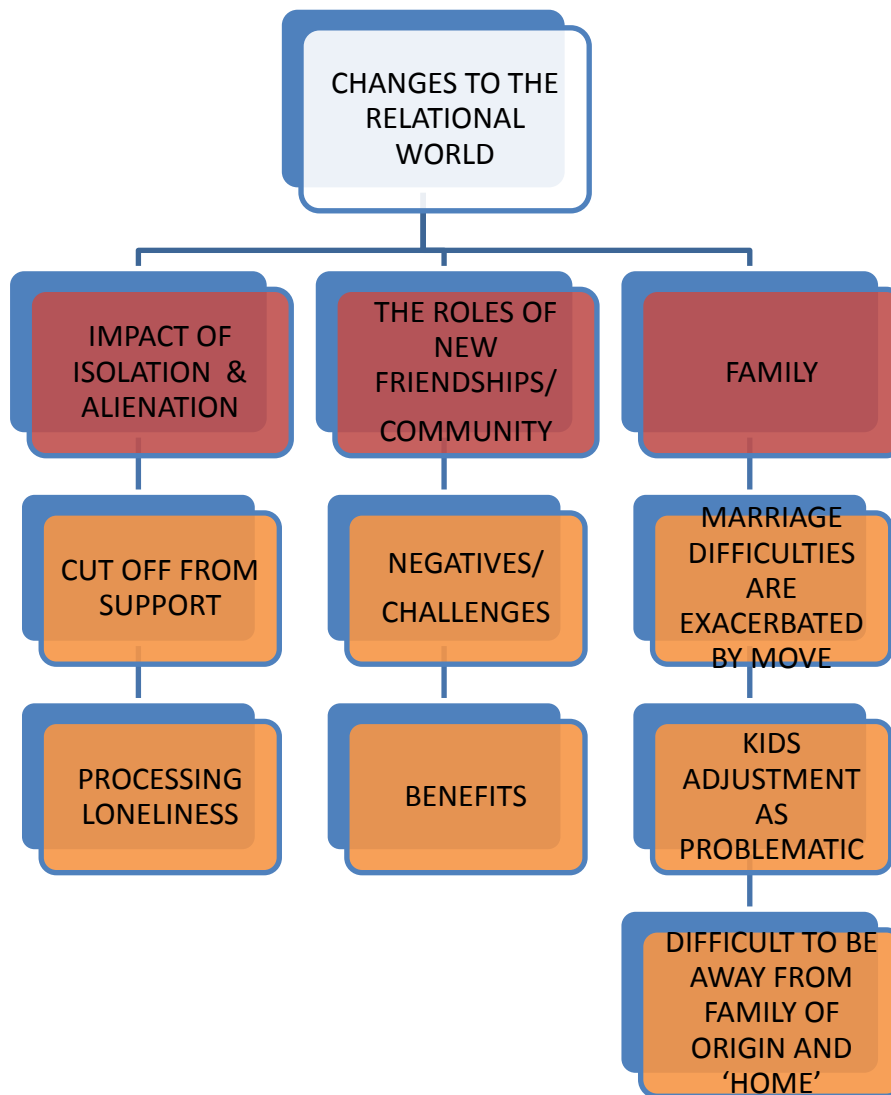
Besides finding flexible, portable jobs, participants like Gail described creative ways of adapting and thriving when faced with employment difficulties. These challenges at times appeared to give rise to pleasant surprises. After having some disappointing false starts that did not lead to a position in her field, Fiona happily describes a period earlier in her time overseas when she volunteered for projects that had a profound impact on her and a sense of joy. *“Well I said... ‘If I’m not going to work, I’m going to do whatever I want to do!’ [] It was great and that led to my next job when I went back to the States which was with the [international organization]”* (Fiona: 66-68).

In her interview, Gail expanded on this idea and asked why we settle for a fixed and static identity. Like Fiona above, she seized upon this change in her career identity to use her time as an ETP to explore her interests and take responsibility for her life’s purpose. I will call it a “why not?!” attitude. The following excerpt is her thoughtful offer to other ETPs:

...why do we [emphasis on ‘we’] limit ourselves to one thing. All of us have many interests and it’s easy just to think of yourself as what you studied or what your career was but maybe it’s not going to work for you for wherever you go []... You have this opportunity to rethink what you want your career to be if you are this trailing spouse and you are not married to your career. You can afford to have the opportunity...I have this gift, this flexibility; I can just choose to do whatever I want to do. Gail: 210

4.3 Superordinate Theme: Changes to the Relational World

Figure 2: Superordinate Theme II: Changes to the Relational World



In this section, I will examine the participants' experience of how their relational or social worlds were affected by the adjustment of living abroad. While their partners and other expatriates struggle with finding a new community or being separated from love ones too, they have an office or a job that may fill their sense of purpose and allow them to easily meet new acquaintances and form instantaneous relationships (Hess and Grady-Huskey, 1997). The expatriate working partner's periods of adjustment and adapting to change appeared easier than their partners who were accompanying them. The trailing partner has the challenge of finding their way in the new community and negotiating relationships with others for their family. The period of adjustment happened over time from first arriving to post and knowing no one to feeling adjusted and a sense of acceptance. I will begin the section by exploring the isolated state that most participants found themselves when they first arrived at a new post abroad and then will proceed to their descriptions of how they encountered their social world on a larger scale: their new community. Then I will turn to how their social world was affected on a more personal level: their family.

4.3.1 Theme II-1: Impact of Isolation and Alienation

A majority of the participants struggled with profound feelings of isolation and loneliness, especially when they first arrived to their new home. Camille remembered the strong feelings of alienation she felt soon after she arrived to her first post. Although she was describing events that happened a few years before, the despair she first encountered was still palpable. *"...I sort of remember you know, I felt some strong emotions... We were like 'Oh my God, what are we doing.'" I remember us going through um the airport with Fred and we were like "what are we doing?" "Are we fit for this or not?"* (Camille: 51).

Like Camille, Gail and Phillip described the early days at post as extremely problematic and a period of little adjustment. While their partners went off to work, they described being thrown into a completely different culture where they knew no one and were left to set up home and settle their family into the new place. For a social person like Phillip, this initial isolation was experienced as unbearable. *"I like helping people, doing stuff for people so it was rough. Because my wife is...she is working, she's socially interacting with people. I'm interacting with my kids. I love my kids, but 24/7 is brutal!"* (Phillip: 118).

Although the participants were at their present post for some time, the emotions of those early days were nostalgic but still substantial. *I knew that I was frustrated and lonely and unhappy.* (Camille: 56). For participants like Camille and Gail, who were used to an active, independent lifestyle, those initial months of knowing no one and not having anywhere to go still conjured up strong negative feelings of a period that had to be endured:

I was living in an apartment at the time but in a small space, there was nowhere you can go here. I felt like I was trapped in an ivy tower at the time, I was a princess in the tower. I didn't leave the house, you know, for security reasons here. And I didn't have a car. [] I decided to adopt the attitude, what's that movie? About a Boy? With Hugh Grant? Where you divide the day up into half-hours to get through the day because you have nothing to do... [] I had to do that to keep my sanity. Gail: 172

The isolation that the participants experienced was magnified by the fact that they were bereft of their belongings and their own personal transportation. I will discuss further how participants experienced the lack of physical freedom later in another superordinate theme, but this affected this period of deep alienation and isolation as well. Typically, governmental, NGO, and international organizations will ship the employee's and their families' possessions, but depending on where you are traveling to this can take a while, from one to four months. For those who have been at previous posts like Gail, this initial period is a known factor that has to be endured, but for first time ETPs, the experience can be a substantial shock. *"Well the first day I got here, the first week was great. But the next five weeks weren't that great. No car, its summer time with the kids... Nothing to do, no toys cuz we didn't have our stuff. So it became a little stressful..."* (Phillip: 108).

The isolation some of the participants experienced was expressed as a period of intense loneliness and alienation. Like Gail's 'princess in the tower' experience of these first days, Phillip also experienced this period as constricted or being 'bottled up.' In the excerpt below, Phillip emotionally discusses his need to belong and how the isolation affected him psychologically:

I felt so um, I felt so isolated, I felt for the first time in my life like I don't have everything to do. I'm not seeing people. I'm not doing anything. ... Yeah so I felt yeah bottled up... I felt bottled up! And I never felt that way in my whole life. Whether it was working with kids and seeing the worst horrible cases, I was still helping and dealing with people and talking with people. Phillip: 123

While those who have been on multiple postings appeared to understand the initial isolation that comes with each move, it seemed that loneliness or lack of connectedness was a constant factor. One would guess that this initial period at one's new home would be easier in subsequent posts, but there was a sense that arrival to post was challenging whether it was one's first or third. Making a new life in another new community was difficult for Camille. *"Again I was on a very downward, downward spiral. You know, I was very resentful. I was umm feeling lost again...So you know, nothing was going well whatsoever..."* (Camille: 108).

Although it was a difficult time for most of the participants, it seemed helpful to remind oneself that this phase was also a temporary period and in retrospect, a natural phase to go through. *"You know, you just have to let time pass. Yes, it would pass. That it would be boring, you know. It was boring in [past post], it was boring here..."* (Gail: 194). There was a sense that this period had to be fought against and, with help from others and some self-initiation; it was a phase out of which one could grow. Camille describes escaping this stage of isolation and how she began to adapt to her new home with support. I see a connection and a progression between the 'lost look' she described in the earlier identity superordinate theme and her description below of 'finding herself':

... I felt like I couldn't handle it again but something, Fred would say "you want to go back to [home country] and start over" and I would say "No we got to figure it out." If we leave, we got to leave and never look back" and ... so I think that kept us going...I finally decided that I get, I have to get some kind of help [] so I found a therapist here which helps incredibly and also all of this time, I got a job too that didn't last long but at this point I wasn't feeling like I couldn't work ever again... That I had lost the strength and then getting this job that lasted for like I do not, two or three months but it just gave me back confidence and I said 'Ok, I can do it. I can go back and forth and eventually I'm going to find myself again.' Camille: 109

4.3.2 Theme II-2: The Roles of New Friendships and Community

Although the first few months were described as being filled with strong feelings of isolation and boredom, eventually the participants described how they began to make friends and tried to make sense of joining a new community. This sub-section will begin with experiences of joining a new community and forming new bonds, then move on to negative descriptions of it, and end with positive encounters of community and friendship. Experiences of forming

relationships in their new home were varied and participants spoke of both negative and positive encounters either in Honduras or in previous posts. All the participants stated emphatically that it was crucial to forge bonds with strangers in a relatively short space of time, but it was not always an easy undertaking. Negative experiences with others could greatly colour one's experience at post. The notion of community was identified as important to one's well-being, especially being so far from home, but creating bonds with people that one is thrown together with was described as challenging and made the adaptation at post difficult at times.

All of the participants described having issues with relating to others, difficulties with creating new friendships or being part of what were, at times, an insular expatriate community. Arriving at post with no support was difficult for some of the participants but entering a social world that appeared familiar yet alien also brought negative feelings to the surface. There was a desire to escape isolation and be included, but some of the participants felt this came at a cost. Camille highlights some of the negative feelings about a community that one is thrust into. Although she craved company, she described being turned off by some of the other stay-at-home partners at her first post. *"I didn't have a network to rely on and I felt that I had to make friends with people that I totally didn't have things in common with, we just didn't connect"* (Camille: 14).

Unlike Camille, Cathy easily made friends at her previous post but struggled to find a church that served as the foundation for her friendships and community in her present location. Like Cathy, half of the participants attended church services and described it as foundation of community and support for them. That close community she belonged to in her previous post enabled her to have positive feelings for the expatriate lifestyle as well as being a trailing partner. *"This post has been very different from the first two. This has been a difficult post. Umm I think one is our lack of activity in church because that was a big part. []. Really, we just go. We don't do anything with it; it's not our core friends..."* (Cathy: 48). For others, the difficulties of creating a desired community were attributed to the security issues that Honduras faced because of the high crime rate. Tall walls do not make good neighbours and Joan highlights how the participants felt emotionally and physically closed off from others here. *"...Another negative is that we can't leave our houses just to go walk around our*

neighbourhood. We don't know our neighbours as a result of that. You know in [previous post] we knew people on every block" (Joan 93).

Many of the participants described their difficulties with overseas friendships because the expatriate community tends to be small as well as claustrophobic and rife with conflict. Gossip and other negative behaviours were seen as insidious and demoralizing factors that had as much impact on adjustment as the high crime and changes to one's identity. The reaction to negative and toxic behaviour was a prevalent theme through most of the participants' accounts. All of the participants noted that this type of behaviour was not country specific. Problematic behaviour can be found anywhere in the world. *"I think the exact same people would be unhappy no matter where they are"* (Joan: 87). There is a strong underlying wish in Fiona's account that people be better behaved and recognize how their behaviour affects the small community.

...in [the expatriate community], you're in a bubble. And people don't realize that. A lot of people, new people come in and you know, they are like...I don't know; they don't adjust their behaviour to the circumstances. And I don't know if anyone ever tells them to either. They don't get any Behaviour 101 for [international organization] life. Like gossiping, you can't gossip. You just can't do it. You know, it's too small of a community. (Fiona: 124)

Joan had relatively positive things to say about her life as an ETP but had an account similar to Fiona's on how conflict affected everyone's day-to-day adjustment. Joan appeared vexed at some of the school-yard behaviour of her fellow ETPs and other expatriates which seemed regressive in nature. *"You know, we should be acting like adults and not perpetuating anymore rumours or get them started but other than that like high school atmosphere, or even grade school atmosphere that I sometimes feel like we are in"* (Joan: 71).

All of the participants except for Cathy had strong reactions to the gossip and negative environments that sometimes breed in expatriate enclaves. It appeared that this was an aspect of expatriate life that could profoundly colour one's experience. There was a sense that the participants could not truly be themselves or completely be free because of the insular nature of the expatriate community. *"I've seen who to trust, who my friends are, what to say, what not to say...I never had to my whole life have to watch everything, everything I'm about to say..."* (Phillip: 171). There was also a sense that one had to keep opinions to oneself, especially about offering advice. This viewpoint is further highlighted by James' account of the difficulties he felt when he socialized with female trailing partners.

It's difficult because I really can't have certain conversations. I have to be very careful about what I say and do. The opinions that I offer. Because I'm usually talking to woman and so I can't say, 'Oh don't worry about it, just go down to the market. You'll be fine, there's nothing wrong with that. I've done it billions of times, nothing has happened to me.' It's not fair. James: 136

Suzanne was particularly affected by negative behaviour and felt personally attacked when she didn't conform into the status quo. She was both incredulous and amused by the intrusion of others. "... *I can't drop everything and go to lunch and I can't drop everything and go have a coffee. And then one thing is that it has been told to me (in a stern voice) 'You need to make a life for yourself. You put too much time into your children...'*" (Suzanne: 131).

While some of the participants recognized that negativity and its impact are part of living in a small community, many described as a coping mechanism the need to distance themselves from other expatriates who could not stop being negative, whether they were depressed or it was part of their personal makeup. Misery loves company, and it was viewed as infectious, a disease that proliferates and affects one's psychological well-being.

It's contagious! It spreads! Of course it's probably true what they are complaining about but you know, you also have to find people who say good things because I think if can become aware of what's surrounding you and distance yourself from negativity.... It depends on what you came from. You know, hey... there's not a coup! [laughing] We're not under a house arrest! [more laughing] Gail: 283-285

Negative people were also seen as toxic and creators of a hostile environment that were to be avoided. "*People in [international organization] tend to especially if it's a low morale post, they gripe and they complain... They gossip... You know, it's really poisonous, it's a negative environment and you need somewhere else to divert your attention*" (Fiona: 85).

Negative or toxic behaviour can be situational and some participants such as Fiona, Gail and Joan realized that the negative thoughts and actions could be because of culture shock or home sickness. While all of the participants had complaints about past posts and where they presently were living, they appeared determined to not be the victim of toxic behaviour. There was a sense that these participants empathized and could be patient with those who experienced difficulties for a while, but there was a shelf-life for how long one was allowed to stay in misery. There was also a sense that they and others had to pull themselves up by

the bootstraps. Although she was frustrated by the complaints and behaviour of others, Joan offered advice to those who were miserable with living in another country. *“You can’t do it. You can’t fall into that slump....You got to also remember that you are somewhere else so go see what there is to see and do. And if you take advantage of all of that, your time will just fly by”* (Joan: 177).

While the majority of participants described difficulties they had forging new friendships and trying to become part of a new community abroad, they also listed many benefits that these new relationships had given to them. A few of the participants described how joining another community, particularly one that was abroad, got them out of their comfort zones and helped them expand not only their worlds but themselves. Besides having the flexibility and freedom to explore other careers and passions, being an ETP opened them to having unique, significant relationships that they would not have gained if they stayed home.

I think it has opened my eyes to things that I never have experience before. I think I’ve heard other people say this and I have to agree that I would have never have been friends with people that I would have normally not been friends with. [] You know but I think it’s made me a better person, a more understanding person. ...Definitely more open-minded... Cathy: 155

Others saw it as an awakening and stance against sedimentation.

Living overseas teaches you more about yourself that you will ever learn living in [North America]. You have your own culture, you have your own food, you make your own set of friends and umm you stay in that. If you don’t ever move around, your groups of friends usually stays the same. To me, people different people, different cultures help you take a look at what your desires are and how they are not being met. [] ...It helps you decide what’s really important. Suzanne: 140

Positive fellowship with others was not only seen as beneficial to expanding one’s world, all of the participants placed great emphasis on how a strong community positively influences their psychological well-being and adaption. *“I think you can’t ever underestimate the support system”* (Gail: 289).

Ironically, the lack of cultural and leisure activities increased the need to form friendships in order to fill leisure time and for entertainment. Especially for those with young children, there was a sense that forming friendships was a necessity. *“You get together and you make your fun that way. Inviting kids over, doing a lot of play dates this year because there is nothing to do....So it is family-oriented because you’re with them a lot and with other*

families” (Cathy: 74). While it was agreed that a small community could be claustrophobic, paradoxically, the closeness also had its benefits and appeared to outweigh the negative aspects of gossip and toxic neighbours. “... *There isn't a lot to do so the thing that you can do is get together with other people. And so for me, that's a big silver lining...*” (Gail: 240).

Creating community and cultivating friendships was essential for all of the participants, but they also emphasized the need to form relationships outside of their partner's organization or the North American expatriate community. For them, these relationships opened them up to the countries' culture but also provided them a foundation in their new home and created some semblance of roots and stability. Because the ETP was the family member interacting the most with the local community, there was a feeling that one needed to befriend non-expatriates in order to adjust. “*We get invited to local birthday parties out of school. It's nice. It's nice to see other families...not [North American] families. Just makes me feel like we are integrating a little bit...*” (Joan: 109). For Fiona, expanding her world outside of the ready-made expatriate community was a lifeline for the ETP or expatriate. “*I always tell people to the extent possible, meet people outside the [international organization] wherever you go. Because it's like for mental health! [laughing]*” (Fiona: 84). Fiona's sentiments here mirrored her strong feelings for having purposeful work or a project as crucial for her adjustment. For Gail, becoming part of the larger community was the foundation of forming roots and creating a home for her family. “... *I think that George and I with the kids tried to adopt that wherever we are, not just be insulated within the expat community which closets you a bit. [] Connect with the local society, in helps and make that home, your home for the duration*” (Gail: 218).

However, some of the participants noted that forming relationships with locals is not easy and takes a huge effort to be accepted by those who already have a firm community in place. Nevertheless, the participants described this as vital and worth the effort for their own well-being.

You have so much in common with the other foreigners. It's very easy to make plans. It can take more effort to make friends with people who are nationals within the country because they already got their life and they are less interested in making friends with transient people than the other transients so it takes a little more effort...” (Gail: 220).

As mentioned before, joining a church was, for half of the participants, a gateway into forming relationships. Because of her strong faith, becoming part of a church community was essential for Suzanne. However, it was a process and the following excerpt shows Suzanne describing the trust that one needs to build in order to become part of the local community. There was a sense that making friends with locals was hard work, but well worth the effort in order to have a richer experience.

There are a select few that feel comfortable enough to say hello until they see that you're not just coming once and that you're not just coming twice. []Then, you know, they are more open...[]. The children are making friends. Their Spanish has taken off dramatically...It was like November of last year when I started feeling like we had some roots digging in. And it has been a joy. Suzanne: 129

4.3.3 Theme II-3: The Role/Concept of Family

In the previous subtheme, I explored the participants' experience of how their social world was changed and specifically how they described forming friendships and joining a new community away from home. I will now turn to how the move overseas and their lives as trailing partners affected their families. First, I will explore the participants' descriptions of how their marriage was impacted. I will then move on to their relationship with their children, and lastly, I will end on how their lifestyle has impacted their relationship with their extended family or family of origin.

Some of the participants were aware that expatriate couples tend to have a higher divorce rate than average. "... I'm aware of the statistics of broken marriages and unhappy children and so on. So any formal data that can relate to our case is good" (James: 9). Only one of the participants specifically mentioned that the move overseas was beneficial for her relationship with her husband: "I definitely think it's been a good thing. It's been a good thing for our marriage" (Cathy: 154). Three of the participants, James, Fiona, and Joan, did not describe how being a trailing partner either negatively or positively affected their marriage. Half of the participants discussed how the move abroad created marital difficulties or exacerbated issues that began before they went overseas. Suzanne was pragmatic about the difficulties and it appeared to her that one has to choose to rise to the challenge. "Just either... you just either make it or you don't. You either go with your husband and support him and find a life

with him or you pull against him and in effect you're pulling against your marriage" (Suzanne: 107).

Some of the participants described being generally unhappy due to their circumstances, displeased with their new homes or new culture in which they found themselves, and dissatisfied with the trailing partner status and the perceived loss of control that they had. Suzanne expressed being very unhappy at a previous post and felt that its culture or views towards marriages were diametrically opposed to her values. She described the stress that was put on many expatriate couples because of the infidelity they witnessed in the community they were living in at the time. *"You know, Jonathan and I, ... it was extremely difficult between the two of us. It was the most difficult part of our marriage"* (Suzanne: 80). Like Suzanne, Camille was discontented in her previous post and these feelings not only impacted her emotionally but also affected her marriage. She described her negative feelings towards her new home and the sense of dependency and hopelessness that she felt at times. This was directed not only inward but outward to her husband. *"I became very dependent on Fred... Well, looking back, I was waiting for him to make me happy since he had put me through that, you know. I was very resentful ..."* (Camille: 14). She gave a honest depiction of this difficult time and the learned helplessness that most likely caused a domino effect on her overall adjustment. *"...as soon as we got to [previous post], I resented it. You know, I resented the whole thing and I'm thinking, or so I thought, 'Well, I've done all of this and now, you got to make me happy Fred. You know, figure it out!' Because I was completely incapable of figuring anything out"* (Camille: 52).

Phillip discussed having several years of marriage counselling prior to moving overseas but felt some of the issues they experienced, like other trailing partners, were brought on by multiple moves within his home country and leaving behind jobs that were meaningful to him. He described his perception that marriages were negatively affected while living overseas. It appeared to him that the ETP dynamic had a negative impact on one's identity, but also had an unfavourable influence on couples. *"...It's rough... It's rough being here as a spouse even though I am working..."* (Phillip: 189).

Gail described her marriage having a difficult period, but it began in her home country and continued into her first overseas move. She and her partner were able to get marriage counselling at that particular overseas assignment. She felt the move exacerbated their conflicts but thought that it did not cause them.

Well George and I passed through a marital crisis then and I think we would have, it would have come to a point at some point anyway. But I think moving overseas where you are more... When you need each other more, puts a lot of stress on the relationship. So either your marriage is strong enough to withstand or it's not. Gail: 118

Gail wanted to be very clear that she did not resent moving nor was the move the catalyst that caused marital difficulties. She tried to make sense of why some other expatriates marriages were affected:

...It's funny because I was speaking with a friend who worked at [an international organization]. Her husband and her were divorcing []but she mentioned to me that working for [international organization] was very family unfriendly because it was very demanding of long hours and lots of traveling an all that. But we were just talking and how these overseas moves are hard on marriages. [] Or you're just kind of loping along; you keep loping along if you don't have the stressor of living overseas. Gail: 154-156

I had the sense that Gail saw something positive in the fact that overseas moves could sometimes bring problems to the forefront that would have otherwise lingered, festered on for years if they stayed in one place. Some of the participants felt that they were able to work through the rough patches of their marriages. Having the experience of one international move under their belts seemed to ameliorate any transitional difficulties. For Gail and Phillip, moving to a new place like Honduras appeared to allow them and their partners a fresh start of sorts. “*So moving here and actually having a change of scenery was great for us, you know. It helped us put the worst moments of our relationship behind us. You know, turn over a new leaf*” (Gail: 168).

For Suzanne, support from her church, faith, and the belief in the sanctity of marriage allowed her to ride out the difficult period in a previous post and her concern about marriages lasting in that atmosphere.

Are things important? Or is my marriage important? Is the covenant that I made with my husband more important than me wanting to go back to [North America]? Umm it's not, they are not equal. It's either I'm going to be selfish

and satisfy me in what I want, I need and what I'm not getting or are we going to work together to make this work. Suzanne: 141

As all the participants had school-age children, their children's adjustment to moving and living overseas directly affected these trailing partners. The participants shared concerns and anxiety regarding raising their children overseas but generally felt that the expatriate lifestyle had a positive effect on their children. The following section will discuss these phenomena.

Parenting, in general, is marked by moments of sheer anxiety; it seems that raising children overseas adds a dimension of additional concerns. A majority of the participants discussed raising their children and the anxiety that they sometimes felt while living overseas. The topics that caused apprehension amongst the participants varied. Suzanne was the only participant who acknowledged that she felt moving abroad was not a mutual decision. She described being worried about her young children's upbringing before she made the move abroad and questioned the initial decision. *"Can I learn the language, am I going to be able to communicate, ... how am I going to rear two children overseas, are we going to be able to find a school that is ... compatible with the children, compatible with our family"* (Suzanne: 36).

For Cathy, the joy of living overseas has been raising her children abroad and having them exposed to diverse cultures. Ultimately, this sentiment was expressed by all the participants to some degree during the interviews. However, Cathy was concerned that as 'third culture kids' (TCKs) they will continue to desire the international, nomadic lifestyle while she is ready to settle down back home. *"It's interesting for our kids but um you know hopefully that they don't want to do this when they are older so ... because a lot of [international organization] kids become [international organization] employees. And that's my fear; I don't want that to happen. [laughing]"* (Cathy: 177). When asked to describe her apprehensions, Cathy paused and responded emphatically, *"Because I want them to stay with me! I don't want them to leave. I want them to live down the street from me... 'You already had it! You had it as a child and now you have to live down the street from me and with my grandchildren'"* (Cathy: 179-181).

For some, living overseas allowed the participants to have household help, especially nannies for their children. For most it was a blessing, but some like Camille and James had concerns about having another caretaker especially if there was a language barrier. These communication problems with domestic help were expressed as frustrating. Camille spoke at length about the anxiety she felt during her first assignment where she didn't speak the language and trusting a caregiver with her then baby. It was hard to communicate but she finally felt trust in her caregiver. Despite it being in a completely foreign locale, Camille's sentiments echoed the concerns and anxieties of many working parent wherever one lives in the world.

...I was thinking, 'Oh my God, this is not working out' but I was like 'you know what, I really want to go home and stay with my child.' ...Not that I didn't want to work, I wanted it but ... I felt like I was abandoning Sarah... I felt like that the time that she was alone with her nanny was lost time in her growth and development. Which turns out to be [laughing] completely and absolutely wrong! Camille: 63

Although issues with security were discussed by almost all the participants, a topic that I will further unpack later, only one participant mentioned his anxiety regarding crime affecting his children.

So I've always gone with the idea that I don't bring anything with me that I'm not perfectly happy to give up and that kind of give me a sense of security. There's nothing on me that I wouldn't happily give away. Except for my child. That's the one thing that does scare me... (James: 140)

Several of the participants discussed that their child or children had at some point in time a problematic adjustment which typically manifested itself right after the move or during the first year. Being taken away from a familiar place and friends and family are difficult for anybody, but for a child, the transition can be particularly trying and guilt inducing for the parents. I had the sense that for the ETP who was usually home with the kids in the early days at post, this was an extra burden for them to carry. In the following excerpt Phillip describes how the move affected his family.

It was the time of the coup, security and ...during the day it was the roughest. It was just rough because I was there with my kids. No toys so we were drawing and doing stuff and having three kids ... not in school and stuff, it was very hard entertaining them and keeping them happy ... And it was sad for my daughter, she missed her friends. The others were fine because they were just young. They didn't really understand ... but it was difficult. []We aren't really TV ones but now and then we want to watch a kid's show... that's in Spanish. My kids didn't even understand... Phillip: 127

This resonates with Camille's account of her eldest child's initial difficulties and the parental guilt that Camille experienced:

Sarah wasn't adapting well and I was feeling very guilty for her leaving her friends [] I was feeling very guilty again with this travelling and moving around and but getting impatient with her because I was like 'look we all need to do a little bit of an effort so.' So for another three months I think, things were not easy at all. [] We were shocked with the violence and how little freedom we had. [] I was missing [former post], regretting our choice or coming here and I was very worried of what all of this was doing, especially for Sarah, not as much for Laura, but Laura was little. Camille: 107

Some of the participants who had more experience of living overseas were aware that the adjustment period for their children was going to be a challenge and they had to plan accordingly. *"I had to change who I was and what my expectations were going to be and listen to the needs of my kids"* (Suzanne: 57). Also, while it is difficult for them to see their friends come and go, they recognized that their children also have to negotiate their place in a shifting, changing community. Typically upbeat and positive during the interview about her time abroad, Fiona's mood changed when discussing the initial adjustment of her TCKs.

"My main effort was initially with my kids, get them settled, get them doing activities, finding out what they can do, what they like to do, find kids for them to hang out with. They need to find their niche and didn't really ever happen last year" (Fiona: 141). I interpret her hesitations and pauses as her reflecting on one of the difficult aspects that she had to face over the years. The transition is never predictable and because a child adjusted in one overseas location, it is never guaranteed that they will fully acclimatize to another place. *"For me it's great... For the kids, it's still iffy. But they are ok, they have friends and they have activities. So, you know, as long as they are doing ok, everything is really fine"* (Fiona: 148).

Although very satisfied with most aspects of her life overseas and as a trailing partner, Joan felt that any trade-offs she had to make were worth it for her children:

My...children have just really acclimated here so well. And that's what I wanted for them is to immerse themselves in another culture... They have made friends who are not [North Americans] very easily. They speak the language beautifully to the point where they are correcting me, you know. That's amazing that that is exactly what I wanted for them. To experience somewhere else in another language... Joan: 70

A majority of the candidates discussed the difficulties of being away from home, but the longing for the familiar was, for the most part, missing their family of origin, not a concrete place. Being away from a loved one who was sick or raising your children away from doting grandparents were difficult for some of the participants. Holidays away from home were especially difficult for some.

We had some friends over and you know (sounding sad), it's certainly not the same with being with my family or his family where Christmas is a big deal. We are all together, it's important. ... We had dinner and we had people over on Christmas day and everything but it's not the same. Gail: 88

Camille recalled the guilt and sadness of not being near home when she first went overseas. Her account coincides with Gail's account of missing holidays and important milestones with family. She felt as if she was taking something from both her parents and her child.

I remember this very strong feeling of, umm, being away from my family. That was because of Sarah. I think being away from my family when Sarah was a little baby was heart-breaking to me. I didn't know there were some things that I wish I could learn from my parents but also I felt incredibly guilty for taking this sweet little baby from them and that they wouldn't be able to stay with her. So you know, I know that that is not necessarily being related to being a trailing spouse but in my case it's totally... you know, it all comes together. Camille: 57

During her interview, Cathy discussed the trade-offs involved in living overseas but being away from family. Even though she would have to live in another section of North America, Cathy felt that if she stayed in her home country she would see her family more often. She wistfully pondered whether the grass was always greener if they stayed home and compared herself to another family member who has children but stayed in their home town. "...They have lived in the same house and the same school. You know those deep, deep roots. And we always look at the other side and think 'that's nice.' It's just a way of life..." (Cathy: 188). Overall, the experience of living overseas for James had been a positive one, but he noted the only downside was being away from his family. He also described missing two people who were important in his life, his father and close friend with whom he often did his hobbies; their absence was important to him. "So, that's kind of hard to replace..." (James: 57).

All of the participants spent their childhoods in their country of origin. Their children were either born while they were living overseas or had moved as young children. For these TCKs, the definition of 'home' is complex and situational. Fiona's children lived most of their lives abroad with short stints in their home country. She felt it was important for them

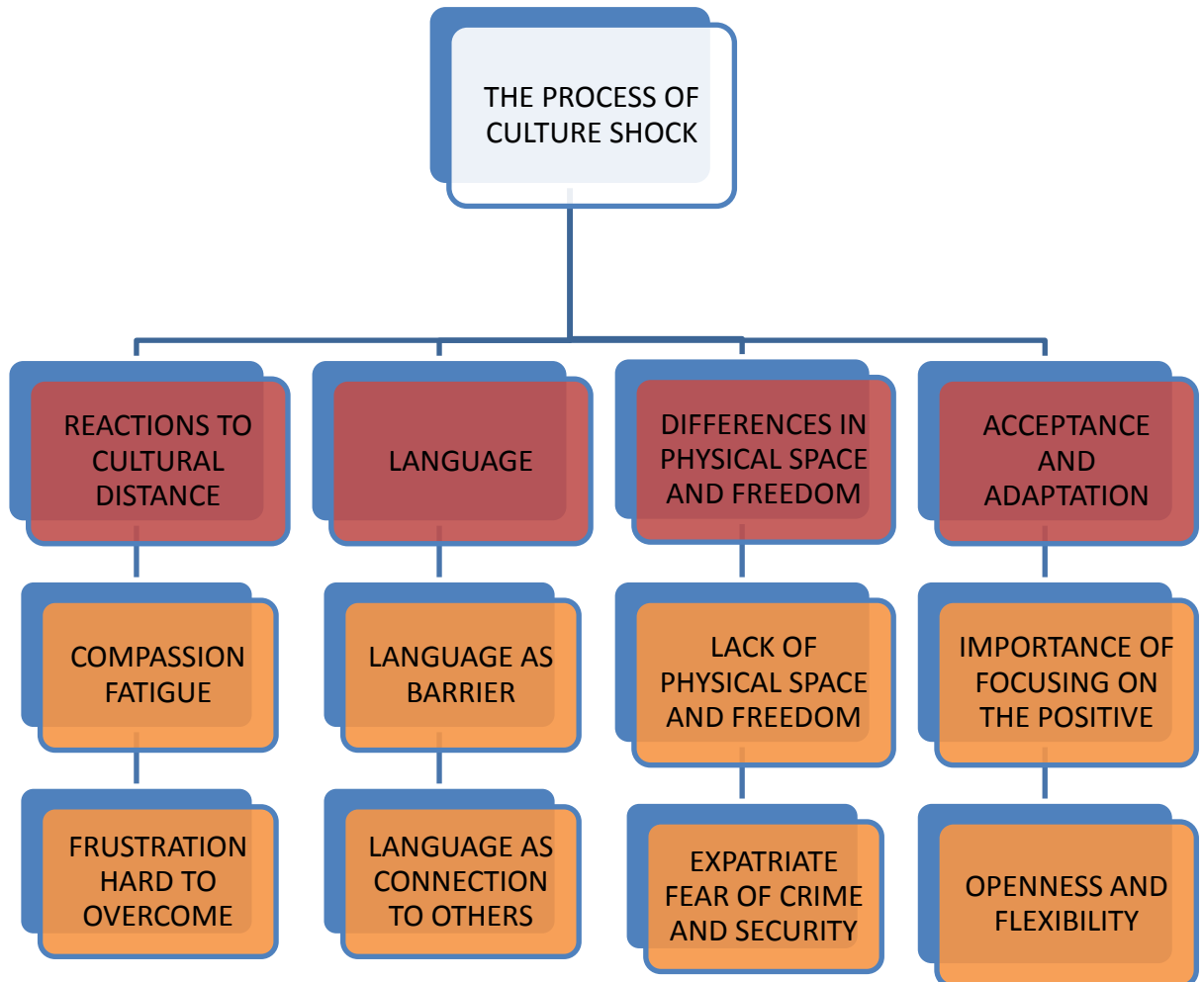
to have some semblance of roots and worked for them to maintain ties to ‘home’ and old friends. *“We go back every single year. We see all their friends. They still have friends from kindergarten. Umm we go see our house. We walk around it. I think it is really good for the kids. So they feel like they have a home”* (Fiona: 182).

In contrast, Gail felt it was crucial to define home differently if you are raising children overseas and are moving constantly.

One of [George’s] colleagues advised us with regards to children, ‘wherever you go, that’s your home.’ You can’t be like, “Oh you’re from the [North America] and [NA] is your home because for your children, it’s not. You don’t have the connection to [NA], you need to make wherever you are your home. Gail: 218

4.4 Superordinate Theme III: The Process of Culture Shock

Figure 3: Superordinate Theme III: The Process of Culture Shock



While the participants interviewed were trailing spouses and therefore had different experiences than other expatriates who came for their own work or personal mission, most expatriates had some type of reaction to the cultural differences they encountered when they moved from home. In order to understand the trailing partner experience, it is important to explore how they describe their experiences as expatriates as well. Additionally, because the ETPs generally interacted with the local population often, they tended to be more exposed to cultural differences than someone who was in an office interacting with other expatriates. The reaction to cultural differences was unanimously described as having a substantial impact on the participants' experience abroad and their adjustment.

The participants discussed their encounters with culture shock in two temporal stages: experiences that happened to them in the past either in other experiences abroad or even in their home country and what they were presently experiencing in Honduras. Although each experience they encountered was unique, prior experiences abroad or living in a culturally different place in their own country seemed to colour and shape how they experienced their current home. In order to talk about their current experience, an understanding of their past intercultural interactions was explored; these experiences could not be separated.

I will explore these phenomena in this section and will begin with the participants' description of their experiences with cultural distance. Next, I will explore how the participants adjusted to living in a place where the national language was not their mother tongue, and how they contended with differences of physical space and freedom. I will end this section by examining how they described adapting to their lives abroad.

4.4.1 Theme III-1: Reactions to Cultural Distance

When we arrived in [prior posting] it was very shocking to be in a foreign place where I didn't speak the language. We went to live in a compound, which was very strict in a way and with a new baby. So it was, I used to say a lot that it was like going to Mars, you know. Going to Mars. [laughing] Going to another planet. Camille: 9-11

It's kind of an oppressive place at that time. People were pretty tense, I mean, [she names prior post] that I'm talking about here. Like I was...It was really, really because in [region] you always hear that people are so friendly, open,

but [prior post] ...not so much... [] people were kind of rude and unfriendly. It was hard. I thought it would be a lot more fun and interesting but it was really difficult. Fiona: 39

So I put on my worse clothes, took all my jewelry off, put on my flip flops or I would put on a pair of socks and tennis shoes and stuff them with my money and cell phone so no one could... nobody could see them. Peter and I would walk 7 blocks down and the mantra when we walked was "Watch your step! Don't step in the dog poop! Move over there. Let's walk here. Somebody is tinkling here. Move to the right. [She starts to speed up in a comical manner] Step over the dog poop. Hang on. Wait a minute. Here's some taxis, wait a minute, step over the dog poop, yes that guys is homeless he doesn't have a place to live, his foot is turned around backwards and that's sad, Peter. We can go get him a hamburger at lunch when we walk back, because McDonalds was right there." [Sarcastically] So this is how we walked to school. (Suzanne: 55)

Like Camille, Fiona, and Susanne, all of the participants gave vivid reports of past postings. Some were positive descriptions of past experiences and others gave accounts of having a difficult time adapting to cultural changes, whether it was abroad or in their home country. This was also true of the present. Part of an expatriate lifestyle is negotiating culture shock and cultural distance. Because the experience of cultural differences is a vast topic and could be an entire study on to itself, I will not go into great detail of the participants' reactions, especially from past posts, but will include some excerpts that particularly speak to these participants' experiences.

With the frustrations that most of the participants felt about cultural differences they faced in Honduras, there was a sense of hopelessness. For some, it was the first time they were faced with extreme poverty and it went against their sense of fairness and justice. *"You know, it just wears on you here. Because there's so much poverty and you just feel for these people... So that's something that kind of is going to take over time. You feel that it starts to wear you down after two years"* (Cathy: 63).

The weariness and frustration caused by the poverty that Cathy and others described was known as 'compassion fatigue.' The excerpts from Cathy and Phillip further the understanding of this common emotion: *"I'm not going to give to you [laughing] because I just gave to the guys before you, you know. So just seeing it every day. It's difficult to see what these people go through"* (Cathy: 69). *"I feel really sad for the people, I do what I can*

to help” (Phillip: 195). This feeling of hopelessness was further illustrated by James. For him and his partner, they wanted to go abroad to make a difference and have enjoyed some of the benefits of living overseas, but were unsatisfied with the progress they saw and questioned their time whilst abroad.

So I have to ask, why are we here? Not in an overarching sense like why is [various international organizations] here... [] Why have we given up three years of our lives? To do this when in the end Julie hasn't appeared to accomplish anything. Well that's a bit of a harsh statement. [] Things have happened but because of the nature of her job you can't help but feel that it's always going to be two steps forward two steps back kind of situation. James: 86

Participants also discussed a myriad of other cultural differences that greatly impacted their time in this post. It seemed that everyone discuss these issues with a sigh and weary tone. “It's just difficult to get anything done. It's complicated” (Cathy: 59). “I think it's a really disorganized place” (Phillip: 195). Both Joan and Fiona complained about dealings with various local institutions: “Very frustrating...very frustrating...” (Joan: 131). “I find it really frustrating and the [institution] is useless (Fiona: 128). Even things like rules of the road or lack thereof annoyed participants and affected their daily living. Trailing partners are out on the road more than the working partner and experience this issue more than others who are at office jobs.

I caught myself a couple of times going to get out of my car to go and knock on somebody's window and talk to them and say, 'You know, why did you do that? Why did you cut me off?' [] And I had to remind myself that we still live in a dangerous country where they are packing handguns and other strange people walking up to their windows can scare them and they might shoot them. James: 82

4.4.2 Theme III-2: Language

Dealing with cultural differences and host country troubles and idiosyncrasies greatly affected the participants, but not being able to speak the language of the host country was often described as problematic for some participants. Some organizations offer the ETPs language training before posts, but often the trailing partner arrives with little to no language skills. Although approximately five of the participants were proficient to fluent in Spanish upon arrival in Honduras, some of them discussed the difficulties they had at previous locales while those who struggled with Spanish described their issues at their present post.

Camille speaks several languages, including English and Spanish, but she did not speak the language in her first post. Her excerpt below describes this obstacle:

There was the obvious language barrier. You know...And of course, I feel that I can communicate very well in English so I could talk to the foreigners and as I said we lived on a compound so I could get the everyday life. Well (exaggerated), but as soon as I stepped off on the streets, I wouldn't understand what people were saying and they couldn't understand me and I felt... That made me feel very uncomfortable. So that was part of it. And I just didn't know how much more had to do with [previous post]... We had people available to be nannies but then of course I was feeling, 'How can I give my baby to somebody that doesn't understand me and I don't understand her.' So I felt very trapped... Very trapped... Camille: 26

Not being able to speak the language where you live was once described to me as “being in an eight cylinder car and only running on four.” It can be experienced as stressful and anxiety provoking. I got a sense that for Camille, who described herself as a very active person, not speaking the language and being trapped on a compound was isolating and debilitating. However, once she was able to work outside the home, the difficulties of not being able to speak the language did not cease and caused her a great deal of anxiety.

There was a lot of, you know, just like, lost in translation throughout the entire project. So I was the project manager, with this whole team of experts that didn't speak English so it was really difficult to manage them. I relied a lot on this guy that turned out not to be very reliable. So you know, I was, I was in a pickle. Camille: 61

The ‘lost in translation’ seemed to be expressed as a hindrance that didn’t allow some of the participants to enjoy the full experience of expatriate life:

I have to consciously prevent myself from doing the ‘smile’ [he acts out an exuberant but fake smile] and ‘nod’ [emphatically nods] and saying “Si, Si!” and walking away from them. If I didn't understand it, I should have to say so and it uh, doesn't happen because I usually smile and nod [laughing] and walk away. (James: 101)

James was excited to come to this present post in order to learn another language but expressed feeling disappointed in himself for not being able to achieve proficiency. He noted this several times especially when he was discussing his ‘holding pattern.’ “I’m mostly disappointed because I know it’s a lack of effort on my part. I definitely learned that I am not a linguist...It appears that my ability to learn second languages is not good either. And I think it kind of creates an anxiety to where we go next” (James: 103). Phillip seemed to

equally feel handicapped because of his lack of fluency in Spanish. *“I get a lot of grief!”* (Phillip: 219)

Even though Joan did have a level of proficiency in Spanish, it was difficult for her to manage conversations during moments of crisis or conflict and it appeared distressing for her. *“So it’s hard when you’re really fired up about something and there’s some indignant behaviour going on. It’s hard. Those are the most difficult times and also the most important times that you should be communicating. But I can’t...You just get so worked up that you can’t do it”* (Joan: 133).

However, Joan was quick to find meaning in communicating in a second language that she was still learning. *“...It’s been great because it has allowed me to think very quickly on my feet for alternative ways to say something. []It has allowed me...it’s been beneficial. ‘Ok, so that’s not going to work, I’m going to say it this way’”* (Joan: 146).

Suzanne described learning earlier on that as a trailing partner being able to communicate was necessary not only for her survival but also to connect to others. *“Whatever country we were living in, I had to learn the language. Because I hated living that so far out and not being able to communicate with the people that surrounding me. So that’s when I learned I could either sink or swim with my language”* (Suzanne: 18). Although Gail spoke Spanish fluently, she offered this advice to others who struggled with the language and were in despair. Like Suzanne, she saw the need for expatriates to recognize their responsibility in this aspect of adjustment:

So if you thinking to too much negative, ‘well this isn’t the country that I like, this wasn’t uh I, I don’t speak the language...’ well you have the chance to learn a new language. I would love to move to a country where I had the chance to learn a new language. But I think, you know, for me, that’s an opportunity. Rather than a frustration. (Gail: 212)

4.4.3 Theme III-3: Differences in Physical Space and Freedom

While some of the participants experienced language as a mental barrier at some point of their lives overseas, all of the participants discussed how their concept of physical space was affected by moving abroad and the impact it had on their sense of personal and physical freedom. This constriction affected them physically and psychologically and most cited that

this was an aspect that was difficult to adjust to regardless of the time at post. All the participants lived a majority of their lives in North America, which has large, open spaces and the inhabitants are usually free to walk around or access transportation, whether public or private, whenever they want. Living abroad in some regions of the world does not allow the physical freedom that most of us take for granted. Taking a stroll is pretty much unheard of. *“There’s sooo little to do here. Like, you don’t walk in the park. There aren’t enough kids’ museums; you don’t know the city well enough to go walking around downtown. Or you’ve been told you shouldn’t”* (Gail: 182). All of the participants described the consequences of the lack of physical freedom they encountered. Although some of them discussed how it impacted them in other posts as well, this section will mostly concentrate on their descriptions of their present day life. This section will first explore the participants’ descriptions of how the lack of physical freedom influenced their daily living and then move to how the two major factors, fear of crime, and lack of transportation affected their experience as expatriate trailing partners.

All eight of the participants discussed how the differences in physical space and freedom affected them at some point when they lived abroad, and except for Suzanne, seven of the participants discussed in great detail how they were presently affected by this issue. As in a majority of developing countries, many affluent families and expatriates live behind high walls which are typically fitted with barbed wire. Some have guard gates outside the house.

There was a sense of constriction and amongst the participants, especially when they first arrived at post. The isolation described earlier in the relational world superordinate theme, which the participants described in various places they lived in, is directly related to this experience but seemed to be magnified here because of the actual physical limitations. *“Yeah, it was sooo claustrophobic. And so unexpected, I think, because you don’t know what it is like to live in a high security situation until you get into it”* (Gail: 186). Because they tended to be home more or out and about in the city, they felt the physical restrictions more than other expatriates who went to an office every day. Not being able to freely walk around had this effect on Cathy. *“It’s hard, it’s hard. I feel a little cooped up, a little bored, a little stir crazy...”* (Cathy: 52).

When working overseas for an NGO, international organization, or as part of a diplomatic mission, it generally takes a few months to receive all your personal effects, including your car. In a developed country where there is ample public transportation or the ability to walk freely to shops or for exercise, not having a personal mode of transportation is inconsequential. But in a country like Honduras, it can be experienced as restrictive. Hired or rental cars are not abundant and are cost prohibitive for that amount of time. Public transportation is almost non-existent. Taxies were unreliable and one's safety was at risk if you collected on the street. *[Imitating person sounding alarmist] "You can't take a taxi!"* (Phillip: 125).

Most offices will make sure their new employees can get into the office by providing drivers or arranging for car pools, but it is usually left to the trailing partner to fend for themselves in getting around. This was not only isolated to Honduras; Camille experienced this in her prior post as well. The 'not knowing' impacted her ability to adapt and cope with changes. *"When we get there we spent at least two months without a car and that's pretty big. Brutal! [laughing] Now I know it takes time. ... So we were two months without a car and I'm thinking 'I'm going to die, I'm going to die' and 'I can't go anywhere'"* (Camille: 35).

Before one lives in this type of atmosphere it is hard to imagine how oppressive it is to not move around freely. It seemed that the feelings of wanting to escape isolation outweighed the need for security. Some of the participants described the constant waiting around and feeling cloistered as driving them to despair. *"Like if I had a car, some wheels, I would have been fine. Because I could have at least gone to a restaurant for lunch with Molly... Something! We were just sooo bored!"* (Gail: 174). Phillip further illustrated not being able to deal with the lack of freedom anymore and for the need to escape. *"So the most exciting part was my wife coming home. I would have dinner ready, sit down and I would leave. She was 'You can't walk' and I was 'I don't care!' I walked all over this city. I took taxies, 'I don't care! I need to get out!'"* (Phillip: 129). Receiving one's personal car was big day, a day that one would sense a prisoner would describe when being released from prison. *"I got that car ... and that was the change for me [sounding ecstatic] 'Ah the car! I can go anywhere if I want to.' Also I must say the mentality of not being able to go anywhere..."* (Gail: 190).

Although the lack of freedom due to issues with transportation was intense but temporary, the fear of crime was a constant source of stress, always lurking in the background for most of the participants. On top of this anxiety, the coup was a recent memory for all the participants and it was an unsettling time with periods of long curfews. From the moment most of the participants arrived, they were told by others and in briefings that it was not safe to walk in the streets and roving taxis were not to be trusted. One had to take extreme caution and use security measures to protect oneself that would not be needed in most areas of North America and Europe. This security kept one safe but it also was troubling and greatly restricted freedom. The participants could enjoy many aspects of living there, but restrictions because of crime still had an impact on one's well-being. *"The whole security thing is oppressive. And worrisome"* (Fiona: 209).

The sense that it was in the background and could happen to you was always there as a dark cloud that hovered over your daily life. Again, because the ETP tended to be out and about more and tending to household needs, they appeared to be exposed to security concerns more than expatriates who were office-bound all day. However, all of the participants tried to balance the need to stay safe with living their lives and moving around as freely as possible. Most of the participants discussed security with a sense of humour and a shrug of the shoulders. Laughing at it seemed to take the edge off. *"The crime... I know it's here. Well, it hasn't really affected me. Or hasn't affected me yet, I'm sure... I wouldn't be surprised that the day I get robbed, I'd be like, 'Finally! [laughing] I knew that this was going to happen and I'm good now'"* (Cathy: 53-55). However, pragmatism was considered important and wise. *"It's sad, very sad... You know, it's a beautiful city even just to run from my house to the American school and back, you probably can do it because there are so many cars but you know with the kidnappings... I don't know! Are they targeting me, probably not, but you don't want to give anybody any ideas"* (Joan: 101).

All the participants interviewed were well travelled throughout the country and although they were careful and took precautions, their personal and physical freedom was very important to them. It seems that the warnings and fear from others was seen as over-cautious and excessive to some of the participants. *"Yeah, you know, people have commented to me 'You just go off?'"* Uh, I always checked first. For what was appropriate and what was not. But

why set limits on yourself”? (Gail: 246). However, Gail acknowledged that it was a real concern and understood where their fears and limitations came from: “[Security]...That would be the one thing that is a super challenge ...and probably if you haven’t experienced it, it could be shocking. It would be very hard to adapt to for some people. ... I observed that other people may feel more constrained” (Gail: 250).

James, who tended to be out and about more than other ETPs, looked at the fear of crime pragmatically and summed up what attitude worked best for him:

One of the things that I did figure out early but didn’t have the experience yet was that most tragedies that happened were when people resisted. [] So I’ve always gone with the idea that I don’t bring anything with me that I’m not perfectly happy to give up and that kind of gave me a sense of security... James:
140

The male participants and some of the female participants commented that the feelings of freedom and fear of lack of security differs with gender. A majority of trailing partners are women, so these observations warrant an examination. Joan described having an adventurous nature and presented with a positive, upbeat outlook to living in Honduras and all her travels but is aware of her limitations and heeds warnings. “As a lone female, if I was to run, I would not...I don’t even think my husband would let me do it. But I wouldn’t feel safe just to do it” (Joan: 99). Phillip felt that his gender and size protected him and gave him more freedom than others could have. However, by interpreting the following excerpt, I got the sense from the sounds of restlessness in Phillip’s voice that his dismissal of security precautions was encouraged by his claustrophobia:

[] I didn’t feel threatened. I never felt threatened though. It was more my wife...people saying you can’t do this. Like, ‘Whoa...I’m doing it! I’m walking! They say ‘Take a taxi!’ I need to walk, to get out. [] This is crazy but not crazier than house I’ve lived next too and that I saw in [North American city]. Phillip:
131

James’s outlook was similar to Phillip’s, but he offered an explanation of why he as a male trailing partner had fewer restrictions. “I haven’t found it to be as dangerous as we have been led to believe. I think my experience has been very different because I’m a man. I suspect their experiences would be very different than mine because there are things that they can’t do because of gender” (James: 114).

He acknowledged that women had more inherent risks but thought that trailing partners could have more freedom than they were allowing themselves to have but they should exercise common sense as well. “[] *Plus the fact is if things whether you are a man or a woman, it’s probably going to be with a gun and you’re probably in just as big in trouble whether you’re a man or a woman*” (James: 132).

4.4.4 Theme III-4: The Process of Acceptance and Adaptation

The participants also described many things that they loved about past host countries and their present post and this helped them to cope and anchor a life in their home abroad. It seemed that all of the participants wanted to discuss the realities of the lifestyle, but they also seemed eager to share the beauty they also experienced without prompting.

Many participants felt that one had to focus on the positives in order to adapt wherever you are. Gail described being open to seemingly difficult places despite the challenges. “*The more you get out it the country, the more the spectacular it is... [] I think that also that experience of going out and about in the country really put the rose coloured glasses on for me in Honduras*” (Gail: 242).

For others, there was the ability to enjoy aspects of it that others may not see which helped them to adjust and feel contentment. “*I’ve really enjoyed the quality of life we have here... It’s compromised by things like, walls and guards and security concerns. ...But I like the fact that we live in a city that has nice mountains all around it so I can go and ride my bike*” (James: 109). For Phillip and Cathy, it’s the intimacy of the collectivist society and other positive cultural attributes that are endearing to them. “*I like that Latino way of life. You gather every Sunday. They are very close. They go to the beach with their cousins, they go to school with their cousins, I mean, I like that. I do appreciate the Latino way, the closeness of the family. I think that’s great*” (Cathy: 182-184). *I love the weather, I loved the people that I’ve met, umm I umm, I like the culture. [] I think it’s a beautiful place* (Phillip: 194).

The participants noted that living overseas did come with some difficulties, but it was one’s attitude of openness and flexibility that had the greatest impact on one’s experience.

In discussing a prior post in which she had a hard time adapting to its cultural differences, Suzanne came to this realization that one had to actively adapt to living overseas and had to let go of set rules and fixed cultural values from home:

There were 5 things I said I would never, ever do because I was a snot. But I didn't realize that I was a snot. I was judgemental snot. I'm not going to have a live in maid. If Peter was ever going to go to school, he was not going to ride a bus. I didn't trust the traffic and the drivers. [] But I did... I ended up while living in [prior post] doing all 5 things. Oh, yeah, I wouldn't let him get in the car without a child seat. I did that. Ummm, you can't get in a taxi without seatbelts and expect to put your children in a car seat because there are no seatbelts to begin with. So you just quit taking the car seat at the corner. You don't carry the car seat out to the corner anymore, you just all pile in. And go... (Suzanne: 47)

Besides being vigilant in searching for the positive aspects of a place, it seems as if one had to adopt a notion of openness and the ability to be flexible in order to cope like Suzanne did above. I see a connection here between the need to have an open, positive attitude towards living in different culture and the necessity of surrounding yourself by positive people in order to adjust that was discussed in the earlier chapter.

It's more about nature. Whether you're a glass half full or half empty or whatever kind of person but I think it's easy to focus too much on and allow your brain to kind of run the tape of 'it's not safe here or this is what I don't like about here'' and to run that tape. You have to at some point train yourself to another tape and say "hey you know what, it's sunny again" each day. (Gail: 266)

Attitude counts. Joan discussed the mind-set she needed to get over a recent difficulty with culture shock. *"But then if you pick up on them too much and dwell on them too much, you'll be in a rut...So I don't. I just corrected the situation as best as I could and just moved along. We are who we are"* (Joan: 164). Openness and a sense of adventure were also cited as necessary for living overseas. I found there was a collective positive attitude amongst most of the participants used for creating new portable careers and interesting projects; there was also a spirit of the need to invent, explore and try something new. I also noticed, especially in the following excerpts, that when the participants spoke of how they coped or adjusted, they tended to speak in generalities, using 'you' instead of 'I.' I interpreted the way they are speaking here as what one normally does as part of a community; offering of practical advice to the audience instead of depersonalizing their experiences.

I think what's worked for me...I think you have to be open to whatever. It's like what [a friend of Fiona's] says... She has this 'take advantage of available fun' idea. It's like whatever happening, just do it! [] And then you

end up going to really weird, crazy things that you normally wouldn't do and I think that's really good. Fiona: 162

Fiona added that she would never have partaken in such rich experiences when she was in her home country because the desire to venture off or explore somewhere new is not strong enough.

Suzanne learned she had to be flexible and adapt according to wherever she was living. She questioned some of the beliefs of where she was from and living overseas made her open to other cultures and other people's individuality.

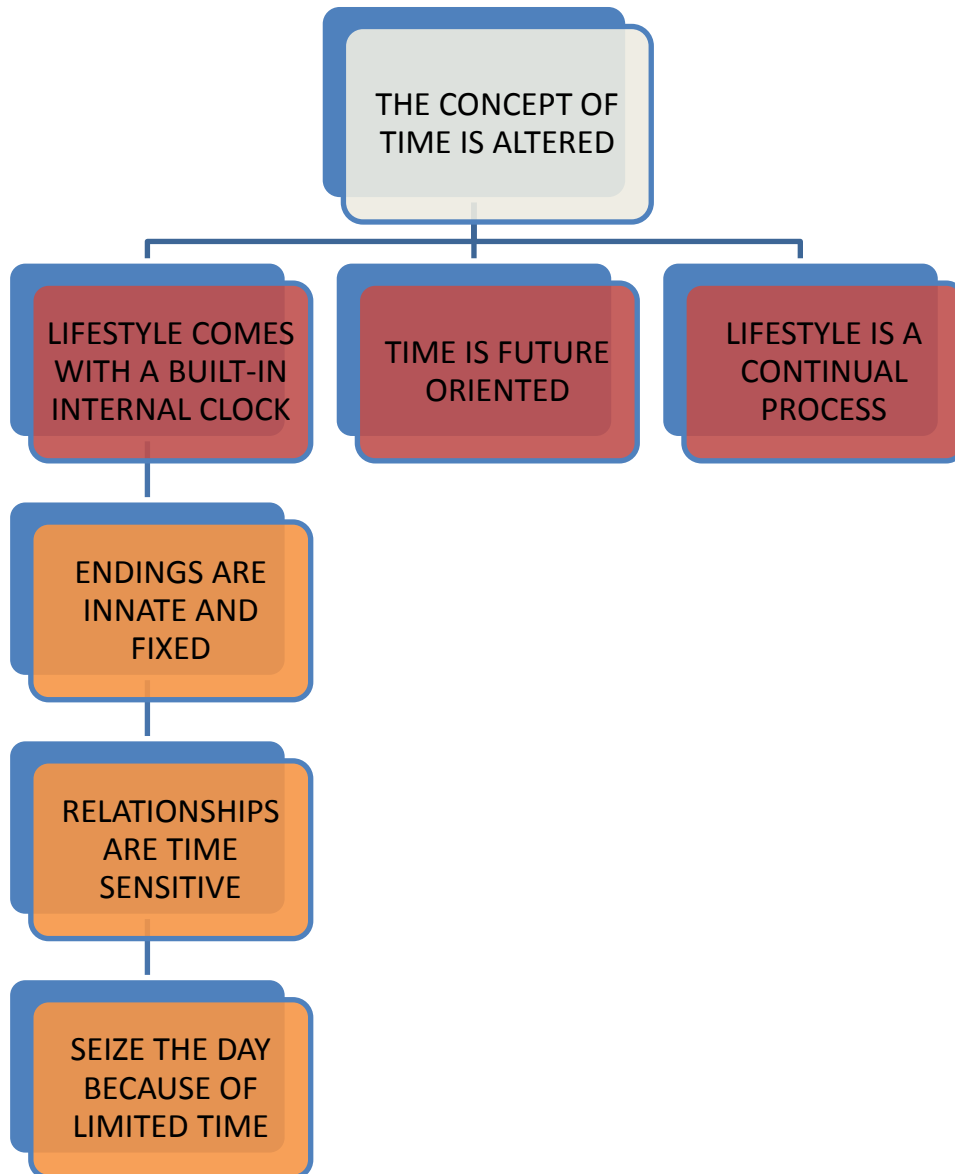
Don't judge others until you walk a mile in somebody else's shoes. Umm the requirements for one person can be far different than the requirement one needs in another place...Different cultures, sub cultures within [North America] put certain expectations on people, on those that live in that sub culture that does not apply when you live in a foreign environment. Suzanne: 49

Lastly, Joan offered that whether you live overseas or not, how you approach life is a choice.

"Who is to say I wouldn't have the same, you know difficulties in [North America]. You know so I think no matter where you are living, who your family is, who your friends are, you can find problems and negatives anywhere. It's just your life, your outlook on life, you gotta stay positive..." (Joan: 166).

4.5 Superordinate Theme IV: The Concept of Time is Altered

Figure 4 - Superordinate Theme IV: The Concept of Time is Altered



Another theme that arose throughout the participants' interviews was a sense that the expatriate lifestyle, especially for many ETPs who live abroad for a set period of years, is measured by time and is seen as episodic. Before unpacking this section, I first must make a distinction. As discussed earlier in the challenge of identity section, the participants talked at great length of unstructured periods of time which seemed to affect the here-and-now of their daily existence. It affected their feelings of purpose and adjustment but it also spurred some of them on to search for meaning and create an identity that worked for them. However, there was another superordinate theme concerning time that arose from the data. It seemed that time in this case was always in the background, not discussed directly, but influencing and shaping all the other superordinate themes concerning identity, relationships and coming to terms with culture shock and difference. In this section, I will explore the phenomenon of what I will call the 'expatriate internal clock.' Then I will move to the future thinking nature of the participants and lastly explore how the lifestyle is a continual process and that all experiences continue to build on each other.

4.5.1 Theme IV-1: Lifestyle comes with a built-in internal clock

When speaking to participants about former posts, it seemed to me that all stories and descriptions came as episodic chapters in a book. Each chapter was a unique, delineated period, all with a finite set of time. A stay in one country was usually a fixed set of time, ranging from two to five years. For some of the participants, it appeared that the endings were innate and fixed; when it was over, it was over.

In commenting about a previous post, Suzanne's concept of time sounded like a prison sentence. *"I wanted to go back to the States. My year and a half was over. I mean, get me out of this place!"* (Suzanne: 65). For others, there was something like an alarm clock going off signalling the time for departure. *"I'm thinking, 'maybe it's time to go now.' If I'm getting this frustrated here..."* (James: 82). This alarm seemed to sound off whether it was a positive or negative experience. Even though Cathy enjoyed her previous posts she remarked that at the end of her three years in each of them she felt the need to leave. *"It's time to move on and you just get that way after doing a post for three years. You're just done. It was just time. I was ready to go try something different and I was very happy where I was at too"* (Cathy: 133-135).

There was also a sense that relationships were time sensitive and affected one's internal clock and adjustment. *"It's also hard because people leave so and you make new friends by people start to come and go and you know, then you kind of feel internally that your time is about over"* (Cathy: 139). Conversely, the internal clock had a profound effect on how one forms relationships. Since each posting was a fixed and a relatively short period of time, relationships had to be built quickly out of necessity for companionship and intimacy, as well for practical reasons, like carpooling children.

And then I recognize that we got to build this network of people, you know. So now we are constantly trying to make friends so, "Yeah, let's make friends uhh, let's make friends" so it's almost like systematic thing. Fred was saying 'we got to make new friends because our friends are leaving' and but if you are not in tuned to that information, without making friends, you get very lonely. (Camille: 147)

As in any community, relationships could encompass close friendships, casual acquaintances and adversaries. However, it was my observation that they appeared to be formed quickly and often intensely due to their expatriate nature. Friendships could fizzle out with any move but they could just as easily last after the posting, helped by accessible travel, e-mail, and Skype. *"We've kept in touch with a lot of friends from [previous post]"* (Fiona: 203). However, there typically seemed to be a shelf life. It was hard to form relationships if you were mentally near the end of your post.

The other thing that Julie and I noticed is that in our last year here kind of felt like a holding pattern, [] but the one thing that we noticed is that we stopped trying to make any new friends. And that last year is sort of like 'done!' 'Oh so you're new here. I'm not going to take your phone number or call you because ... I don't care!' [laughing] James: 150

For others, the transient nature was bittersweet, especially for upcoming departures. *"It's going to be very emotional. [] You know in the next few years we're going to see people come and go, most people because we are here for a long, long time"* (Phillip: 202).

For some participants, the fixed time period created an anxiety to act and to experience. I observed this throughout the participants' accounts. There was a sense that most of the participants needed to explore, to participate, and to create because of the fixed and unmoveable time. There seemed to always be a need for movement. I see a connection here between the unstructured period of time subtheme and this particular one. Unstructured time

and feeling a lack of purpose appeared to be an alien concept for most of the participants who were used to living busy, full lives. This also seemed to be accentuated by the fact that they were aware of the amount of time they had at post. Three years can be experienced as a long time if one has nothing to do. Paradoxically, time can also feel wasted and quickly moving through your hands like sand. However, these feelings of frustration can either sediment you and cause you to feel hopeless or it can serve as a catalyst to take advantage of this fixed period. Gail and James talked at great length of taking advantage of travel, trying new projects, and moving on to new ones at her next post. This also resonates with Fiona and Camille's statements of using their time at post, whether it was at their present post or in past posts, to work on meaningful projects, like their career or volunteering. For Joan, her awareness of the limited time spurred her on to live and explore to the fullest. *"Yes, I mean it will be sad to leave when it's time to go but time to move on. To the next! To wherever we're headed to next... So I say take it...it's an adventure! It really is..."* (Joan: 176). Joan also suggested using this fixed notion of time to one's benefit:

So having said that, I would also say set your mind that you are going to like it. And it's not permanent. For me even I...I don't remember having my last bad day here but even what would have been my worse bad day, it's not permanent. We're going to be gone in anywhere from 3-6 years so enjoy it. And for some people, it is usually only 2 to 3 years, to me, that's such as short period of time.
Joan: 174

4.5.2 Theme IV-2: Time is Future Oriented

Besides the internal clock, there was always a sense that the participants were always in the state of planning for the future. As this theme unfolded in my analysis, I recalled a recent conversation that I had with friends who were expatriates for over 30 years. They led a very rich life, spanning many continents and making countless friends. The wife, who was the ETP, named her main regret: always living in the future and never enjoying or experiencing the present. Her husband nodded in agreement. They were always thinking about the next post, what opportunities were there and what they would do. Although they may not have had the perspective that the decades afforded my friends, this seemed to mirror how some of participants described living their lives at the time. It is not to say that they weren't living and experiencing life in the present, but it appeared that the future signified hope or promise. In some of the accounts, the participants appeared to be thinking about the next post, sometimes anxiously and striving to understand what they had learned or what they could

take from this post in order to do better for the next post. *“I think that I will definitely on my next posting try to avoid the holding pattern mentally”* (James: 152). Cathy described bidding for new jobs and all the rumination that surrounds that process even though she was not close to her exit date time: *“It bothers me because I think about it a lot. [] You know, all the scenarios running through your mind and what’s frustrating is that, a lot of times in these instances that will be nothing because it could be dead”* (Cathy: 123). For Fiona, the expanse of future possibilities appeared exhilarating. *“There’s all these cool looking places around the world. And you’re always like, “Oh wouldn’t that be great!”* (Fiona: 72). This future projecting was also further illustrated by Camille, whose focus was on the future although she still had a period of time to be at her present post.

You know, all of these things that I told to you that keep me busy and if I do anything productive, I really want to do something that is going to help with what we do next...To think about it when we go to the [next post] I would go with something figured out at least before with a job lined up so I wouldn’t go, you know, start all over again ... So definitely for it me it’s, it’s much better to not to think that I have to start all over again. Camille: 133

4.5.3 Theme IV-3: Lifestyle is a Continual Process

The expatriate experience was seen as a continual process, one to always be learning from and adding on to. I envisioned it as a slow-moving snowball, which gets bigger as it rolls along. This is where it seems that the future, present, and past join together and from that cumulative experience, knowledge and wisdom are formed. *“You adapt, you accept, you know and right after you accept it, don’t dwell on it and move on”* (Joan: 105). Although the postings were seen as set, distinct periods of time, the experiences of the participants were foundations which they could build and learn from. *“It really becomes part of everything you react to after”* (Fiona: 205). The following excerpt from James furthers the understanding of this snowballing process of learning and experiencing:

Umm, I’ve certainly learned about my own nature and how I need to be more proactive to take advantage of being at a posting has to offer. The potential with my free time. The potential to get out and explore. I have gotten out and explored. And just that I’ve learned about some of the pitfalls that I’ve thrown in there. That if we go out again to another posting, I’ll be more conscious. And much more proactive so in setting up, I can be more effective to get the things that I want to get done, done. James: 144

Camille viewed this process as one she is not only learning from but one that she is building a strategy for to serve her in the future. She recognized that this plan includes that although she is a trailing partner, she has choices to make and a responsibility to herself in the present and future.

I think that has a lot to do with doing therapy actually and it's just realizing that that's the choices we make and you know, and we have the opportunity to make great friends. Of course we go through the thing of saying good bye ... it's very sad but, but we are figuring out how to live this life. I think we have much more knowledge now that we, you know, you have to develop a strategy to live this life.
Camille: 147

In the next chapter, the discussion section, I will place these results and superordinate themes in a wider context and review the findings in conjunction with existing literature as well as existential literature that served to illuminate the themes.

5 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the experiences of ETPs and to look at how they adjusted to living overseas. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight Canadian and U.S. expatriate trailing partners (two men and six women) and the researcher employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis to design the research and analyse the data. This chapter will critically evaluate the results from the previous chapter. Furthermore, in order to place it in a wider context, the results will be reviewed in conjunction with existing literature and research presented in the literature review chapter.

As noted in IPA literature (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), it is acceptable that extra sources be researched and included to elucidate new viewpoints which have developed from the interviews and from subsequent analysis. Besides adding pre-existing literature to deal with unanticipated topics that arose from the data, I will be discussing existential literature which illuminates themes that appeared during and after the analysis and writing up period. The chapter will be divided into a discussion of each of the four superordinate themes which emerged from the analysis. I will begin with the first superordinate theme, Identity, and then move on to the Relational World superordinate theme. After the review of these two themes, I will explore the Process of Culture Shock theme, and conclude with a review of the Time superordinate theme. This will follow with a conclusion of the study as well as an examination of the significance of the study, the quality of the overall project and recommendations for future research.

5. 1 The Impact on the Sense of Identity

Issues with identity, primarily the challenge of having one's identity defined by others, appeared to be an element that some of the participants contended with when adjusting to their time abroad. There was a sense that while they were expatriates, they were considered a separate group and labelled as such by others. The ETPs were the ones who followed, and because of this, participants like Fiona and Phillip described being treated as not important or being discounted by others in their community. The reaction to this labelling was often described as a shock and was also referred to as dispiriting and affecting one's sense of self. For some, the reactions to the trailing partner identity were strongly negative, but others had

polar reactions. For example, James and Suzanne were not overly concerned with how others viewed them and James felt that the benefits of living abroad outweighed having this label.

While there were diverging opinions about how the ETP definition affected one's sense of identity, lack of purpose was a perpetual subtheme amongst a majority of the participants. It was described as negatively impacting one's sense of self. One's identity is usually defined by what one does and by one's productivity, particularly in North American culture. It is my observation that 'not being busy' is generally seen as a moral affliction and not having a sense of purpose can feel demoralizing and depressing. Having a routine was described not only as a goal for most of the participants but as an indication that one felt more grounded and whole. Most often, a career was described as essential to one's identity, because it provided both purpose and the craved-for sense of routine. Maintaining or resurrecting one's career was seen as difficult with many impediments in the way. However, rising to the challenge and creating a new career identity was a subtheme discussed by all as being crucial to one's well-being.

These themes are consistent with what has been raised in existing ETP literature with regards to the challenges of identity. Shaffer and Harrison's (2001) research also noted that ETPs may not adapt well if they do not recognize that roles and skills that worked at home may not work well overseas. A majority of the candidates noted that they had difficulties at certain points continuing their careers or finding meaningful work. It appears that this one of the places that 'psychological contract,' discussed by several researchers (Guzzo et al, 1994; Garonzik et al., 2000; Haslberger and Brewster, 2009), broke down because of the little organizational support given to the ETPs in this area. These sentiments also resonate throughout the ETP research covered in the literature review (Hughes, 1999; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Bikos et al, 2007b; Bryson and Hoge, 2005; Weise, 2006; Haslberger and Brewster, 2008; Richardson, 2010). Hanging on to past identities is not a productive strategy for adjustment, and in the case of this study, the participants had to create new ones.

Redefining one's own identity by learning new skills such as languages or creating a routine which fits into the new lifestyle, as this study's participants found, help individuals better adapt to new locations. This is clearly evident in Gail, Suzanne, Camille, Joan, Fiona, and James's accounts. When they realized that their former careers or identities would not

translate to their new lives abroad, they looked for creative ways to forge new identities and construct portable jobs that did work well with their lives overseas.

Maintaining one's sense of self and creating a portable identity was also the crux of Bryson and Hoge's (2005) work. They acknowledge that the ETP's life is thrown upside down and what worked in one's home country will not necessarily succeed abroad, so individuals need to assess their commitment to change (Bryson and Hoge, 2005). As with a majority of the participants in this study such as Suzanne, Cathy, Gail, Camille, Joan, and Fiona, Bryson and Hoge (2005) stated that the ETPs needed to tap into whatever personal resources they have, such as stress management and open mindedness, and tools they can utilize, such as a support network, counselling and whatever other outside resources are needed to establish stability and security.

Turning to existential literature to elucidate the findings, identity and purpose are key elements of one's personal dimension, which is part of the four dimensions: physical, social, personal, and spiritual (Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker, 2005). Each of this study's themes appeared to encompass elements of these dimensions. Van Deurzen's (1984) concept of the four dimensions is based on the philosophical works of Binswanger's (1963) to which she added the fourth dimension, the *Uberwelt* or the spiritual dimension. Van Deurzen and Arnold Baker (2005, p. 157) note that the personal dimension is "a world of our own (*Eigenwelt*), which is regulated by a sense of ownership, individuality and integrity." However, there are times when our identity and place in the world is tested and we struggle to meet this challenge. As discussed in the existential migration section of the literature review, escaping from freedom and not taking this responsibility to choose how one confronts difficulties and obstacles exemplifies Sartre's (1956) concept of 'bad faith.' When we practice this form of self-deception, Cooper (2003, p. 25) explains "we also deny our possibility of freely choosing towards our own future, and actualizing our own most potentiality for being." This concept is extremely useful in understanding what causes the trailing spouse to fix their identity in a certain way and therefore to be unable to adjust to their new setting, or, in a similar vein, allow others to define them. They are never able to move on from that even if time and place have changed. It is as if they are saying, 'I was this before when I was at home or elsewhere so this is how I'm going to be here.'

Van Deurzen (1998) acknowledges that living in 'good faith' is difficult, particularly in the face of living in a different culture. The participants had to take responsibility and choose how they responded to barriers and difficulties in creating an identity. This appeared to be no easy task and seemed to be an on-going process that one had to work through over time. However, not taking responsibility or succumbing to learned helplessness, the feeling things are out of one's control, leads to depression and anxiety (Yalom, 1980). Citing May (1969), Van Deurzen (2002, p. 135) notes that "when people become detached and apathetic they embark on a downward spiral." Baumeister (1991, p. 29) found that in order to have a life with meaning, one needs to have:

1. Purpose – we perform activities oriented towards purpose;
2. Value – we do actions that are right and good;
3. Efficacy – we have control over events and making a difference; and
4. Self-worth – our lives have positive values.

Without these, he notes, a person may feel out of balance (Baumeister, 1991). I view this in line with Heidegger's (1962/2008) concept of "unheimlich." Heidegger (1962/2008) described this sense of being unsettled and ill at ease as uncanniness or "unheimlich." He notes: "anxiety thus takes away from Dasein the possibility of understanding itself, as it falls, in terms of the world and the way things have been publicly interpreted" (Heidegger, 1962/2008, p.232). In other words, because we are not in tune with ourselves when we are anxious, we feel "not at home" (Heidegger, 1962/2008, p. 233). This state, however, is part of the human condition (Cooper, 2003). While anxiety or uncanniness may be experienced as uncomfortable, it can also push us to engage and shake things up. Madison (2010, p. 25) notes that for his participants who left home to find their purpose, the "uncanniness confronts the individual with the nothingness of the world in which he or she feels compelled to fulfil his or her own self."

This resonates with this study's participants' accounts. When participants such as James, Camille, and Cathy felt at times that they had no control over certain aspects of their lives or were feeling a lack of purpose, they described their mood as low, sometimes anxious, and they had a hard time making decisions and taking action. James described this as a 'holding pattern.' This greatly affected their feelings of self-worth, which caused a vicious circle, because without feelings of control and confidence, their motivation to fulfil goals was minimal.

However, there seemed to be a point for all the participants when this feeling of unease pushed them out of this period of alienation and feelings of lack of purpose and propelled them to act and discover new ways of being and doing. No matter how many obstacles were placed in their way, all of them found creative ways to find outlets, whether work or projects that brought meaning into their lives. Most of them appeared to thrive despite or even because of the difficulties by overcoming and learning from challenges and crisis. In past research regarding ETP adjustment and identity (Hughes, 1999; Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Mohr and Klein, 2004; Bikos et al., 2007b), particularly with regards to their career, I felt that the challenges and problems were well identified but the sense-making of the participants and how they negotiated and even overcame obstacles were missing. Because of the phenomenological nature of this study, the participants had room and time to explore this process which may provide readers with a better understanding of this experience.

After analysing the data, I felt the need to also review Camus, because both his philosophical and dramatic works delve deeply into what it means to be an outsider or a stranger and into the sense of alienation that leads one to despair, yet still carry on and even prosper. One theme in the author's work is that the absurd is man's quest to find meaning in a meaningless world (Camus, 1942/2000). He (1942/2000, p. 75) argues that the "traveller" is an example of the absurd man; I would argue that the ETP is the quintessential absurd person because they must constantly create their own meaning. Because they do not have a 'ready-made role' for them in their new home, meaning or a purpose is not there to be 'found.' They must negotiate their own identity and place in the world. To Camus, the absurd is not only a state of anguish, it can also be one of motivation and creativity (McCarthy, 1982). Van Deurzen-Smith (1997, p. 68) notes that for Camus, "it is the perception of meaning and fullness in one's situation and surroundings that constitute the art of living, no matter how tough or how pointless the circumstances may seem." Combating the lack of purpose, the participants set out to create a new identity and a career that could buttress a new sense of self. I view this concept as in line with Madison's (2010) existential migrants who uses their displacement as a catalyst for growth and opportunity to construct a new identity.

5.2 Changes to the Relational World

Van Deurzen and Arnold-Baker (2005, p. 89) describe this dimension, the social world, as “that of our emotional relations to other people.” The concept of relationships is one that is always in flux in the expatriate lifestyle. While the image of life overseas is one of adventure, it can, paradoxically, be one of alienation and isolation (van Deurzen, 1998). However, there was a sense that ETPs experienced more intense changes than their partners and other expatriates. The sub-themes were temporal in nature, ranging from the initial early days of experiencing isolation to ultimately belonging to a community. Because they often arrived to post with no fixed support structure or an office waiting for them, they struggled with loneliness and finding their way in a new community. The lack of connectedness appeared to affect a majority of the participants to a certain degree and was seen as having a negative impact on their wellbeing and mental health. This initial isolation and how it affects one’s adjustment has been described in great detail in both the expatriate and ETP literature discussed in the literature review. The participants’ experience of isolation resonates with Bikos et al.’s (2007b) participants during their first year in Ankara, McKenna’s (2010) depiction of expatriate Doug and Bryson and Hoge’s (2005) description of their experience of loneliness and isolation while adjusting to their new home.

Researchers have noted the impact that this type of experience has on one’s mental health. Bekhet et al. (2008, p. 208) note that “loneliness is a subjective state” where there is a separation from someone or something of attachment and alienation or isolation is an objective state or the manifestation of a physical separation. In citing several studies, the authors note that loneliness has a relationship with mental health challenges, including issues such as “neuroticism, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic concerns and aggression.” (Bekhet et al., 2008, p. 209).

Bekhet et al. (2008) notes that people form or join relationships such as friendship, couples, religious congregations, and clubs in order to belong and join with others they have things in common with or similar values. Becoming part of such a community and negotiating new friendships and relationships were perpetual subthemes that arose from analysis. The support from these relationships, both with other expatriates and with locals was seen as crucial but was simultaneously noted as complex and problematic. Because of the small community

feeling, there were often complaints about the lack of boundaries from others and a claustrophobic atmosphere which is characteristic of this type of living situation. There was a sense that the participants experienced these relationships as a double-edged sword, benefiting from the support they brought, but also suffering from resulting claustrophobia. They had to be careful about whom to select as friends for their own well-being. The topic of friendships and community were not discussed in great detail in the expatriate literature reviewed except for in studies conducted by Shaffer and Harrison (2001); Bryson and Hoge (2005); Weise, (2006); Walsh, (2006); Bikos et al. (2007b); and Madison, (2010). This study's findings were in line with this previous research which discussed the challenges of isolation during the early days in one's new home, the necessity of friendships and obtaining social support for adjustment and the difficult nature of forming such relationships.

These relationships were seen as vital for support but one must also be conscious that not all social contact is positive and the wrong type of relationships could add to adjustment problems (Haslberger and Brewster, 2008). Seven out of the eight participants noted the toxic behaviour that they experienced from others and expressed the negative impact this behaviour had on their own mood and well-being. It was described as 'contagious' and negatively affected morale and was seen as something to avoid to preserve mental health. Haslberger and Brewster (2008, p. 330) cite various studies regarding "emotional contagion" that support this study's participants ascertain that it was best to avoid troubled people in order to keep their well-being intact.

Turning to existential literature to explain the negative behaviour from others that the participants described and tried to make sense of, Heidegger's (1962/2008) exploration of 'the They' resonates with these accounts. In order to avoid feelings of anxiety, Heidegger states that we fall in with other people or "'the They' until we experience 'unheimlichkeit, 'ill-at-easness,' and discover we stand alone'" (Kirkland-Handley and Mitchell, 2005, p. 181). Blattner (2006, p 125) states that for Heidegger, this falling in with others causes us to ignore our freedom, to live and relate inauthentically. Tantam and van Deurzen (2005, p. 128) further explain:

This means that we are inclined to relate to ourselves and to others in an anonymous fashion. We are inauthentically in the mode of the 'They-self'; we act with self and others as we imagine others would act. In this state of anonymous relating we will tend to hide in gossip, curiosity and ambiguity.

However, like bad faith, escaping inauthentic behaviour completely is impossible because we are always being-in-the-world-with-others (Cohn, 1997; Spinelli, 2005). Cohn (1997, p. 25) explains that “‘being-in-the-world’ we find ourselves always in the world as others, never as separate entities by defined by other, as we define them.” Van Deurzen-Smith (1997), however, notes “the key to becoming authentic is to face our own death and with it our own limitations.” In this case, authenticity is a process that is fluid, shifting and one has to take responsibility for (Pollard, 2005, p. 172). When we become aware of this and can be more open and flexible with the world, we can strive to live and relate more authentically with others (Cohn, 1997).

Befriending locals was seen as important to the participants in their adjustment process and they expressed the need to not be cloistered in solely the expatriate community. Fiona, Cathy, Suzanne, Joan, and Gail expressed that they did not want to live amongst the local population in an observational manner but to genuinely relate to the entire community, locals and expats, to be fully open to the experience of living and relating abroad. This was in line with Madison’s (2010) findings that expatriate communities could be constricting and alienating to some individuals and that socializing outside this community opens one up to the culture and new experiences. Like most of the participants in my study, his participants found the expatriate community frustrating and limiting and felt the need to escape in order to have freedom. Making friends with locals was seen as crucial not only for socializing but for adjustment.

Another sub-theme that ran through all the interviews was how the lifestyle had an impact on the role or the concept of family. Again, these types of relationships were affected by the expatriate lifestyle, again a double-edge sword: in some ways, it brought families closer together, but was also perceived as placing more stress on a marriage than if one stayed domestically. Half of the participants discussed having issues related to their partner or marital difficulties. However, for those who reported problems, half of them attributed it to the lifestyle while the other half reported that their marital issues were already there, though they were exacerbated by the move. There was a sense that between counselling and moving to a new locale, couples were allowed to have a fresh start in their relationships. While the

literature reviewed (Hughes, 1999, Shaffer and Harrison, 2001, Bikos et al, 2007b) made mention of these issues of marital difficulties, there were no in-depth exploration of these studies. Regarding the effects of expatriation on marriage, Hughes (1999) states that a large percentage of her interviewees claimed to have marital difficulties because of their displacement and the new role they felt forced to take on, but included no in-depth insight, perhaps due to the large overview and numerous interviewees of her qualitative study. Bryson and Hoge (2005), however, spoke honestly of their own marital difficulties, which ranged from feelings of resentment to thoughts of infidelity to soothe their feelings of loneliness, but did not provide statistics from a wider community. None of the studies reviewed explored whether the marital difficulties were in place before the move abroad or happened after because of adjustment issues. The implication is that living overseas burdens marriages, but there was no in depth exploration of this assumption. In this study, however, it is evident that marital relationships and difficulties are not one-dimensional and that the move overseas itself may not always be the cause of the discord in one's family.

Living abroad was seen as beneficial to children. Participants, however, did worry about various factors related to expatriate life, like the impact of crime, but focused most of their concern on the issue of children leaving friends behind and adapting to their new surroundings. Additionally there was a subtheme regarding leaving one's family of origin which also signified the main aspect of leaving home. It seems that for the participants, 'home' wasn't necessarily seen as a place but was where your parents and siblings were. Many of the participants had misgivings about leaving family, especially taking their children away from those types of relationships. However, the notion of creating 'home' where one lived was seen as crucial for one's family. This study's participants' concept of home and relationships seem to resonate with Walsh's (2006) exploration of how her participant strives to create a semblance of 'home' using domesticity (keeping home identity through food and cooking) and intimacy (creating meaningful relationships whilst abroad).

Leaving home, especially taking one's children away from home was discussed at length by a few of the participants as one of those difficult choices. Although it was possible to belong or forge relationships that created intimacy for oneself and their family, there appeared to be nostalgia for those deep-rooted relationships of family and friends from home. However, a few of the participants, Gail in particular, noted that you must create a home wherever you

are, especially for your children. This resonates with Madison's (2006) notion of home as a concept versus a tangible place or one's birth country.

5.3 The Process of Culture Shock

The experience of expatriates having culture shock has been written about widely. However, each country and each individual comes complete with their own experiences and cultures. This section will discuss in further detail some sub-themes that arose, as well as capture experiences unique to those who lived in a certain place and a certain time. For all the participants, the ways they reacted to their new locale and set expectations were based on previous experiences. All the participant spoke at length about their prior post, especially regarding culture shock, whether it was overseas or domestically. Participants then described their early days in Honduras and how they reacted to the reality they encountered once they arrived. This then led to honest and frank descriptions of how they experienced the cultural distances they faced. Although all the participants described feeling somewhat adjusted to their present home, most of them described occasional difficulties adapting to the host country's cultural differences and expressed great concern and unease with the poverty that they witnessed on a daily basis. Similar findings of reactions to culture shock and cultural distance factored in findings in research conducted by Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Walsh, 2006; Robertson et al, 2007; Bikos et al., 2007b; Smiley, 2010; and McKenna, 2010 in which they made sense of shocks. McKenna (2010) notes that his participant doesn't completely adapt but tries to find way of coping with chaos and shocks that he encounters. As with the participants in this study, adapting to these cultural differences is an on-going process and feelings of groundlessness and, conversely, feelings of adjustment can come in waves. This result adds to challenging traditional culture shock literature, because the notion of the linear process of traditional U-shaped culture shock theory again is questioned.

The concept of culture shock and our relationship to the environment in which we live is part of the individual's physical dimension. Van Deurzen and Arnold Baker (2005, p. 27) state that in this dimension, "the tension between the desire for security and the threat of potential insecurity is a powerful element determining our struggle." This tension between these two poles is part of our existence and may be magnified overseas, but how do we adjust to it?

Heidegger's (1962/2008) concept of 'thrownness,' which was discussed in the existential migration section, is helpful in understanding this dilemma. Not facing the situation that we encounter, such as moving to a different culture, by escaping through isolation, self-harm such as drug and alcohol abuse or extramarital affairs, or even refusing to come to terms that one has left home for a period of time will have a negative impact on the individual. This is where the physical dimension intertwines with the personal and identity is impacted by culture shock. Blattner (2006, p. 161) states that for Heidegger "the contingency of the self is an aspect of thrownness. You can only be who you factually are in the cultural, social, historical, and linguistic context in which you live." The situation may not be changeable but we can make a choice how we confront it (Cohn, 1997). All the participants had negotiated challenges due to the move but described times when they didn't want to face them. Suzanne, most notably, described fighting against the culture shock and changes she experienced and the negative affect that this lack of adjustment had on her marriage and personal well-being. This notion is in tune with the participants' described observations of others who were not coping, could not or would not adjust, stayed solely in expatriate enclaves, and appeared unhappy and isolated.

The subtheme of language's role in the ETP's adjustment was mentioned in expatriate literature, but again there was no in-depth exploration of its impact only that proficiency in language assists in adaptation (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Mohr and Klein, 2004, Bikos et al. 2007b). Camille, James, Phillip, and Joan spoke about the role of language in their lives and how not being fluent affected their adjustment. Even though a majority of the participants were fluent or proficient in Spanish, some participants such as Camille and Fiona experienced the frustration of learning a language or not being fluent in another language at previous posts, and this was experienced as not operating at one's maximal potential. Learning a new language can be difficult and appearing markedly different from others can cause despair and the desire to retreat to what and who is familiar. However, the ability to communicate was seen as crucial in connecting with others and truly adapting to one's home.

Contending with differences in physical space and freedom was a subtheme that was touched upon by a majority of the participants. Van Deurzen (1998, p. 55) notes that all expatriates are not living in familiar surroundings and therefore "the basic animal instinct for security is tampered with, a continuous state of alarm is set off." Because of lack of public

transportation and infrastructure and fear of crime, the participants described feeling claustrophobic and fenced in. Madison (2010, p. 61) notes that his participants stated that “feeling independent and free permits choosing for oneself, but independence, freedom, and thus choice, require a sense of physical 'space' because for some people physical space is a requirement for psychological space.” One of Shaffer and Harrison’s (2001) dissatisfied ETPs complained of “living in a cage within a cage” (p. 243) during her time in Caracas, which also had security issues and fortress-like protections. This excerpt resonates with many of this study’s participants descriptions of feeling constricted. Feeling trapped and lacking the space they needed, was described by my study’s participants as having profound negative effect on their ability to cope and their psychological well-being.

Another corresponding sub theme that was discussed by all participants was their on-going fear of crime and lack of security. This theme was central to Smiley’s (2010) research on expatriate fear and exclusion in Dar es Salaam. Smiley (2010) essentially found that because expatriates in her study believed Dar to be crime-ridden, their concern caused them to construct a segregated expatriate community which perpetuated limited social interaction with locals. This, in turn, she found brought about little cross-cultural understanding. This was true of other overseas locations, and particularly Honduras. The threat of crime and violence was always lurking in the background and while the participants accepted it as a part of life, most of them struggled to live freely and move around despite their trepidation. They reported about other expatriates that they came across who mirrored Smiley’s participants’ experience of expatriate fear.

In order to adapt, all the participants described the need to accept the difference of one’s new home and to take the stance of focusing on the positives and staying open to all experiences to enjoy one’s time overseas. This was not seen as an effort to ‘wear rose coloured glasses’ or ‘faking it until you make it’ but to acknowledge the difficulties and to cultivate flexibility for one’s own well-being. It was expressed by almost all the participants as an attitude one had to take. While the participants did not take a personality test, they expressed a degree of openness and flexibility reflected in the reviewed quantitative research (van Oudenhoven et al, 2003; Swagler and Jome, 2005; Stahl and Caligiuri, 2005) which measured the role of personality on expatriate adjustment. With exception to a few studies (Walsh, 2006; McKenna, 2010; Madison, 2010), I found that how people took responsibility or how they

utilized resiliency or accessed support was missing from most expatriate and ETP literature. Similar to the findings regarding identity and career, complaints and shortcomings of being an ETP have been well documented, but by allowing a more in-depth exploration of the participants making sense of their lives overseas perhaps gives readers a more dimensional understanding of this group's experience. In acceptance and adaptation, the participants seemed to welcome the differences and engaged in being open with their own foreignness and feelings of being thrown into a situation and place that was different from home. As with Madison's participants (2010), the ETPs appeared to view this as an opportunity, not as a burden or a mistake. Besides some of the meaningful projects and portable careers that the participants created, meeting different people that they otherwise would not have met if they stayed in their home country or experiencing other cultures, opened them to a new way of being. This was experienced by the participants as overwhelmingly positive and as a catalyst for growth.

5.4 The Concept of Time is Altered

The analysis found that time or one's relation to time appeared to be different to this group of participants than for most individuals who are not globally mobile. Unlike the other superordinate themes, I could not locate quantitative or qualitative research that focused specifically on this aspect of the ETP or expatriate experience. Except for ascertaining if time in country affects adjustment, the way it is perceived or experienced was missing from past ETP literature. The subtheme of the lifestyle coming with an internal clock was not described per se by each of the participants but it emerged from the data. Each one described posts in time-frames that were fixed and not malleable. With multiple moves, the past flavoured the present but when described, each posting was told as a chapter or an episode. This, in turn, affected how one saw relationships. If someone came towards the end of a post, then it was seen as difficult to make friends with that person because the end was near and the participant was moving on to the next post.

In the reviewed literature, Bikos et al. (2007b) made mention of a participant's sadness because of an overseas friendship ending due to an impending departure. This resonated with Phillip and Camille's recognition that they and their family would be encountering a cyclical loss of friends over a set time period. Some of the participants in Shaffer and Harrison's

(2001) research also discussed being affected by the limited time frame and felt having this fixed period allowed them to endure their postings. One of their participants went past this time expectation and not only noted that “my time was up” but reported feeling distraught during the extra time over the expected limit she remained at that post. Like Suzanne, Cathy, and James, once the internal clock went off, it was time to go. However in Shaffer and Harrison’s participant’s situation, it seems that if one does not adhere to the alarm, there may be negative repercussions to one’s well-being and adjustment.

However, because of the fixed, definite time-frame for each posting there was a sense throughout all the participants’ descriptions that one must take advantage of this time to explore and experience a place. That period would soon be over, never to be relived again because the new chapter must begin. There was a sense that the majority of participants’ focus always tended to be on the future. Participants frequently seemed to be reflecting on what they could learn from this post to bring to the next post and thinking about where the next post would be. ‘Where’s next?’ was always the question in the background. Each posting appeared to have a snowball effect, a lifestyle in which one not only accumulates possessions around the world but also knowledge and wisdom.

In order to expand on the notion of time, I will again turn to expatriate literature to elucidate the findings. Van Deurzen and Arnold Baker (2005, p. 219) note that the concept of time is one of the significant aspects of the spiritual dimension and they ask how do the past, present, and future influence the way we live our lives. Cohn (1997, p. 14) states that our notion of time is described as thus: “the past is carried along by the present that is already anticipating the future.” All three tenses are interrelated and affect each other and this was certainly experienced by the participants in their accounts. Weixel-Dixon and Strasser (2005, p. 228) state that Heidegger noted there were three tenses of time – ec-stasies – “ways in which we stand out” and these tenses were always in relation with one another. Blattner (2006, p. 117) explains that Heidegger (1962/2008) argues that time measured by a clock or calendar is determined by “primordial temporality,” because our lives are structured by time. Temporality or the concept of time factored throughout all the other superordinate themes. The participants’ descriptions of their experiences were ones of process and movement of time which impacted their self-identity, relationships, and encounters with new cultures.

Mentioned during the identity superordinate theme, the lack of purpose and feeling of being 'in limbo,' that some of the participants described in the present tense, felt like a void and, as James described, a 'holding period.' Most of the participants experienced this period as 'in limbo' and stressful. In explaining Binswanger's (1955) view of melancholia, Cohn (1997, p. 110) states that that this state manifests itself when the individual's does not focus on the present but only the past and the future and this causes hopelessness and despair. Once they could relate to all three periods of time, it appeared that not only they were thriving in the present but they were learning to build upon their past and present experiences for their future lives.

In the final chapter, the Conclusion section, I will summarize and critically evaluate what I have learned from the process of conducting this research study and how it has had an impact on me as a researcher and an existential psychotherapist. It is my aim to provide the reader with my own reflections of the strengths of this study and how the project can be utilized in both practise and training as well as explore avenues for further research.

6 CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I will conclude this study with a summary of the research findings, the significance of the study, the strengths and limitations of this study, the study's clinical implications and its potential impact on theory and practice, and the quality of the research project. I will end the study with suggestions for further research.

6.1 Summary

The objective of this research project was to explore the experience of expatriate trailing partners. Eight trailing partners from North America who partners worked for NGOs, international organizations, and diplomatic missions were recruited and interviewed about their experience of being expatriate trailing partners overseas at their present post. The author found that discussions of past experiences of being a trailing partner could not be separated from speaking about the present so this data was also included in the analysis. The methodology, IPA, was utilized to design the research project and analyse the data, and this allowed for a detailed exploration of the participants' experiences. Four superordinate themes were identified.

In the first superordinate theme, the experience of living overseas was found to have a strong impact on the sense of identity. Under this superordinate theme, the sub-themes of the challenges of identity, the lack of purpose's effect on selfhood, and career as a measure of self-identity emerged from the analysis. Under the second superordinate theme, changes to the relational world, the sub-themes included the impact of isolation and alienation which occurred during the early days at post; the roles of new friendships and community, which highlighted the positives as well as negatives of these relationships; and the role of family, which encompassed sub themes regarding the experience's impact on marriage, children and family of origin. The process of culture shock was the third superordinate theme, with sub-themes of reactions to cultural distance, language, differences in physical space and freedom, and the process of acceptance and adaptation. In the last superordinate theme, which discussed how the concept of time is altered, sub-themes explored how the lifestyle appears to be centred on a fixed time, much like an alarm clock; how ETP time is future-oriented; and

lastly, how the lifestyle is always a continual process which continues to build upon itself. All the themes were found to be interrelated and affected one another.

6.2 Significance of this study

In empirical research conducted over the last decade, family issues or spouse/partner unwillingness to move or unhappiness once they move abroad are cited as some of the main reasons why prospective employees declined overseas jobs or curtail their assignment. Researchers have found that besides the exorbitant cost related to the expatriate worker's early departure, poor performance was linked to their partners' unhappiness, referred to as the 'spillover effect' (Takeuchi, et al, 2002). For organizations and corporations, the bottom line is money lost: premature departure and substandard performance is expensive to them. Prior research shows that it can cost as much as one million U.S. dollars to relocate an employee, and total costs to multinational corporations (MNCs) alone can be up to 75 million U.S. dollars per year (McNulty, 2005). The psychological impact on the expatriates and their families and their adjustment has been touch upon by researchers, but typically as a means to the end of retaining the expatriate worker.

There has been significant qualitative and quantitative research on expatriates and their adjustment process, and with increased globalization, the demand for this type of research will continue to grow. While there have been numerous insightful quantitative and mixed-methodological studies on ETPs, they have concentrated on the 'why.' Researchers and experts in this field still note that despite awareness, this group still faces challenges with adjustment and self-identity. Perhaps to move onto a new understanding, we as qualitative researchers can focus on the 'how's' and 'what's' and learn directly from the participants as they make sense of their experiences. My goal is that this paper will add to the growing body of existential migration as well as expatriate mental health and wellness research.

Based on my search for pre-existing literature, I believe this is the first interpretative phenomenological analytical study on expatriate trailing partners and will be true to this methodology's aims of contributing to knowledge and social change.

6.3 Strengths and Limitations of this study

In keeping with pre-existing literature on expatriates and ETP, themes such as culture shock, challenges to identity and the changes to their relational world emerged and were elucidated for a greater understanding of this group. Additionally, new themes or unexplored themes such as the participants' description of how changes to their physical space affected them psychologically and the exploration of their perception of time added to the significance of this study. Employing IPA's purposive and small sampling, the participants' voices could be heard and in-depth analysis provided richer, more textured findings than what has been found in quantitative and mixed methodological studies. Furthermore, because IPA is ideographic, the participants are seen as individuals with both shared and unique concerns and were not just part of a percentage, as is found in large studies.

However, there are limitations to this study. Although I was able to find eight participants who met the criteria for the sampling, because of the recent political unrest, the pool from which I could select in Honduras was smaller than I anticipated when I was first designing this project. Furthermore, since the participant pool and the expatriate population is smaller in Honduras than in other large metropolises, more of an effort was needed to obscure potential recognizable attributes of the participants.

Because there was little variation in some of the participant attributes - all were educated with at least a first degree, five had advanced degrees; all had been or considered themselves to be professionals; and all were well travelled before becoming ETPs. Having a different demographic sample in that regard may produce different results. Also, because a majority of the participants were in relationships with their partners before deciding to move abroad, their willingness to move and be part of this lifestyle also influenced the data compared to someone who did not choose to move abroad or the offer to move overseas was not expected. Being married to someone who works for an international development organization, international NGO, or a diplomatic mission signifies the awareness that some of your career will be spend moving abroad. Results from ETPs associated with MNCs will presumably yield different results if their partner's company offered an unexpected transfer and it was not their decision to move.

Choosing one location over another undoubtedly influenced the results. As mentioned in the methods section of this report, one location, Honduras, was selected to not only provide a homogeneous sample but also for logistical concerns. A multi-country sample might have provided more generalizable results. As the participant pool only consisted of Americans and Canadians, research with other expatriate nationals may generate different results due to cultural differences. However, exploring these participants' experiences provided us with a strong sense of what it was like to be an expatriate trailing partner and the participants also offered rich details of their experiences in other locales, which greatly added to the data. It was not my intent to declare this the definitive study about ETPs but rather to make a contribution to the field and encourage more research on this group.

As discussed in the methodology section, there is no perfect methodological choice for qualitative research. While I believe my selection of IPA was a sound choice for this project based on my epistemological choices, other methodologies such as critical narrative analysis or template analysis may have influence the focus of the analysis and what could be explored. As mentioned in the methodology section, possible limitations of this research approach is the participant's accounting of their experience. The participants, at times, differed in their ability to be introspective and reflective on their experience and this may have influenced the data. Although most of the discussion focused on their current setting and recent experiences, the participants discussed and explored past experiences that shaped and focused their recent settings or to provide context. This recounting of past experiences was based on memory, the recollection of which could be shaped and influenced by more current experiences.

Because of the breadth of the topic and word limitations on the overall project, it may be useful to conduct a larger scale project in the future or conduct follow up studies which focus on specific aspects on this phenomenon such as the changes to the participant's relational world or their experience of time. Instead of a limitation, though, I see this as an opening for possible future research studies.

Lastly, although I do not consider this necessarily a limitation, the study may have yielded some different data if I focused solely on male expatriate partners or female expatriate

partner. However, it was not my goal to include gender as a main focus of the study, but to focus on the notion of expatriate trailing partners in general.

6.4 Reflexive Reflections

In the almost three years since I began to develop this project, I was aware of my position as both a researcher and as an expatriate trailing partner throughout the entire research project and how my presuppositions could affect the interviews and the analysis. Although some of the material resonated with my experiences and some did not, I was aware that everyone's experiences, including mine, were unique. We are all shaped by our own history, family of origin, ethnicity, and class, and this personal context will shape our experiences (Etherington, 2004). Being female, American-born with a British father, and mixed race from a multi-ethnic immigrant family undoubtedly shaped my worldview as the participant's background did theirs. Migration and multiple national identities was part of my personal make-up but I was aware that the history of the participants could be completely different from mine. I was cautious not to give extra weight to data that was either the familiar or unfamiliar to me and attempted to be attuned to my own thoughts and biases in order to fully engage with the participants.

Because of this I kept a reflexive journal which allowed me to engage with the material and develop thoughts and ideas further. I consistently discussed issues and thoughts that arose for me with my supervisor and peer group throughout the entire process and conferred with my supervisor about how I analysed and discovered themes that were grounded in the participants' interviews.

I was also mindful of how the material could have a bearing on me and influenced my growth (Etherington, 2004). Although I had experience interviewing people and researching topics from my documentary filmmaking days and developed listening skills from my existential phenomenological psychotherapeutic training, this research project deeply impacted me personally and professionally as a psychotherapist and coach. Morrow's (2009) account of the transformation that she underwent as a person and as a psychotherapist because of her research project resonated with the changes I experienced. Not only did it help me make some sense of some of my past experiences and others that I witnessed, I believe that I

became a better clinician. I sense that my listening, attending, and exploring skills grew exponentially during this process. This also had a positive impact on my work with clients who were trying to make sense of issues and challenges that they were facing during my clinical residency at a crisis centre in the metropolitan Washington D.C. area. Carrying out this research project has also influenced me to learn more about career's impact on identity and understanding the vast issues that expatriates and immigrants contend with in their new homes. Embarking on further education in this area will be beneficial in my present location, Washington D.C., which has both a large domestic and international transient population and immigrant community and in clinical work during a possible overseas posting in the future.

It is necessary to point out that the analysis process took place after I moved back to my home country. I moved back to the D.C. area, where I have lived on and off for twenty five years. It has become 'home' for me and despite the typical disorientation that comes with any move, I was surrounded by the 'known' and have deep roots here. While my expatriate experience added to my knowledge of the topic and was a recent memory for me, I explored the data with a different lens than if I were still abroad. My engagement wasn't detached from the participants' accounts, but I believe time away and being in a different setting afforded me some observational distance and therefore influenced the reading of the material. This too was reflected on in the reflexive journal and discussed with my supervisor and supervision peers.

6.5 Clinical Implications

This study could have significant impact on how corporations, international organizations, and governments provide assistance and support programs aimed at expatriate trailing partners while living overseas. The results of this study could be used to improve expatriate couples, family, and individual therapies, as well as supply information to give to expatriates and their families in order for them to provide their own self-care. Madison (2010) has offered valuable therapeutic considerations in working with existential migrants and it is my hope that this study will contribute to the expatriate adjustment and mental health discourse as well as the existential psychotherapy field. I envision that this study will provide

psychotherapists and counsellors with more understanding of how best to provide or tailor psychotherapeutic which can aid clients through the difficult adjustment period or during other challenging times of change. I will first share what I found beneficial in working with this client group and then reflect on other findings and implications that arose out of the research that will be beneficial for audiences such as psychotherapists and other mental health practitioners and international organizations which are interested in outcomes for this group.

This research has had great impact on my own clinical work and my understanding of how ETPs experience adjustment. After I conducted the study, I found the overall experience affected my clinical work with clients. In the past, I would, like most other practitioners, listen and attend to whatever presenting issue the ETP client brought to therapy, I learned from this study that that it is helpful to also have the client describe their expectations about their moves, how they viewed their identities and roles, the state of their relationships, and what gives them meaning. Since conducting this study, I have found it valuable to listen for references made by ETP or expatriate clients to the four dimensions and then to encourage them to consider where they may feel a lack in each area. Together we can explore what the possibilities and limitations they encounter in trying to seek a balance. In looking at the physical dimension, previously, I would attempt to get a sense of the how the client nurtures his or her body through diet and exercise but the research foregrounded for me the need to also discuss with clients how they are affected by security issues and changes in their ability to move around freely.

I found that examining issues in the social dimension is crucial for clients, especially expatriates, given that numerous studies, including this one, discovered that positive social support from family and friends greatly influences how one adjusts, manages stress during transitions, and maintains positive well-being. Understanding how one relates to others is imperative especially because of the work that is needed to form new friendships in different cultures as well as the vast impact that it has on existing relationships, such as marital and familial. The participants in this study discussed at length the impact that both positive and negative relationships had on their experiences overseas. Given how important social support is during a transition, I am now aware of how beneficial it is in therapy to explore with the client what their social supports are as well as the quality of their friendships. As with things

like food and exercise, this research highlighted how important and nourishing relationships are for individuals, especially during major life changes and challenging times. I would now look with clients at their present social world and consider if their relationships are fulfilling and positive or shallow and toxic. This study also underscored for me the family's impact on the client's adjustment, particularly during this time away from home. To understand this unique experience where nuclear families may frequently rely on each other more as they leave behind other familial and long-standing supports, I discuss with my clients their present perception of their family cohesiveness and connectedness and how they and their families can remain supportive and intact wherever they are in the world.

Focusing on the impact of an overseas move on one's identity, and how one deals with changes to these roles, is helpful in allowing clients to acknowledge how this move has impacted on how they saw themselves. How does career or lack of work affect how they perceive themselves? Does their present role give them meaning and purpose or are they feeling empty and lost? How can they take charge of their identity and existence? Now that I understand how much routine and career impacted not only how my participants experienced a change to their identity but how it affected their adjustment, I work assist clients in asking these questions of themselves. Instead of mourning or feeling as one has lost control, reflecting on these changes has opened up possibilities and considerations of different ways of being. In addition, this study has spotlighted for me the importance of time and one's relationship to it, especially for this group. I now work with clients to explore their assumptions about this fixed period of time and their relations to all three tenses of time. Are they living for an unknown time in the future or stuck in remembering a past place and how can we work to live in the present?

Now I will further reflect on the impact of my findings on training and on other people's clinical work in settings where they deal with people affected negatively by being a trailing partner. There are implications for mental health practitioners, especially those who work in the existential phenomenological approach. Spinelli (2005, p. 145) states that "common to the various 'attitudes' within existential psychotherapy is the acknowledged emphasis placed upon the exploration of client's consciousness and experience of being in the world." Vital to this study's findings and this approach is that therapeutic services cannot be one-size-fits-all; they should be unique to each individual as well as location. Clients may bring issues to the therapist's office that present as 'typical' clinical issues such as depression, anxiety, and

addictions, but the challenges that this group faces are distinctly different and it is crucial that practitioners be aware of these concerns. I believe it is important for practitioners to themselves have international experience or moving from one culture to another at some point of their life because they would be able to understand better the challenges that ETP and other global nomads encounter. However, if a clinician finds themselves interested in working with a client from this group, it is imperative they read as much as possible about global nomads, but also to keep an open mind about this group and not make blanket assumptions about their experiences. What might be an adventure to one person could be an unpleasant or even traumatic experience for another. Some clients have lived many years abroad and could possibly view their world through the lens of many cultures. An accent or appearance may not be an accurate indicator of an individual's cultural worldview.

Because each posting is time-limited, it may be important for clinicians to recognize how much the past and future factor into these clients' lives but to work with them in the present. For some clients who are having difficulties in adapting, it would be helpful for clinicians to learn about the unusual stressors of international moves and for them to explore what it is like for their clients to live with instability or being uprooted. Feelings of loss and grief may be at the root of the client's presenting problem. As discovered in this study, adjustment, relocation, and change may impact an individual's well-being and it may be beneficial for the psychotherapist and his or her client to holistically explore how the client's physical, social, personal, and spiritual dimensions have been affected. One important finding in this study that is helpful for clinicians to understand if working with this group is that adjustment is a process, one that most humans go through in some shape or form and difficulties with adapting and dealing with the unknown does not have to be viewed as a pathology or a disorder.

It may be beneficial for practitioners and clients to explore what personal resources the client possesses, such as open mindedness and communication, that they can summon and what supports are needed to deal with the change. Also, therapists may assist clients in exploring and attending to feelings such as loneliness and discuss what activities help ground them and give them a sense of well-being. Bryson and Hoge (2005) recommend that these activities can be undertaken in solitude, like journaling or exercise, or in conjunction with others, such as sports and traveling. This may seem elementary to some, but I have witnessed that once

clients are feeling isolated and hopeless, it is hard to explore the downward spiral without support.

Understanding how the challenge of the move and additional stressors of changes to one's professional and personal life affects the family and marriages is crucial for mental health professionals who work with this group. Another important finding in this study was that some marriages may have had existing concerns while others may be tested by the upheaval and it is important for therapists working with this group to explore whether these challenges were on-going difficulties or brought on by the event of the move and adjustment process. As mentioned earlier, some expatriates may experience moves and change as a loss and may mourn the loss of friends, family, routines, or other things that they value. This study found that these processes of re-belonging and reinvention can possibly be a strain on an individual and may also affect their marriage. Therapists can perhaps assist couples to explore these issues and build a life together away from home while maintaining their individual goals. Therapists can work with couples to strengthen communication between them, and explore ways they can problem solve together and support each other during the transition process and times overseas may alleviate feelings of resentment and discord that may arise in expatriate couples. The couple's dynamic at home may not be suitable abroad, so interactions like compromise and intimacy may need to be explored in counselling. It may be worthwhile for couples to explore with counsellors both partners' career and personal goals and examine how this would affect their partner and family dynamics. While the suggestions above are not intended to be therapeutic models of working, they could be an idea for future research that I can publish at a later date.

The participants described at great length their frustration with finding employment and maintaining their careers while getting little support from their partner's organization. However, many showed great initiative on their own to create employment or projects that gave them meaning and were portable around the globe. The need for greater, more effective career counselling and development services for expatriates is evident from past literature (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001; Mohr and Klien, 2004; Bikos et al. 2007b, Richardson, 2010) and this study's results. Psychotherapists trained in career counselling and development will be particularly useful to this population. Career counselling has been usually seen as separate or adjunct to counselling and psychotherapy but there is a move, especially in the United

States, to make vocational psychology and career counselling as part of the integral training for mental health practitioners (CACREP.org, 2012). Work is an integral part of someone's life and may affect the client spirituality, personally, socially, and physically. Because there may not be a suitable position for the client or not possible for them to work in their field overseas, services helping ETPs explore what they value and goals they may have could improve their sense of personal satisfaction. This is relevant for mental health professionals because efficacy and feelings of purpose and value are indelibly linked to subjective well-being (Baumeister, 1991). Similarly, ETPs will also have to take responsibility for how they choose to live abroad and, if they elect to pursue a career, they need to take the impetus to train or create work that gives them meaning and purpose.

The data and past research shows that cross-cultural training for the entire expatriate family is important for adapting overseas (Bikos et al. 2007b; Kupka et al. 2008; Richardson, 2010). As with counselling services, cross cultural training cannot be one-size-fits-all, but has to recognize the unique situation of each individual and post to which they travel. The traditional U-shaped model of culture shock, which is still widely cited, may need to be reconsidered by psychotherapists and clinicians who work with this population. As with Mohr and Klein (2004), Bikos et al., (2007a) and McKenna's (2010) research, this study found that not everyone goes through the stages in a linear way. They may skip, go back and forth, or be stuck in one or several stages for a long period of time. It may be detrimental for clients to think of complete adjustment as an end goal that can be reached at a certain period of time. This can feel like being set up for failure. Updated training and on-going counselling support will help expatriates and their families negotiate this on-going process and these challenges. Not all organizations have the funding to provide pre-departure scouting trips, but preparing the expatriates on what they can expect to encounter, such as differences in physical space and security described in this study as well as in Robertson et al. (2007) and Smiley (2010), may help counter the surprise at cultural distance and the initial early days of being a stranger in a strange land.

Moreover, these results can be shared with EAPs (Employee Assistance Programs), expatriate and local mental health and medical providers who provide support and assistance on the ground, and professionals who work with those who repatriate after an expected tour

ending or curtail early because of poor adjustment. Additionally, this research could support Vercruyse's (2002) suggestion for the creation of more locally based community counselling centres staffed by expatriates or those who have been trained to understand the needs of this demographic. There is also an opportunity to develop more web-based counselling and coaching services to meet the demands of those who live far afield.

It is my goal to share these findings with organizations, governments, and corporations who have large expatriate workforces in order to design programs and strengthen counselling services that assist their partners and families make adjustment overseas. I intend to take advantage of counselling organizations, such as the BACP, UKCP, and ACA and their academic journals as well as other professional journals that focus on expatriate living, to further disseminate the research findings. In addition, it is my aim to present at future conferences, such as those held by Families in Global Transition which work to support expatriates and generate new research about the increasing number of global nomads.

6.5 Quality of Study

In conducting this research project, it was not my intention to produce a conclusive study on expatriate trailing partners or to state that what was found was the absolute truth. Instead, my aim was to provide what Pringle et al. (2011, p. 23) calls "a coherent and legitimate account that is attentive to the words of the participants." Although one cannot produce something that defines the truth, there are guidelines that qualitative researchers can follow to ensure the quality of their research. However, I am aware that there are models created with a particular philosophy and it is important to choose a model that is compatible with my own non-positivist epistemological stance and methodological approach. Finlay and Evans (2009) cite Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of quality for relational researchers, while Langdrige (2007) notes that Giorgi (2002) and Polkinghorne (1989) have developed criteria for quality that well serve descriptive phenomenological research. However, he along with Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) and Shinebourne (2011) agree that Yardley (2000) has devised criteria, comprised of four principles that can be applied to a wide range of qualitative methodologies. These include:

1. sensitivity to context
2. commitment and rigour
3. transparency and coherence
4. impact and importance. (Yardley, 2000)

This allows for quality assurance from the beginning of the research project and is compatible with my epistemological stance and the reflexive nature of this project during which I diligently reviewed my role as the researcher (Willig, 2008). I will discuss how these criteria were addressed and met in the following section.

In the first principle, sensitivity to context, Yardley (2000) states that one should be sensitive to previous research, the socio-cultural context of the study and to the participants in one's study. This sensitivity to context also includes the researcher being grounded in the methodology chosen for the project (Smith, Larkin and Flowers, 2009). I have documented in the methodology section how I reviewed various phenomenological methodologies and subsequently selected IPA. Additionally, I have included details of the process of the study including literature review, the research design, and the writing process of the results.

Shinebourne states (2011, p. 27) that Yardley's second principle, commitment and rigour, "can be demonstrated through prolonged engagement with the topic and immersion in the data of the research." In showing rigour, I have detailed my thoroughness with the data collection and analysis. Furthermore, I have demonstrated commitment to my participants in exploring their experiences with the utmost respect and have also exhibited commitment to IPA and the research process by undertaking a comprehensive and careful analysis of the data.

Transparency and coherence is Yardley's third principle and it requires the researcher to demonstrate to the reader how they worked through the process of the research as well as to present the findings in a clear and well-argued manner. By utilizing both supervision and peer supervision during the entire process, I have striven to ensure that the findings will be coherent to my audience. By being consistent with the tenets of IPA, this study has stayed close to the participants' descriptions while conducting interpretations (Shinebourne, 2011).

Lastly, Yardley's fourth principle is impact and importance. Research should be significant and valuable for the audience (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009). It is the goal of this research to provide an understanding of expatriate and ETP experience and adjustment to organizations that employ or service this group as well as individuals who are considering this lifestyle especially in this age of increasing globalization.

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p. 184) also suggest preparing for an independent audit as a way of assuring quality in a qualitative research project. Per their advice, I have kept a trail of materials including my reflexive and process notes from conception to final project, the initial research proposal, an interview schedule, digital recordings, transcripts with the three levels of notations, tables of themes, numerous drafts and comments from academic supervisors and peers, and the final report. Throughout the process, I provided my academic supervisor with materials and updates, from designing the project to carrying out the analytical and writing-up process.

6.6 Suggestions for Future research

The process of conducting this research has helped me to recognize several areas for future research on expatriates and expatriate trailing partners. I hope it encourages more qualitative studies in the area of expatriate studies, especially on ETPs and families. As mentioned, the last decade has generated interest and subsequent quantitative studies on ETPs, but more qualitative studies may need to be implemented on this group and undertaken in other regions to get a perspective on how different cultures can affect adjustment. Also, it would be useful to have more longitudinal studies, whether measuring adjustment over one overseas assignment or through several posts. Additional pinpointed studies focusing on the impact of both career disturbances and development on adjustment and well-being for this group can add greatly to this field. Because a majority of my participants were proficient to fluent in Spanish, it may be helpful to have additional studies exploring living in a culture where one does not speak the language.

It would be beneficial to conduct in-depth research on the ETPs' or expatriates' access to mental health services, including how easy was it to obtain and what they found helpful or lacking in that particular experience. Further qualitative phenomenological research on the effects of living abroad on marriage and family dynamics is needed, as well as an up-to-date focus on all-male trailing partners and all-female trailing partners, which will provide a different dimension to this research field.

There are also implications for training that come from these findings. With increasing globalization of both voluntary and involuntary migrants, clinical training in modules such as Multicultural Counselling or Social and Ethical Issues may examine how individuals adapt to various cultures and how mental health professionals can best work with clients who are facing adjustment challenges whilst living away from home. Additionally, because work and career are so central to one's identity, sense of purpose, and livelihood, understanding the psychological aspects of vocational choice for clients may be an area in training to be further developed.

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8 APPENDIX

Appendix 1-Ethical clearance

Middlesex University, Psychology Department

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Applicant (specify): UG PG (Module:.....) PhD STAFF

Date submitted: January 21, 2010

Research area (please circle):				
Clinical	Cognition + emotion	Developmental	Forensic	Health
Occupational	Psychophysiological	Social	Sport + exercise	
Other _____				
Methodology:				
Empirical/experimental	Questionnaire-based	Qualitative	Other _____	

No study may proceed until this form has been signed by an authorised person indicating that ethical approval has been granted. For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved.

This form should be accompanied by any other relevant materials (e.g. questionnaire to be employed, letters to participants/institutions, advertisements or recruiting materials, information and debriefing sheet for participants¹, consent form², including approval by collaborating institutions).

<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is this the first submission of the proposed study?	Yes/No
---	--------

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- Is this an amended proposal (resubmission)? Yes/No
Psychology Office: if YES, please send this back to the original referee

- Is this an urgent application? (To be answered by Staff/Supervisor only)¹ Yes/No

Supervisor to initial here _____

Name(s) of investigator(s) Rochelle Johnson Benning

Name of supervisor(s) Jill Mytton

Title of study: "Not at Home: An Existential-Phenomenological Study of Expatriate Trailing Partners in Honduras"

Results of Application:

REVIEWER - please tick and provide comments in section 5:

APPROVED

APPROVED WITH AMENDMENTS

NOT APPROVED

¹ see Guidelines on OasisPlus

SECTION 1 (to be completed by all applicants)

1. Please attach a brief description of the nature and purpose of the study, including details of the procedure to be employed. Identify the ethical issues involved, particularly in relation to the treatment/experiences of participants, session length, procedures, stimuli, responses, data collection, and the storage and reporting of data.

SEE ATTACHED PROJECT PROPOSAL

2. Could any of these procedures result in any adverse reactions?

YES/NO

if "yes", what precautionary steps are to be taken? I do not foresee any adverse reactions resulting from these procedures but will be conscious that issues could arise or participants could become upset when delving into an experience. I will debrief the participants after the interviews and if they feel affected emotionally, I will provide them with a list of mental health professionals that they can use if they so choose.

3. Will any form of deception be involved that raises ethical issues?

YES/NO

(Most studies in psychology involve mild deception insofar as participants are unaware of the experimental hypotheses being tested. Deception becomes unethical if participants are likely to feel angry, humiliated or otherwise distressed when the deception is revealed to them).

Note: if this work uses existing records/archives and does not require participation per se, tick here and go to question 10. (Ensure that your data handling complies with the Data Protection Act).

4. If participants other than Middlesex University students are to be involved, where do you intend

to recruit them? (A full risk assessment must be conducted for any work undertaken off university premises)^{6,7}

Participants will be recruited via expatriate and organizational newsletters, organizations geared towards expatriates and also from referrals.

5a. Does the study involve	
Clinical populations	YES/NO
Children (under 16 years)	YES/NO

Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders? YES/NO

5b. If the study involves any of the above, the researcher needs CRB (disclosure of criminal record)	
-Staff and PG students are expected to have CRB – please tick	YES/NO

-UG students are advised that institutions may require them to have CRB – please confirm that you are aware of this by ticking here _____

6. How, and from whom (e.g. from parents, from participants via signature) will informed consent be obtained? (See consent guidelines ² ; note special considerations for some questionnaire research)

From participants via signature after reviewing informed consent sheet (as well as recording a verbal consent)

7. Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time,

without penalty? (see consent guidelines²)

YES/NO

8. Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?

YES/NO

(see debriefing guidelines³)

9. Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?

YES/NO

if "no", how do you propose to deal with any potential problems?

10. Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will confidentiality be guaranteed? (see confidentiality guidelines⁵)

YES/NO

If "yes" how will this be assured (see⁵)

All material collected from the participants will be kept as strictly confidential. Participants will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications (all recognizable attributes will be concealed). All materials (forms and tapes) will be protected under the Data Protection Act and stored in my secure personal office, which is locked and only accessible to me. Codes assigned by the researcher, instead of names, will be used on the documents and tapes in order to maintain confidentiality. All tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in this location and I will personally transcribe the tapes for use in my research. No other use will be made of them without the participant's written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings other than my research supervisor. The tapes will be erased at the end of the project and participants have the right to request that they be erased before this time.

If "no", how will participants be warned? (see⁵)

(NB: You are not at liberty to publish material taken from your work with individuals without the prior agreement of those individuals).

11. Are there any ethical issues which concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form?

YES/NO

If “yes” please specify:

I will also provide ample security for me and the participants and have listed all the precautions that I will take regarding this issue in the risk assessment form.

(NB: If “yes” has been responded to any of questions 2,3,5,11 or “no” to any of questions 7-10, a full explanation of the reason should be provided -- if necessary, on a separate sheet submitted with this form).

SECTION 2 (to be completed by all applicants – please tick as appropriate)

YES NO

12. Some or all of this research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University	X	
--	---	--

If “yes” tick here to confirm that a Risk Assessment form has been submitted	X	
--	---	--

13. I am aware that any modifications to the design or method of this proposal will require me to submit a new application for ethical approval	X	
---	---	--

14. I am aware that I need to keep all the materials/documents relating to this study (e.g. consent forms, filled questionnaires, etc) until completion of my degree / publication (as advised)	X	
---	---	--

15. I have read the British Psychological Society’s <i>Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human participants</i> ⁴ and believe this proposal to conform with them	X	
---	---	--

SECTION 3 (to be completed by academic staff -- for student approval, go to Section 4)

Researcher..... date

PSY OFFICE received

Signatures of approval: Ethics Panel date **date:.....**

(signed pending approval of Risk Assessment form) **date:.....**

If any of the following is required and not available when submitting this form, the Ethics Panel Reviewer will need to see them once they are received and before the start of data collection – please enclose with this form when they become available:

- letter of acceptance from other institution
- any other relevant document (e.g., ethical approval from other institution): _____

PSY OFFICE received

Required documents seen by Ethics Panel date **date:.....**

ATTACHMENT FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

Please attach a brief description of the nature and purpose of the study, including details of the procedure to be employed. Identify the ethical issues involved, particularly in relation to the treatment/experiences of participants, session length, procedures, stimuli, responses, data collection, and the storage and reporting of data.

NATURE AND PURPOSE

The aim of this study is to look at the phenomenon of what it's like to be an expatriate (a person who has left his or her own country to live in another) trailing partner. A commonly used term both in literature (Bryson and Hoge, 2005; Hughes, 1999; Keenan, 2007; Pascoe, 2009; Tiessen, 2008) and by organizations, an expatriate "trailing" partner is an individual who has moved from their home country because of their partner's career and who often lives in a country that is very different culturally from their own. As a psychotherapist who is herself an expatriate trailing partner and who also works with expatriates in a professional counselling capacity, I am hoping that the outcome of the research addresses what people have found helpful to them. The goal is to create counselling and psychotherapy services that delve more deeply into how this group is experiencing this type of life and that help them work therapeutically through issues that affect them whilst living abroad.

METHODS

Design

Data will be collected in two stages. In the first stage, potential participants will be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire that will ask them to provide general demographic information (time in country and remaining time left, number of school age children, native language, partner's career, how often partner travels from home, participant's educational level, etc.). If potential participants meet the criteria for the research project and consent to be interviewed and taped, the second stage will proceed. This stage will consist of a semi-structured interview based around three open-ended questions. I will create an interview schedule that will cover these questions and will allow the participant to answer freely, reflect on their thoughts and comments, and expand on ideas that they would like to discuss further.

Session Length

Upon selection, participants will be asked to take part in interviews that are planned to last 60 minutes with an additional 30 minutes allotted for a debriefing period.

Analysis

I will be employing a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) method. I chose this approach because I wanted to combine both a phenomenological and an interpretative analysis of what's it like to be an expatriate trailing spouse and what their experience is like at that particular moment. I want to remain open to the experience of the participants so I will not have a set hypothesis that I want to prove (which would likely lead to some biases) (Langdridge, 2007).

I also chose IPA because I believe that interpretation is needed in order for me to make sense of what the participants experience while they are analyzing their strategies for dealing with this lifestyle. In addition, I am interested in learning about the "subjective" experience of each of the participants, because each individual will have a different way of viewing the expatriate lifestyle (Ibid). It is important to maintain reflexivity through the entire research project as I must remain conscious of and reflective of how my own position and reactions could affect the research project (Willig, 2008).

Lastly, IPA is one of the methods that Langdridge (2007, p. 109) describes as focusing "on the production of empirical findings in the hope that this knowledge may contribute to genuinely real and useful social change." The goal is to learn from the research what information and trends can be discovered to better help those presently living that lifestyle, and those who may be partaking in the future, to better identify how to cope with the challenges of not only living in another culture but possibly giving up one's stability, culture, career and goals to follow another person.

As IPA analyzes in great depth the similarities and details of each case and is considered time-consuming, IPA experts such as Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) recommend students and first time researchers use a small sample size of three to six

participants. I will recruit five to seven individuals to allow for possible participant withdrawal.

Participants and Selection Criteria

Participants will be recruited from expatriate and organizational newsletters, organizations geared towards expatriates, and from referrals.

Participants will be expatriate trailing partners currently living in Honduras. Their spouse's or partner's career was the reason they left their home country. They were not forced to do so by economic, social or political pressures.

In order to have a fairly homogeneous sample (recommended for IPA research), participants will meet the following criteria:

- Participants will come from non-governmental organizations and foreign service/office partners. Both these career paths have comparable salaries and perks (moving and travel expenses covered, return trip visits to home country, housing subsidized).
- Participants will have lived away from home or their native country for over two years and have been in their relationship with their partner for over two years so the participants will be settled into both their home abroad and their relationship. I am not choosing newlyweds or recent arrivals because the honeymoon period in both cases would colour responses. There would not be adequate time for reflection, and the novelty of the new partnership and excitement of a new location would bring different issues than those for someone who has been living abroad for some time. Participants will also have plans to reside in Honduras for one or more years after the interview. This criterion is needed in order to avoid "short-timer" focus (looking ahead to a future move instead of at daily life in Honduras). Participants will travel home up to two times a year, with only one of these times paid by their partners' employer. (This is a usual perk of most international organizations and embassies.) Another factor worth noting, though it won't be a criterion, is how much the participant's partner's work takes him/her away from their home in Honduras.

- Participants in this study cannot be presently living in a host country that has the same national language as their own (participants will not be native Spanish speakers). Participants will come from North America and Europe and will have graduated from university. This population is small in Honduras and has formed a tight-knit expatriate community.
- Participants will either be unemployed or working in a job that is different from the career they were pursuing before the move. Historically, trailing spouses have had difficulty obtaining employment in their chosen career because of legal, language, economic and cultural restraints.
- Another common attribute that will be required as a selection criterion is that the participants will have dependent school age children with them in Honduras. Raising a family and being responsible for others while away from home and living in another culture will undoubtedly raise other issues and different experiences than being a couple with no children. Because of this particular criterion (having children under the age of 18), participants will be 30-50 years of age. Because most organizations and embassies will not give clearance for an employee or family members to travel abroad if they have serious health issues (mental and physical), it is safe to assume that the participants overall general health is good.
- While the greater percentage of expatriate trailing partners is women, I would also like a fraction of the participants to be men. The traditional roles of the man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker are shifting in North American and European cultures, and that change is reflected in expatriate families. I would want my participant pool to match the expatriate societal make-up, so I would like to include both sexes, with women making up the majority.

PROCEDURES

- 1) Identify research participants through recruitment and distribute questionnaire to identify suitable candidates for study.
- 2) Study and purpose of the study will be discussed with participants. They will be informed also of confidentiality and that the interviews will be taped.

- 3) Secure informed consent and go over their rights (to leave study, request that recordings are erased before end of project, etc.).
- 4) Interview the participants.
- 5) Transcribe interviews.

DATA COLLECTION

During the interview stage, the participants will be asked to describe and reflect upon their experience of what it is like to be an expatriate trailing partner. After the completion and transcription of the interviews, I will look for themes and will group similar thoughts together according to conceptual similarities. I will then provide a narrative account based on the subjects discussed. An analysis of the themes will be put in cultural and theoretical perspective through a review of existing literature on expatriates and expatriate trailing partners.

STIMULI

Not applicable.

RESPONSES

Full disclosure will be available to participants.

COSTS

All costs will be paid by the researcher. If relevant, travel expenses can be offered to reimburse participants for petrol and mileage, parking or taxi fare costs. Tegucigalpa is a very small city and travel distances are not great.

ETHICAL ISSUES

I will ensure that there will be effective handling of all ethical, moral and legal issues before I start the initial phases of the research. In accordance with the BPS and UKCP code of conduct and ethical principles for conducting research with human participants, I will secure consent from all participants and they will be informed of the research project's scope and goals. I will also seek ethical approval through NSPC's ethics board panel. There will be total transparency and disclosure of all aspects of the project. I will treat all material collected from the participants as strictly confidential. Participants will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications (all recognizable attributes will be concealed).

Participants will be informed of their right to leave the study at any time. I will have enough participants in the study to allow for changes of heart or other commitments that would not allow them to participate in the study. They will also be informed that their interviews will be recorded and about how the tapings will be stored during and after the project.

Consent will not be tainted by professional or personal relationships between me, the researcher, and the participants.

I will check the participants' emotional state during and after their interviews. During a debriefing after the main interview, I will discuss with the participants their understanding of the research and interviews and make sure that they are not leaving

with any negative feelings or misconceptions. If there are any issues that arise from the work we did together, the participant will be provided with a list of mental health professionals that they can use if they so choose. Ideally, the debriefing will provide closure for the participant so that they leave the interview feeling that they made a valued contribution to the research.

The project will aim to protect participants from physical and mental harm during research and to maintain their well-being and dignity. I will also be conscious of the possible physical risks to me, the researcher. All research will be conducted between normal working hours (9AM-5PM) and there will be ample security and protective measures taken to create a secure environment at the clinic where the interviews will be held.

STORAGE AND REPORTING OF DATA

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, all interview materials (written and audio) will be either encrypted or locked in my secure personal office, which is locked and only accessible to me. Codes assigned by the researcher, instead of names, will be used on the documents and tapes in order to maintain confidentiality. All tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet in this location and will be transcribed by me for use in the research. No other use will be made of them without the participants' written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings other than my research supervisor. The tapes will be erased at the end of the project and participants have the right to request that they be erased before this time.

Besides audiotapes of the interviews and discussions, accurate field notes and a process diary will be kept. Procedures and reflections of interviews will be kept in order to make sure the entire process is transparent and accurate.

INDEMNITY

Researcher has professional indemnity insurance.

DISSEMINATION OF THE RESULTS

Once completed and approved, I will be submitting the dissertation for publication and for presentation at conferences using the research data. I anticipate that the

project will be a catalyst for organizations such as international corporations, NGOs, and diplomatic and military corps to create programs and services that address the challenges faced by their expatriate employees and family members.

Appendix 2- Risk Assessment

INDEPENDENT FIELD/LOCATION WORK RISK ASSESSMENT FRA1

This proforma is applicable to, and must be completed in advance for, the following fieldwork situations:

1. *All fieldwork undertaken independently by individual students, either in the UK or overseas, including in connection with proposition module or dissertations. Supervisor to complete with student(s).*
2. *All fieldwork undertaken by postgraduate students. Supervisors to complete with student(s).*
3. *Fieldwork undertaken by research students. Student to complete with supervisor.*
4. *Fieldwork/visits by research staff. Researcher to complete with Research Centre Head.*

FIELDWORK DETAILS

Name Rochelle Johnson Benning.....

Student No M00250106

Research Centre (staff only).....

Supervisor – Jill Mytton

Degree course NSPC DProf

Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident

NEXT OF KIN

Name Douglass Benning-partner

Phone 0013018417085 or 0115042355550

Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed fieldwork

None.....

Any health problems (full details) None.....

Which may be relevant to proposed fieldwork activity in case of emergencies.

Locality (Country and Region) Tegucigalpa, Honduras.....
.....

Travel Arrangements All research will only be conducted in Tegucigalpa, Honduras (where I reside) in a well-guarded and well-staffed clinic where I work. All interviews will be done during normal working hours (9AM-5PM). I will travel by personal car and participants will travel by personal car or by tax

NB: Comprehensive travel and health insurance must always be obtained for independent overseas fieldwork.

Dates of Travel and Fieldwork March-May 2010

PLEASE READ THE INFORMATION OVERLEAF VERY CAREFULLY

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
CAREFULLY

PLEASE READ VERY

List the localities to be visited or specify routes to be followed (**Col. 1**). Give the approximate date (month / year) of your last visit, or enter 'NOT VISITED' (**Col 2**). For each locality, enter the potential hazards that may be identified beyond those accepted in everyday life. Add details giving cause for concern (**Col. 3**).

Examples of Potential Hazards : Lone Working

Adverse weather: exposure (heat, sunburn, lightening, wind, hypothermia)

Terrain: rugged, unstable, fall, slip, trip, debris, and remoteness. Traffic: pollution.

Demolition/building sites, assault, getting lost, animals, disease.

Working on/near water: drowning, swept away, disease (weils disease, hepatitis, malaria, etc), parasites', flooding, tides and range.

Lone working: difficult to summon help, alone or in isolation, lone interviews.

Dealing with the public: personal attack, causing offence/intrusion, misinterpreted, political, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic differences/problems. Known or suspected criminal offenders.

Safety Standards (other work organisations, transport, hotels, etc), working at night, areas of high crime.

Ill health: personal considerations or vulnerabilities, pre-determined medical conditions (asthma, allergies, fitting) general fitness, disabilities, persons suited to task.

Articles and equipment: inappropriate type and/or use, failure of equipment, insufficient training for use and repair, injury.

Substances (chemicals, plants, bio- hazards, waste): ill health - poisoning, infection, irritation, burns, cuts, eye-damage.

Manual handling: lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy items, physical unsuitability for task

If no hazard can be identified beyond those of everyday life, enter 'NONE'.

Give brief details of fieldwork activity: The only potential hazard that I can see is lone working, but the risks are minimal. The majority of interviews will be conducted during normal working hours (9AM-5PM) and I have ample security in at the clinic where I will be conducting the research (security guards, accessible telephone line, both land and mobile, and panic buzzers) for my and the participants' protection.

1. LOCALITY/ROUTE	2. LAST VISIT	3. POTENTIAL HAZARDS
Researcher's office at a clinic	Daily	Low risk of lone working

--	--	--

The University Fieldwork code of Practice booklet provides practical advice that should be followed in planning and conducting fieldwork.

Risk Minimisation/Control Measures

PLEASE READ VERY CAREFULLY

For each hazard identified (**Col 3**), list the precautions/control measures in place or that will be taken (**Col 4**) to "reduce the risk to acceptable levels", and the safety equipment (**Col 6**) that will be employed.

Assuming the safety precautions/control methods that will be adopted (**Col. 4**), categorise the fieldwork risk for each location/route as negligible, low, moderate or high (**Col. 5**).

Risk increases with both the increasing likelihood of an accident and the increasing severity of the consequences of an accident.

An acceptable level of risk is: a risk which can be safely controlled by person taking part in the activity using the precautions and control measures noted including the necessary instructions, information and training relevant to that risk. The resultant risk should not be significantly higher than that encountered in everyday life.

Examples of control measures/precautions:

Providing adequate training, information & instructions on fieldwork tasks and the safe and correct use of any equipment, substances and personal protective equipment. Inspection and safety check of any equipment prior to use. Assessing individuals fitness and suitability to environment and tasks involved. Appropriate clothing, environmental information consulted and advice followed (weather conditions, tide times etc.). Seek advice on harmful plants, animals & substances that may be encountered, including information and instruction on safe procedures for handling hazardous substances. First aid provisions, inoculations, individual medical requirements, logging of location, route and expected return times of lone workers. Establish emergency procedures (means of raising an alarm, back up arrangements). Working with colleagues (pairs). **Lone working is not permitted where the risk of physical or verbal violence is a realistic possibility.** Training in interview techniques and avoiding /defusing conflict, following advice from local organisations, wearing of clothing unlikely to cause offence or unwanted attention. Interviews in neutral locations. Checks on Health and Safety standards & welfare facilities of travel, accommodation and outside organisations. Seek information on social/cultural/political status of fieldwork area.

Examples of Safety Equipment: Hardhats, goggles, gloves, harness, waders, whistles, boots, mobile phone, ear protectors, bright fluorescent clothing (for roadside work), dust mask, etc.

If a proposed locality has not been visited previously, give your authority for the risk assessment stated or indicate that your visit will be preceded by a thorough risk assessment.

4. PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES	5. RISK ASSESSMENT	6. EQUIPMENT

PLEASE READ INFORMATION OVERLEAF AND SIGN AS APPROPRIATE

DECLARATION: The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.

NB: Risk should be constantly reassessed during the fieldwork period and additional precautions taken or fieldwork discontinued if the risk is seen to be unacceptable.

Signature of Fieldworker (Student/Staff) **Date**

Signature of Student Supervisor **Date**

APPROVAL: (ONE ONLY)

Signature of Curriculum Leader (undergraduate students only) **Date**

Signature of Research Degree Co-ordinator or Masters Course Leader or Taught Masters Curriculum Leader **Date**

Signature of Research Centre Head (for staff fieldworkers) **Date**

FIELDWORK CHECK LIST

1. Ensure that **all members** of the field party possess the following attributes (where relevant) at a level appropriate to the proposed activity and likely field conditions:

- X Safety knowledge and training?
- x Awareness of cultural, social and political differences?
- x Physical and psychological fitness and disease immunity, protection and awareness?
- x Personal clothing and safety equipment?
- x Suitability of fieldworkers to proposed tasks?

2. Have all the necessary arrangements been made and information/instruction gained, and have the relevant authorities been consulted or informed with regard to:

- x Visa, permits?
- x Legal access to sites and/or persons?
- x Political or military sensitivity of the proposed topic, its method or location?
- x Weather conditions, tide times and ranges?
- x Vaccinations and other health precautions?
- x Civil unrest and terrorism?
- x Arrival times after journeys?
- x Safety equipment and protective clothing?
- x Financial and insurance implications?
- x Crime risk?
- x Health insurance arrangements?
- x Emergency procedures?
- x Transport use?
- x Travel and accommodation arrangements?

Important information for retaining evidence of completed risk assessments: Once the risk assessment is completed and approval gained the **supervisor** should retain this form and issue a copy of it to the fieldworker participating on the field course/work. In addition the **approver** must keep a copy of this risk assessment in an appropriate Health and Safety file.

Appendix 3-Consent form

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling/

Middlesex University School of Health and Social Sciences

Department of Psychology **Middlesex University,**

Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4BT

Written Informed Consent

Title of study and academic year: ***Not at Home: An Existential-Phenomenological Study of Expatriate Trailing Partners – A Sample From Honduras.***

Researcher: Rochelle Johnson Benning

Supervisor (*only for students*): Jill Mytton

I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.

I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.

I further understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and provide my consent that this might occur.

I have understood that the interviews will be recorded and confirm that I have consented to the recording.

I understand that the tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet, and transcribed for use in the research. No other use will be made of them without my written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings other than the researcher and the research supervisor. The tapes will be erased at the end of the project and I may request them to be erased at any time before this if I choose.

Print name

Sign Name

date: _____

To the participants: Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Social Sciences Ethics committee of Middlesex University, if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: _____

Appendix 4-Personal Information sheet

Rochelle Johnson Benning – Researcher
Jill Mytton-Academic Supervisor
New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling/
Department of Psychology
Middlesex University,
Town Hall, The Burroughs, Hendon, London NW4 4BT

STUDY TITLE: *Not at Home: An Existential-Phenomenological Study of Expatriate Trailing Partners – A Sample From Honduras*

Dear Research Participant,

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take your time to read the following information carefully, and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take your time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the research?

The aim of this study is to look at the phenomenon of what it's like to be an expatriate trailing partner and to explore how these individuals create meaning and new identities when they move to another country because of their partner's career and their new "home" is culturally different from their own.

You have been chosen to participate in the study because you are an expatriate trailing partner and fit the criteria for the study. The plan for this project is to understand the extraordinary challenges faced by expatriate trailing partners, such as you, and to give them a voice and a platform through which to discuss their experiences.

What will happen to me if I take part?

As a participant, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire that will take approximately ten minutes. The next stage will include participating in one interview during Spring 2010 that will take approximately one and a half hours of your time. Research will take place in my office at Clinicas Medicas in Colonia Palmira, Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

I will be asking open-ended questions about your experience and will be interested in hearing what it is like for you to live in your particular situation. I do not have any set hypothesis or any biases about how the research should be conducted.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

While the project will protect participants from physical and mental harm during research, there can be some potential risks to participating. The interview location will be well secured.

During a debriefing after the main interview, I will discuss with you your understanding of the research and interviews and will confirm that you are not leaving with any negative feelings. If there are any emotional issues that arise from the work we did together, I will provide you with a list of mental health professionals that you can use if you so choose.

Consent

As a participant, you will be given a copy of an information sheet and also asked to sign a consent form prior to taking part in the research. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide not to take part you may withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

The interviews will be recorded. The tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet and transcribed by me for use in the research. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings other than my research supervisor. The tapes will be erased at the end of the project. You may request them to be erased at any time before this if you choose.

Who is organising and funding the research?

All research has been organized and funded by me, the researcher, Rochelle Johnson Benning. Gas and mileage, parking or taxi fare will be reimbursed to you.

Who has reviewed the study?

All proposals for research using human participants are reviewed by an Ethics Committee before they can proceed. The New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling Ethics Committee has reviewed and approved this proposal.

Thank you very much for reading this information sheet. If you have any more questions on the research and study, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to working with you further on this project.

Best regards,

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If you have any concerns about the research or are not satisfied with the way the research has been conducted and would like to file a complaint, please contact:

Jill Mytton (Supervisor) by e-mail at jill.mytton@arthio.com

Appendix 5-Sample Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you lived in Honduras?
2. Where did you live before Honduras?
3. How long do you plan to stay in Honduras?
4. How long have you and your partner been together?
5. Do you have children? If so, how many? What are their ages?
6. What was the highest educational level that you completed?
7. What is/was your career?
8. What are you currently doing in Honduras?
9. What type of work does your partner do here in Honduras?
10. Does your partner's work take him/her away from home? If so, how frequently?
11. What is your native language? Do you speak Spanish? If so, how would you rate your level of fluency/proficiency in the language?
12. How often do you plan to visit/return to your home country? Does your partner's company/organization pay for the visits home?

Appendix 6-List of interview prompts and questions

SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND INTERVIEW PROMPTS

1. What attracted you to the topic?
2. Where did you live before you came here?
3. At some point you made a decision to move abroad with your spouse - can you tell me about that experience?
4. I am interested in hearing about your experiences as an expat trailing spouse, can you tell me what that experience has been like for you?

Other prompts:

Can you give me an example?

How did you feel?

What did you do?

What do you mean by _____?

Appendix 7-Developing themes

Themes	Verbatim	Exploratory Comments
<p>Language as barrier</p> <p>Alienation</p> <p>Reaction to cultural distance</p> <p>Lack of freedom</p> <p>Anxious about children/family</p> <p>Language as barrier</p> <p>Reaction to isolation & loneliness?</p>	<p>Yeah, so. There's the obvious language barrier. You know...And of course, I feel that I can communicate very well in English so I could talk to the foreigners and as I said we lived on a compound so I could get the everyday life. Well (exaggerated), but as soon as I stepped off on the streets, I wouldn't understand what people were saying and they couldn't understand me and I felt... That made me feel very uncomfortable. Ummmm, so that was part of it. And I just didn't know how much more had to do with [previous post]. I didn't know what to do in a place where I didn't have a job, I didn't have a reason to be there and I also felt that I couldn't go out and figure out what to do 'cause I had a baby that I had to take care of. Take care, you know... And then we had people available to be nannies but then of course I was feeling "How can I give my baby to somebody that doesn't understand me and I don't understand her." So I felt very trapped. Very trapped. And all the time, I was like "I might just have to go back to ... you know, just pack up my things and go back [home]." I felt like that for a long, long time.</p>	<p>The language barrier was an issue. Hard to interact with local culture. Very unnerving not being able to communicate. Also difficulties were due to non-location specifics- no job, taking care of a small baby, not having a purpose to be there. She felt trapped and wanted to leave.</p> <p><u>Sense of a compound as cage, participant needing to escape.</u> <u>Compound – space of exclusion</u></p> <p><i>The exaggerated "well" seems to signify the huge shift/disparity between life on the compound and life outside of the compound. Speech becomes more emotional as she tells the story.</i></p>

Appendix 8-Table of Themes

Superordinate theme [section]

Theme [sub-section]

Subtheme

Verbatim quote: Participant: Location

I: The Impact on the Sense of Identity

I-1 - The challenge of identity

Identity defined by others

...until I came across the term trailing spouse which is, you know, we consider ourselves expats so we..., I had no idea of what it was and all the... life changes that you go through... (Camille: 8).

It was kind of a shock. Being a spouse...A newly acquired dependent spouse ... And that's NADS (both laughing). I had an acronym. (Fiona: 11)

You really are kind of in the system like a sort of second class citizen (Fiona: 50)

Reactions to 'new identity'

It bothers me because people don't have a clue what, who I am, what I'm about or uh. Or where I come from, you know. (Phillip: 164)

there he was trying to do a story on the kind of hardships of trailing spouses and I had nothing but positive things to say to him. (James: 168).

I don't want to be the leader. I'm fine with being the follower. (Suzanne:113)

Oh they judge! They totally judge. (Phillip: 154)

...men who are quite happy to drift along and let their spouse sort of lead the direction. (James: 119)

I-2 Lack of purpose affects concept of selfhood

Unstructured periods of time as the nemesis

Just to me, it's a lot of waste of time." (Cathy: 94)

each week has a different pattern and that to me is very stressful." (Camille: 126)

I sort of settle into a position where I'm just kind of marking time and I have a hard time getting myself out of that pattern...mental state."
(James: 43)

'What am I supposed to do now?' (Camille: 137)

That's the lost look that I see. Like, 'what the hell just happened?'
(Camille: 139)

Routine is important to retain sense of self

And I liked that I was forced to keep moving and... (Cathy: 100)

It's all coming together... I know that sounds goofy but it's like we have our routine. (Joan: 77)

I-1 Career and work as a measure of identity

Work and Career as seen as vital to one's identity

I felt like that was a community for me to go to, people that I could relate to, that I had fun with and I enjoyed that time. (Cathy: 84)

I like to work. I like to work, I like to do stuff. [Phillip: 121]

It was very wonderful to go out and work. I loved it and they paid very well so and all of a sudden I felt I was, you know, independent again and working." (Camille: 48)

I'm able to find fulfilment here because of my hobbies, because of my current career... (James: 158)

Impact of Career Barriers

This whole idea of spouse employment is uh a huge problem." (Fiona: 52).

But it isn't that easy, usually...(Fiona: 30)

...it could have been another job but not a career.(Gail: 44)

I hate that feeling of, which is sort of the feeling of moving to another place isn't it, you know. It's getting to a place and starting from scratch." (Camille: 111)

...you know what I feel like; I don't want to be doing that anymore. I want to have a job that people know what I do and I just get, you know, do the work. Not working on getting the job all the time." (Camille: 117).

It was difficult to leave my job and it was a good job and for me it was the pinnacle, ...so it was hard to walk away from that. (Joan: 66)

It seemed so obvious. You have plenty of highly qualified spouses who could do jobs at the [international organization]; you know they could be getting preferences for professional jobs if such things open up and wherever (Fiona: 56).

It's hard to find work; it's hard to find decent work. And if you can't afford things, you get kind of desperate. (Fiona: 96)

Rising to the challenge of creating new career identity

No, I'd kind of like my freedom (Gail: 114)

I guess I still have a sense of fulfilment and able to earn an income... (James: 120)

It kind of brought back that I can (pause) you know, that I can do something (Cathy: 86-88)

I finally took a step. []If that would lead me to sort of like a very part-time job that I could take with me somewhere than that would be that would ... make me very happy. I would have more of a sense of purpose of doing all of this... Camille: 115)

But you know, you can just invent something that is... that works for you for now." (Gail: 236)

I'm happy to cruise along and do different things." (James: 118)

I think that I happen to have certain interests that lend themselves to reinventing wherever you are you are. (Gail: 208)

If I'm not going to work, I'm going to do whatever I want to do! (Fiona: 66)

You have this opportunity to rethink what you want your career to be if you are this trailing spouse and you are not married to your career. You can afford to have the opportunity...I have this gift, this flexibility; I can just choose to do whatever I want to do." (Gail: 210)

II: Changes to the Relational World

II-1 Impact of Isolation & Alienation

Cut off from Support

I felt some strong emotions... We were like 'Oh my God, what are we doing.' (Camille: 51)

I like helping people, doing stuff for people so it was rough. (Phillip: 118)

I knew that I was frustrated and lonely and unhappy. (Camille: 56)

I felt like I was trapped in an ivy tower at the time, I was a princess in the tower. I had to do that to keep my sanity. (Gail: 172)

Nothing to do, no toys cuz we didn't have our stuff. So it became a little stressful... (Phillip: 108)

Processing loneliness

I'm not seeing people. I'm not doing anything. ... Yeah so I felt yeah bottled up... I felt bottled up. ... And I never felt that way in my whole life. (Phillip: 123)

Again I was on a very downward, downward spiral. (Camille: 108)

That it would be boring, you know. It was boring in [past post], it was boring here... (Gail: 194)

I felt like I couldn't handle it again but something, Fred would say "you want to go back to [home country] and start over" and I would say "No we got to figure it out." If we leave, we got to leave and never look back" and ... so I think that kept us going.....I finally decided that I get, I have to get some kind of help (Camille: 109)

II-2 The roles of new friendships & community

Negative Aspects of living in the new community

I didn't have a network to rely on and I felt that I had to make friends with people that I totally didn't have things in common with, we just didn't connect.(Camille: 14)

it's not our core friends... (Cathy: 48)

We don't know our neighbours as a result of that. (Joan 93)

The rumour mill... Well I think that's part of small town, small community.... That's just the consequence of it. (Joan: 79)
gossiping, you can't gossip. You just can't do it. You know, it's too small of a community. (Fiona; 124)

we should be acting like adults and not perpetuating anymore rumours (Joan: 71)

I've seen who to trust, who my friends are, what to say, what not to say...I never had to my whole life have to watch everything, everything I'm about to say. (Phillip: 171)

It's difficult because I really can't have certain conversations. I have to be very careful about what I say and do. (James: 136)

I think the exact same people would be unhappy no matter where they are. (Joan: 87)

I can't drop everything and go to lunch and I can't drop everything and go have a coffee. (Suzanne: 131).

It's contagious! It spreads! (Gail:283)

it's really poisonous, it's a negative environment and you need somewhere else to divert your attention. (Fiona: 85)

It's very strange sometimes...to hear how people just bemoan where they are. You can't do it. (Joan: 177)

there's a lot of ... kind of stuff like rumours, just the general small community stuff and you're like "ugh, burned out.(Joan: 71)

I literally try to avoid people who just you know, have this aura of negative energy. And it's easy to do because you can just spot them a mile away. (Joan: 89-91)

it's great to connect with people but if you fall into the trap of venting every time you see them, you have to find some people that are happy with their situation because I think it can make you unhappy (Gail: 281)

Benefits - relationships open you to new world

I would have never have been friends with people that I would have normally not been friends with. [] You know but I think it's made me a better person, a more understanding person. (Cathy: 155)

Living overseas teaches you more about yourself that you will ever learn living in the US. (Suzanne: 140)

You meet these great people that you wouldn't otherwise if you, you know, are living in the same neighbourhood with the same friends that you always had. (Camille: 148)

I mean It's nice to socialize within [partner's organization] but definitely find other people to socialize with outside. (Fiona: 84)

I think you can't ever underestimate the support system. (Gail: 289)

It is when you get together with other families... You get together and you make your fun that way. (Cathy: 74)

there isn't a lot to do so the thing that you can do is get together with other people. And so for me, that's a big silver lining... (Gail: 240)

It's nice to see other families...not [NA] families. Just makes me feel like we are integrating a little bit. (Joan: 109)

I always tell people to the extent possible, meet people outside the [international organization] wherever you go. Because it's like for mental health. (Fiona: 84)

Connect with the local society, in helps and make that home, your home for the duration. (Gail: 218)

It was like November of last year when I started feeling like we had some roots digging in. And it has been a joy. (Suzanne: 129)

II-3 The role/concept of the family

Marriage difficulties exacerbated by move

... I'm aware of the statistics of broken marriages and unhappy children and so on. So any formal data that can relate to our case is good.(James: 9)

I definitely think it's been a good thing. It's been a good thing for our marriage. (Cathy: 154).

You either go with your husband and support him and find a life with him or you pull against him and in effect you're pulling against your marriage. (Suzanne: 107)

...it was extremely difficult between the two of us. It was the most difficult part of our marriage." (Suzanne: 80)

I was waiting for him to make me happy since he had put me through that, you know. I was very resentful ... (Camille: 14.)

I resented the whole thing (Camille: 52)

It's rough. It's rough being here as a spouse even though I am working...(Phillip: 189)

When you need each other more, puts a lot of stress on the relationship. So either your marriage is strong enough to withstand or it's not. (Gail: 118).

But we were just talking and how these overseas moves are hard on marriages. [] Or you're just kind of loping along; you keep

*loping along if you don't have the stressor of living overseas.
(Gail: 154-156)*

*But we were just talking and how these overseas moves are hard
on marriages. (Gail: 154-156)*

*So moving here and actually having a change of scenery was great for
us, you know. It helped us put the worst moments of our relationship
behind us. You know, turn over a new leaf. (Gail: 168)*

*Is the covenant that I made with my husband more important
than me wanting to go back to [NA]? Umm it's not, they are not
equal (Suzanne: 141).*

Kids adjustment as problematic

*...how am I going to rear two children overseas, are we going to be
able to find a school that is ... compatible with the children,
compatible with our family? (Suzanne: 36)*

*...because a lot of [international organization] kids become
[international organization] employees. And that's my fear; I don't
want that to happen. (Cathy: 177)*

*'you know what, I really want to go home and stay with my
child.' (Camille: 63)*

*...Except for my child. That's the one thing that does scare
me...(James: 140)*

*...it was sad for my daughter, she missed her friends. (Phillip:
127)*

*Sarah wasn't adapting well and I was feeling very guilty for her
leaving her friends [] I was feeling very guilty again with this
travelling and moving around (Camille: 107)*

*I had to change who I was and what my expectations were going to be
and listen to the needs of my kids.(Suzanne: 57)*

*They need to find their niche and didn't really ever happen last
year. (Fiona: 141)*

*So, you know, as long as they are doing ok, everything is really fine.
(Fiona: 148)*

*My...children have just really acclimated here so well. (Joan:
70)*

Difficult to be away from family of origin and 'home'

...it's certainly not the same with being with my family or his family where Christmas is a big deal. (Gail: 88)

I think being away from my family when Sarah was a little baby was heart-breaking to me. (Camille: 57)

And we always look at the other side and think 'that's nice.' It's just a way of life. (Cathy: 188)

So, that's kind of hard to replace.(James: 57)

I think it is really good for the kids. So they feel like they have a home. (Fiona: 182)

...with regards to children, 'wherever you go, that's your home. (Gail: 218)

It can take more effort to make friends with people who are nationals within the country because they already got their life and they are less interested in making friends with transient people than the other transients so it takes a little more effort... (Gail: 220).

III: The Process of Culture Shock

III-1 Reactions to Cultural Distance

Compassion fatigue

You feel that it starts to wear you down after two years. (Cathy: 63)

It's difficult to see what these people go through. (Cathy: 69)

I feel really sad for the people, I do what I can to help. (Phillip: 195)

...you can't help but feel that it's always going to be two steps forward two steps back kind of situation.(James: 86)

Frustrations are hard to overcome

When we arrived in [prior posting] it was very shocking to be in a foreign place where I didn't speak the language. (Camille: 9)

So it was, I used to say a lot that it was like going to Mars, you know. Going to Mars. [laughing] Going to another planet. (Camille: 11)

It's just difficult to get anything done. It's complicated. (Cathy: 59)

I think it's a really disorganized place. (Phillip: 195)

Very frustrating...very frustrating... (Joan: 131)

I find it really frustrating and the [institution] is useless. (Fiona: 128)

And I had to remind myself that we still live in a dangerous country (James: 82)

III-2 Language

Language as a barrier

I wouldn't understand what people were saying and they couldn't understand me and I felt... That made me feels very uncomfortable. (Camille: 26)

There was a lot of, you know, just like, lost in translation throughout the entire project. (Camille: 61)

I have to consciously prevent myself from doing the 'smile' [he acts out an exuberant but fake smile] and 'nod' and saying "Si, Si!" and walking away from them. If I didn't understand it, I would have to say so and it uh, doesn't happened because I usually smile and nod [laughing] and walk away. (James: 101)

It appears that my ability to learn second languages is not good either. And I think it kind of creates an anxiety to where we go next. (James: 103)

I get a lot of grief! (Phillip: 219)

Those are the most difficult times and also the most important times that you should be communicating. But I can't...You just get so worked up that you can't do it. (Joan: 133)

Language as a connection to others

It's been great because it has allowed me to think very quickly on my feet for alternative ways to say something. (Joan: 146)

So that's when I learned I could either sink or swim with my language. (Suzanne: 18)

So if you thinking to too much negative, 'well this isn't the country that I like, this wasn't uh I, I don't speak the language...' well you have the chance to learn a new language. I would love to move to a country where I had the chance to learn a new language. But I think, you now, for me, that's an opportunity. Rather than a frustration. (Gail: 212)

III-3 Differences in physical space and freedom

Lack of physical space and freedom

There's sooo little to do here. Like, you don't walk in the park. (Gail: 182)

...it was sooo claustrophobic. And so unexpected, I think, because you don't know what it is like to live in a high security situation until you get into it. (Gail: 186)

It's hard, it's hard. I feel a little cooped up, a little bored, a little stir crazy. (Cathy:52)

You can't take a taxi! (Phillip: 125)

I'm going to die, I'm going to die' and I can't go anywhere. (Camille: 35)

Like if I had a car, some wheels, I would have been fine... We were just soooo bored! (Gail: 174)

'I don't care! I need to get out.' (Phillip: 129)

I must say the mentality of not being able to go anywhere. (Gail: 190)

Expatriate fear of crime and security

The whole security thing is oppressive. And worrisome. (Fiona: 209)

The crime. I know it's here. (Cathy: 53-55)

there are so many cars but you know with the kidnappings...I don't know! Are they targeting me, probably not but you don't want to give anybody any ideas. (Joan: 101)

Yeah, you know, people have commented to me 'You just go off?' Uh, I always checked first. For what was appropriate and what was not. But why set limits on yourself? (Gail: 246).

[Security] ...That would be the one thing that is a super challenge ...and probably if you haven't experienced it, it could be shocking. (Gail: 250)

I don't bring anything with me that I'm not perfectly happy to give up and that kind of gave me a sense of security... (James: 140)

As a lone female, if I was to run, I would not...I don't even think my husband would let me do it. But I wouldn't feel safe just to do it (Joan: 99).

being a bigger person than most of the people here, I didn't feel threatened (Phillip: 131)

I suspect their experiences would be very different than mine because there are things that they can't do because of gender. (James: 114)

Plus the fact is if things whether you are a man or a woman, it's probably going to be with a gun and you're probably in just as big in trouble whether you're a man or a woman. (James: 132)

III-4 Acceptance and Adaptation

Importance of focusing on the positive

I think that also that experience of going out and about in the country really put the rose coloured glasses on for me in Honduras. (Gail: 242)

I've really enjoyed the quality of life we have here... (James: 109)

I do appreciate the Latino way, the closeness of the family. I think that's great." (Cathy: 182-184)

I love the weather, I loved the people that I've met, umm I umm I like the culture. [] I think it's a beautiful place. (Phillip: 194)

Openness and flexibility

There were 5 things I said I would never, ever do because I was a snot. But I didn't realize that I was a snot. I was judgemental snot. But I did... I ended up while living in [prior post] doing all 5 things. (Suzanne: 47)

It's more about nature. Whether you're a glass half full or half empty or whatever kind of person but I think it's easy to focus too much on and allow your brain to kind of run the tape of "it's not safe here or this is what I don't like about here" and to run that tape. You have to at some point train yourself to another tape and say "hey you know what, it's sunny again" each day. (Gail: 266)

But then if you pick up on them too much and dwell on them too much, you'll be in a rut... (Joan: 164)

You have to be open... I think what's worked for me...I think you have to be open to whatever (Fiona: 162)

Don't judge others until you walk a mile in somebody else's shoes. (Suzanne: 49)

...no matter where you are living, who your family is, who your friends are, you can find problems and negatives anywhere. It's just your life, your outlook on life, you gotta stay positive. (Joan: 166)

IV: The Concept of Time is Altered

IV-1 Lifestyle comes with a built-in internal clock

Endings are innate and fixed

My year and a half was over. I mean, get me out of this place. (Suzanne: 65)

I'm thinking, 'maybe it's time to go now.' (James: 82)

It's time to move on and you just get that way after doing a post for three years. You're just done. It was just time. (Cathy: 133-135)

Relationships are time sensitive

It's also hard because people leave so and you make new friends by people start to come and go and you know, then you kind of feel internally that your time is about over. (Cathy: 139)

And then I recognize that we got to build this network of people, you know. So now we are constantly trying to make friends so, "Yeah, let's make friends uhh, let's make friends" so it's almost like systematic thing. Fred was saying 'we got to make new friends because our friends are leaving' and but if you are not in tuned to that information, without making friends, you get very lonely. (Camille: 147)

We've kept in touch with a lot of friends from [previous post]" (Fiona: 203).

but the one thing that we noticed is that we stopped trying to make any new friends. And that last year is sort of like 'done!' (James: 150)

You know in the next few years we're going to see people come and go, most people because we are here for a long, long time. (Phillip: 202)

Seize the day because of limited time

Yes, I mean it will be sad to leave when it's time to go but time to move on. To the next! To wherever we're headed to next. (Joan:176)

We're going to be gone in anywhere from 3-6 years so enjoy it. And for some people, it is usually only 2 to 3 years, to me, that's such as short period of time. (Joan: 174)

IV-2 Time is future oriented

I think that I will definitely on my next posting try to avoid the holding pattern mentally. (James: 152)

It bothers me because I think about it a lot. [] You know, all the scenarios running through your mind and what's frustrating is that, a lot of times in these instances that will be nothing because it could be dead" (Cathy: 123).

There's all these cool looking places around the world. And you're always like, "Oh wouldn't that be great!" (Fiona:72)

To think about it when we go to the [next post] I would go with something figured out at least before with a job lined up so I wouldn't go, you know, start all over again ... (Camille: 133)

IV-3 Lifestyle is a continual process

You adapt, you accept, you know and right after you accept it, don't dwell on it and move on. (Joan: 105).

It really becomes part of everything you react to after. (Fiona: 205). That if we go out again to another posting, I'll be more conscious.

And much more proactive so in setting up, I can be more effective to get the things that I want to get done, done. (James: 144)

I think we have much more knowledge now that we, you know, you have to develop a strategy to live this life. (Camille: 147)

Appendix 9 – Information on Honduras

Brief overview of recent history

A coup d'état against the elected government took place in June 2009 when the president of Honduras was ousted and exiled to Costa Rica. In the months following the coup, political demonstrations occurred on an almost daily basis, often in the capital city of Tegucigalpa, but also in other major cities, along the country's highways, and at border crossings. These demonstrations often disrupted traffic, but were usually peaceful. However, they were still unnerving for those who lived there. In early November 2009, a political accord was signed by the de facto regime and the deposed president and the country elected a new president in late November 2009 (Ruhl, 2010). From the winter of 2010 Honduras returned to being a stable developing country.

As of 2011, Honduras had the highest murder rate in the world, 67 per 100,000 (in the U.S. the rate is 5.4 per 100,000) and Shifter (2011, p. 52) noted that this “highly unsettling security situation has been exacerbated by a still-unresolved political crisis that has undermined governance and in turn, has tended to benefit drug trafficking organizations and criminal gangs.” Ruhl (2010, p. 97) cites a 2009 Latinobarometro survey stating that a third of Honduran families have reported “that a family member has become a victim of street crime sometime during the past year.” Additionally, Honduras has also been classified as one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere and more than two-thirds of the country's population (roughly 7.8 million people) lived below the poverty line (Ruhl, 2010, p.94).